

**Freie Hochschule
für Geisteswissenschaft**

Sektion für Landwirtschaft
Section for Agriculture
Section d'Agriculture
Seccion de Agricultura

Professional development workshop for biodynamic educators

Workshop report

30th – 31st January 2016 in Dornach



Goetheanum

Editor: Dr. Ambra Sedlmayr

Organisational team: Dr. Ambra Sedlmayr, Jean-Michel Florin, Martin Quantin and Thomas Lüthi

Published in September 2016.

With financial support from Software AG Stiftung and free donations to the Section for Agriculture.

Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum

Hügelweg 59

CH-4143 Dornach

Tel: +41 (0)61 706 4211

Fax: +41 (0)61 706 4215

section.agriculture@goetheanum.ch

www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org

Introduction

Ambra Sedlmayr

Nearly 35 teachers of biodynamic agriculture from all over the world met on the 30th and 31st of January in Dornach. The workshop came about by the request of teachers who felt the time available to meet during the Agriculture Conference was not sufficient for in-depth work on the many topics of concern. These topics were ranging from practical and logistic questions when setting up a new training, to curriculum development, accompanying students, teaching key anthroposophical concepts and many more. Since a meeting of biodynamic educator's could not be self-organised over the last few years, the Section for Agriculture took on the lead and coordinated the organisation of the present workshop.

The workshop was meant as a platform for learning and exchange for adult educators in the biodynamic movement. The aim was to have a learning and networking event held and attended by biodynamic educator's themselves. The Section only took the role of coordinator on, gathering questions and wishes of educator's and asking for contributions on these topics. With those offers of contribution a programme was assembled. There were two input sessions on adult education and inner development, four teaching demonstrations meant as inspirational examples, time to share how we use the Agriculture Course as a source and space to work on topics of each person's direct concern in thematic working groups.

An open mood of sharing and learning from each other developed during the workshop, and at the end of the meeting, it was clear that it had been a very fruitful exchange and that participants wanted to continue to work together in the future. The organising team reflected on the event, and despite overall satisfaction, identified a number of issues that can be improved in a next workshop. Mainly we would like to make more time available for working with biodynamic educator's own questions so that meaningful answers can be found through the exchange with peers. The inspirational input in turn should be much shorter and moderated more strategically, to reach the overall goals that each individual contributor cannot keep in mind throughout. Feedback from participants confirmed these ideas.

The present report sums up the contributions to the workshop to make them available to those who could not be present and to help us build up on the work already done in future meetings and in our individual teaching situations.

Programme: Workshop for Professional Development of Biodynamic Educators, 30th – 31st January 2016

Time	Saturday, 30 th January	Time	Sunday, 31 st January
8:30-09:15	Welcome & Introductions <i>Thomas Lüthi and Jean-Michel Florin</i>		
9:15 - 10:30	Spiritual composting <i>Hans Supenkämper</i>	9:00 - 10:30	Practicing self-awareness and non violent communication in education <i>Jean-Luc Watzky</i>
10:30-11:00	Break at the Wandelhalle	10:30-11:00	Break at the Wandelhalle
11:00-11:30	What is an anthroposophical concept? <i>Martin Quantin</i>	11:00-12:30	Teaching demonstration: The natural realms as a read thread through education <i>Ruud Hendriks</i>
11:30-12:15	Teaching demonstration: Case-studies as a method for generating and transferring knowledge <i>Ton Baars</i>		Teaching demonstration: The 4 elements - an experimental way of teaching the fundamentals of biodynamics <i>Jean-Michel Florin</i>
12:15 – 14:00	Lunch at the Speisehaus	12:30 -14:00	Lunch at the Speisehaus
14:00–14:40	Dialogue walk & talk on the Agriculture Course	14:00–14:40	Dialogue walk & talk on the Agriculture Course
14:45– 16:15	Group work (different themes, see below)	14:45 - 16:15	Group work (different themes, cont.)
16:15 –16:45	Break	16:15 –16:45	Break
16:45- 18:00	Reflection on the day with World café <i>Jean-Michel Florin</i>	16:45 - 18:00	World café, review, preview and closing of the workshop <i>Thomas Lüthi</i>
18:00	Dinner at the Speisehaus		

Thematic work groups offered:

- 1) Setting up and developing a biodynamic training – with Kai Lange and Ambra Sedlmayr
- 2) Peer accreditation of biodynamic training courses – with Thomas Lüthi, Sundeep Kamath and Jean-Michel Florin
- 3) Supporting farmers to become mentors – with Martin Quantin
- 4) Accompanying students / student support - with Geert Iserbyt and Ineke Docx

Opening

Thomas Lüthi

Biodynamic agriculture looks at the world and nature in a way that is not common today. The profound knowledge on nature's processes and spiritual beings must become each person's own experience. If it is not made graspable by furthering students' own experience, this knowledge can easily turn into a dogma: something that is not understood but has to be accepted. Therefore the task of the biodynamic educator is not that of teaching facts, but that of developing an andragogical approach that opens up paths of development that lead students to having own experiences and insights.

As an educator, I need to prepare myself: on the one hand side my manuscript, notes, exercises, etc. But also I need to prepare myself so that I can become very awake to perceive what lives in the people attending, and tailor my intervention to them and to the actual teaching situation. In this way an interaction can take place and the students can enter experientially into what the educator would like them to enter into. Sometimes, this works well, students are enthusiastic, grasp the idea and develop their own questions. In other situations it just doesn't work. Perhaps you have prepared very well, but it doesn't happen. Students stay indifferent or skeptical.

Each teaching situation is totally unique and very demanding. Therefore I think it is a very good opportunity that we can meet here, so that we can really learn from each other and learn about different approaches. As educator's we can only prepare ourselves to become ever more able to, in the moment, have real human encounters with the students.

Levels of awareness

Jean-Michel Florin

I would like to suggest that we pay attention to the level of awareness that we have during this workshop , so that we can consciously step to levels of higher awareness. A student recently said it would be really good to have this tool presented to the students at the beginning of a course, so that they can pay attention to how they listen and speak, helping the communication to become more meaningful and fruitful. This comes from the work of Claus Otto Scharmer.

The first level of awareness is that I'm absorbed in my world, I'm not aware of what is going on outside. I only listen and see what I already know. I don't learn anything new. And I only say what I have prepared, what I already know. It is all the result of the past, nothing new is coming in.

The second level of awareness is that I go to the window of myself, using my senses. I look out and listen and pay attention. I hear new things, and take in new facts. I say what I really think. If I have a different opinion than someone else, we can start a debate. There is no real dialogue: both of us want to get their opinion across.

At the third level of awareness I try to go with my attention to the person who is speaking. I don't listen only to the facts, but I really try to feel what the other person is trying to express. I try to understand what the other person means, beyond the words the person uses. When I speak, I try to make myself understood at a deeper level. There is the possibility of dialogue; something new can develop out of understanding each other.

Sometimes there is the possibility to go to a fourth level. Claus Otto Scharmer calls this 'presencing'. Being really here in the moment and to be so aware of what is going on now, that I can open up to what is coming from the future. We can not decide to do this, it is more something that can happen by itself if I make an effort to hold the space and be very aware. Sometimes in a conversation when we are together searching and seeking, we can suddenly find new ideas together. An answer that makes sense to everybody involved comes up.

I would like to suggest that we try to work at the third level of awareness over this workshop: listening and speaking with empathy. We can stop sometimes and reflect: at what level of awareness am I operating? Or: what happened in a specific conversation? What level was that? What were we doing in terms of listening and speaking quality?

4 Types of Listening

Listening 1: Downloading habits of judgements
From habit Habits of judgement

.....>

Listening 2: Factual listening
From the outside Realizing differences

→ **OPEN MIND**

Listening 3: Empathic listening
From within Experiencing the experience of Thou

→ **OPEN HEART**

Listening 4: Generative listening
From the source (from a future that wants to emerge)

→ **OPEN WILL**

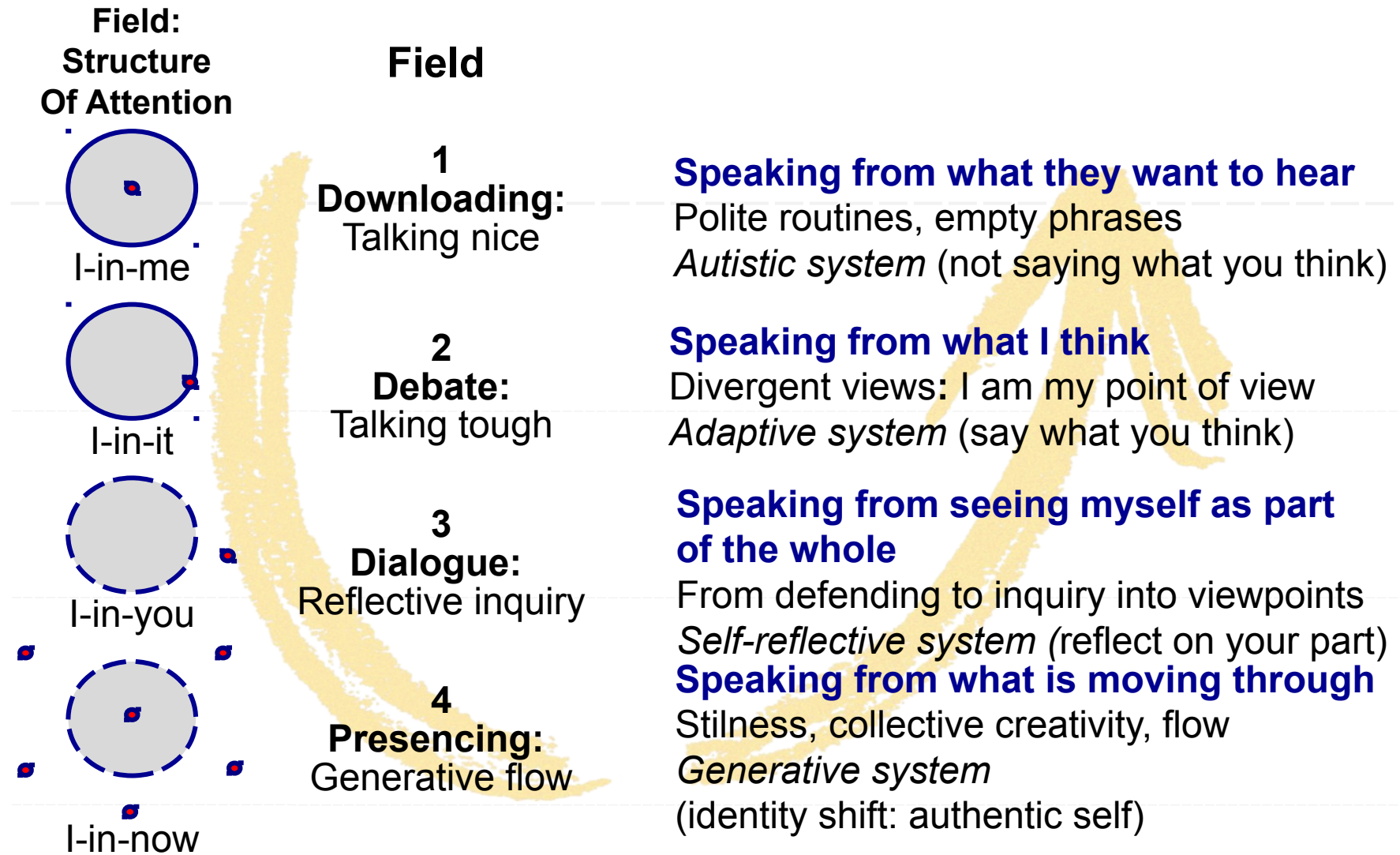
Reconfirming old opinions

Seeing disconfirming (new) data

Seeing through another persons' eyes.
Connecting with the heart.

Seeing from an emerging new possibility.
Connecting to the future Whole. Shift in
Identity & Self.

4 Types of speaking



Source: Claus Otto Scharmer. The Presencing Institute.

- Education out of an anthroposophical world view - *Reflecting on the fundamental premises of our work*

What is an anthroposophical concept?

Martin Quantin

How can we encounter Nature, so that we renew our relationship with it?

The students that come to our training in France have the wish to connect to nature, to contribute to healing the Earth, to do practical work. We encourage them to go to a farm and experience biodynamics hands-on. Often they have only a very faint idea of what biodynamics is. The students discover what biodynamics and what anthroposophy is throughout the training. How can we introduce them to the anthroposophical world-view, without being dogmatic and thereby make students run out of the room?

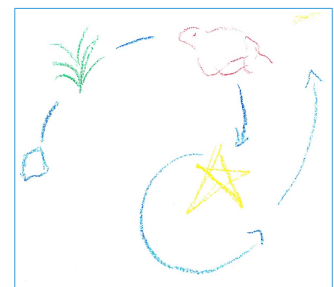
We want to pass on the core impulse of biodynamics and anthroposophy. After interviewing the students, we tell them to read the Agriculture Course and consider if they want to be trained to understand it. If this opens up an interest in them, and they 'still want to attend', we take them on.

During the training, we start with nature observation and guide students to realising that there are realities that are not directly sense-perceptible.

Then we read Rudolf Steiner's „Occult science“. Here the essential experience is that we go through the realms of nature and gradually try to understand their configuration. We develop the concept of the etheric body, based on the contrast between the mineral and the plant world. Then we move on to the astral body, by reflecting on the nature of the animal. And then it becomes really challenging, when we move on to the question: what is the difference between animals and humans? Often there is a strong and emotional rejection of the idea that humans have a higher developed element in them than the animals have. The idea of I-consciousness, individual human intention and freedom are discussed.

It is important to not only stay at an intellectual level and debate this question. We go into the emotion. For this to be possible, we need to have laid the foundations in the time leading up to this event, by having created a mood and space where such a deep and open exchange with the students is possible. How do I experience the „I am“? How do you experience your „I am“? Students start to consciously reflect on and experience the being inside them.

Once the concept of I-consciousness is grasped, there is a turning point. The question of what human nature is takes root in the student's soul. They start their journey on a path of enquiry. This question and the concept of I-consciousness become the foundation for everything else the student is to learn.



Now, out of this understanding of the human being, the realms of nature can be studied again, now in a new light, with a new depth. And the student himself/herself is set on a path of inner development as well, which is central for healing the earth. Awareness of one's beingness is central to biodynamics. „I“ is the first anthroposophical concept.

Suggestion:

In your experience as course leaders, how have you been able to make students aware of their „I-consciousness“? What works and what doesn't, in your experience? What helps and furthers this process and what are the challenges?

- Teaching requires presence in the moment - *Developing our human qualities as teachers*

Spiritual composting

Hans Supenkämper

When we observe our soul activities of thinking, feeling and willing, we can find in them 'compost material' that we can use for developing 'social humus'. We have materials in us that need composting. New adult learning requires that we observe the outside world, AND our inner world. For example now, as you are reading this, what is happening inside you? Take a moment to observe your inner world.

What we observe inside of us when we observe the world is part of our destiny. Our body carries our karma. We cannot step out of it. Our heart holds the knowledge of our karma and it holds the answers to our questions (sense of truth).

What is learning?

Learning is not about becoming a more functional and efficient worker in the market place by reproducing what others have thought before you. Learning is individual development. It is a process of change that depends on the activity of the human „I“. The „I“ must be active and engage with an aspect of the world.

Life processes metamorphose into learning processes:

Life process	Learning process
1. Breathing	Observing, taking in the world
2. Warming	Relating to the world: how it touches me
3. Nutrition	Assimilating/Digesting
4. Secreting	Individualising: making it my own
5. Maintaining	Practicing
6. Growing	Developing new faculties
7. Reproducing	Creating something new

Step four, individualising is where the past and the future meet. It requires presence. Time becomes space. By this we create a space with our ego-activity where Lucifer and Ahriman cannot enter. This is our chance. This is what can heal the world.

Lievegoed described that observing the world in a selfless way can allow one to enter this space. One can add something in a selfless way and then step back and let it go, see what happens, with no expectations. No fixing of what results I want to achieve. It is a willing without willing. This is a mystery of the will.

Individualisation in the presence sets up a light in the etheric world. It's like lighting a candle. The etheric world is dying away and needs us to bring life to it in this way, by entering into the etheric time/space.

When we experience a tension, resulting from the inner reactions to the outside world, we can use this tension as our teacher. We need to discern what is happening in our thinking, feeling and willing, to understand the message that the discomfort is giving us. If our thinking, feeling and will impulses are unclear to us, we have no chance to find the message. The tension points towards a need in a part of my soul. If I can find it, I can find a solution; something I can do. When I change myself, I release the other from his task to 'kick me'; a karmic task of reminding me of my pre-birthly intentions and spurring my development.

Exercise 1:

1. Breathing/observing: Describe a situation. How is it?
2. Warming-up: What part of it touched you? What interested you?
3. Digesting: What part challenged you?
4. Individualising: What part has something to do with you? What new impulse can you take on from it?
5. Maintaining/Practicing: What is the next step you can do?

Exercise 2:

Answer the following questions. Observe your inner world. What are your thoughts, feelings and will impulses that answering the question brings up for you?

Question 1: What is your motivation to work in biodynamic agriculture?	
Answer:	<i>Observe</i> Thinking: Feeling: Willing:
Question 2: Where and how do you experience the shadows of biodynamic agriculture?	
Answer:	<i>Observe</i> Thinking: Feeling: Willing:

Then step back from your notes and look at them from all sides, as if you were looking at notes from someone else and you would like to understand who it is. What gesture can you discern from the activity of the soul? Give it a name like the native Americans used to do, a descriptive name, like „sitting bull“, a name that describes the activity.

You may realise that elemental beings are involved. Question 1 draws on Luciferic beings, question 2 on Ahrimanic beings. There is a polarity with the possibility of integration at a higher level.

Ask the gesture that you have identified with a name: What is your suffering? What can I do for you? What is the new creative higher answer you can give to the beings inside you?

In learning, individualisation is the key moment, something opens up and the new cannot be corrupted.

Practicing self-awareness and non-violent communication in education

Jean-Luc Watzky

How can I be respectful of myself and of the other in relationship?

I discovered non-violent communication when I was searching for a way to improve communication in relationships. Non-violent communication requires that we become more aware of our own feelings and listening to ourselves. Non-violent communication is about saying things gently and in a more conscious and responsible way.

Remember the last time when you had a difficult situation with someone and negative feelings came up. When this happens, take time, like fifteen minutes for yourself, like you would do to listen to a friend in a difficult situation.

Look at the situation: what happened and how did it happen? Generally when we get a strong negative feeling, there was an action ahead of this, a change that led to it. Observe the situation in detail to clarify the situation (exchange in pairs was suggested):

- What happened?
- What were your thoughts?
- What were your feelings?

Frequently feelings come up and we try to make sense of them, we think about it, we fuel the negative feeling with our thoughts, we easily get into a vicious cycle between thoughts and feelings. It becomes like a trap.

How can we find a way out of this trap?

1. By bringing more clarity into the situation by distinguishing facts, feelings and thoughts/judgements.
2. Ask yourself: What is the strongest/worst feeling about the difficult situation? What need or will of mine does it show me?

My feelings point towards something that is really important to me – my need or will behind it. Try to find the will that lies behind the feelings. When you find the will, a creative idea can come up: I find what is important for me and what I can do for it. I find a possibility for action. This is a relief. I can focus on the future and don't need to hang on to the past any longer.

What we need to pay attention to is that the first feeling disappears very fast and the 'trap' begins: the movement between thoughts and secondary feelings. We need to focus on the immediate, first feeling if we want to find the will or need that lies behind it.

Small outside happenings can trigger a whole mountain of background bad feelings and unrecognised or suppressed inner needs. Instead of staying with the first feeling, we often move away from it fast, as we try to make sense of it or as secondary emotions, such as anger arise. Sometimes the emotions triggered have to do with the outside relationship, sometimes they have only to do with me. For example, I'm stressed or tired and get angry easily. When strong emotions come up, it is common that we blame others, we want to find

someone outside to make them responsible for our negative feelings, so that we feel better about ourselves.

Once we understand the situation better and have discovered the need or will underlying our intense negative feelings, we can take responsibility for ourselves. Now we need to use our understanding to communicate with the other. I make a request (not a demand). The aim is to enter into an open creative dialogue so we can find a new solution together. For this I need to be willing to meet the other person. I don't know how she/he will respond and need to take a risk.

In the conversation with the other person, we don't make accusations, but we can speak strongly about our own position. We can say for example: „I am angry because this project is important to me.“ It's not about playing it down or speaking in an artificially gentle way when we feel something else! It's about taking responsibility and being authentic.

1st phase	I'm in a trap	I am confused
2nd phase	I take time to find my need/will; I become conscious of my own responsibility	I gain strength through clarity I'm connected to my needs and values
3rd phase	I communicate clearly	I meet the other person in an open space, where I do not know what will happen. I take the risk of expressing myself and trust that I can deal with the unexpected consequences of standing in for my truth.

Go back to your difficult situation and reflect: What is the request you could bring to the other person?

Comments after the contribution:

Steiner says „Feelings are unrecognised will impulses“ and „thoughts are dead will impulses“. We can transform our thoughts from the past, by connecting to our higher Self – this is real alchemy.

Martin Quantin: In our training in France we introduce non-violent communication right at the beginning of the training, students start paying attention to their inner world in relation to outside events. It also sets a very good foundation for the work together and we can come back to non-violent communication whenever we need it.

Clemens Gabriel: In our training in Scandinavia, students come with big ideals about sustainable agriculture and tend to be very critical when we visit farms. I have started to work with the students so that they observe farms objectively, while being aware of what happens inside themselves.

- My approach to teaching - *Teaching demonstrations*

Case-studies as a method for generating and transferring knowledge

Prof. Dr. Ton Baars

We believe that we need to teach people that another worldview is necessary to understand what is meant in biodynamic agriculture. For this reason, attention is paid in teaching anthroposophy in general and reading the Agricultural Course from Rudolf Steiner. Helpful is all kind of literature from secondary anthroposophy. Basic elements of the new knowing are about spirituality, man and spirit, the cosmos, rhythms, polarity, 3- and 4-foldedness of nature. This is all necessary to introduce the special actions in biodynamics, the preparations and the impact of stars and moon on sowing, on quality, etc.

Also modern interpretations of ethical concepts are used to explain what the intention of biodynamic agriculture could be. Modern terminology is used to explain biodynamics. For instance the concept of naturalness and its differentiation into three complementary views was used to discriminate different ways to make claims in support of organic agriculture. Here the concept of integrity of life as a metaphysical concept was present to show that a systemic approach to agriculture could be widened. Not only cycling of nutrients and the balancing between different parts of the organic farm defined biodynamic agriculture, but also the respect for the living world as a good in its own right. Integrity of life is more than health and welfare, it tackles women rights, animal rights, rights to a worthy, complete life. Although the concept of integrity is accepted in the discussion on human beings and animals, it can also be used in discussion on integrity of plants (genetic engineering, hybrids), integrity of food and diets (food versus minerals, diets versus food stuffs) and integrity of soil and landscape.

Teaching of the new observational skills is another element to become a 'good biodynamic farmer'. The first focus is on getting aware of the life processes as entrance to what we call the etheric world. Instead of the focus on the dead, mineral part of life, we want to get in touch with the living part of the world, which at first is expressed in the world of plants, especially the metamorphosis of the leaves. In the past decades Jochen Bockemühl opened the attention for metamorphosis in a more scientific way. He describes new 'laws of growth and development' based on this principle. The idea of metamorphosis in the living word was already mentioned by W. von Goethe, who had a focus on differences and change in a natural, self-chosen world. Goethe put a lot of attention to the metamorphosis of rocks and wrote a book on plant metamorphosis.

The focus on 'change' rather than 'fixed' can be used in all parts of nature. W. Schad used metamorphosis to find laws of change within the complete group of Monocotyls. T. Göbel used it to characterise different landscapes. In the animal kingdom, W. Schad introduced the principle of threefoldness of mammals, an anatomical principle based on shapes and animal characteristics, not on genetics and evolutionary descendance. These results are only accepted, if you accept that there is a spiritual concept present in the background.

To become a biodynamic farmer it needs more, namely the development of your intuition and judgment to do the right actions, which means the proper action at the right time. If we see the Goethean phenomenological approach as the entrance for holistic observation, participatory action is its parallel for precise action in a holistic environment of the farming system. The methodology of participatory action is part of so-called N=1 research or case study research. Action research is part of the knowledge of professionals, medical doctors, farmers and other practitioners. Interesting here, is that to become a 'good', above-moderate practitioner you need to integrate your biographical development. Interest for something is connected with your biography. Often at a very young age, people discover their specific area of love. After a constant and on-going practicing we shape our etheric body. A good tennis player needs to play a lot and a good dairy farmer needs to start at a young age to be in the barn, observing the cows, feeding the calves, looking at the development of his animals. This is an automatic development of your Goethean skills, mentioned above. The explicit teaching of Goethean science is necessary to become conscious of your observation skills, necessary to participatory action.

The methodology of Participatory Action Research (PAR) can be trained as well. Elements of PAR are the role of intuition and intuitive actions, pattern recognition. Intuition is a private skill to do the right action at the right moment of time, whereas pattern recognition is the way to take control about the effects of your single actions. Since we are dealing with N=1 or single cases, people need to be trained to be honest in their judgement. Training how we can develop our intuition is possible and control of intuition is necessary, because intuition can be misused by farmers to tell stories without any foundation in reality. Intuition should not be confused with blind belief. The basics of pattern recognition is that you get a judgment about the question on cause and effect in single cases, in single observations. Interesting is, that the more complex and the more special the patterns are, the easier it is to be sure, that my actions are the cause of the changes. Simple patterns can be explained by a range of potential causes, whereas complex, special, unique patterns are much easier brought into connection with the cause. The most famous pattern in space is the iris scan or the fingerprint. The pattern of your DNA is so specific that it is hardly possible to make a mistake in identification. In agriculture, farmers sometime make special patterns in their field, although it was not planned before. There was not enough manure or they made a mistake in manure application and made a unique pattern, which next year and the years after completely matched with plant growth, disease or weed development. New insights pop-up based on single treatment. H. Kiene named this in German the 'Abbildungskorrespondenz', the exact overlap between the pattern of my action and the pattern outside. Kiene distinguished among others patterns in time, patterns in space, homeopathic patterns, space in time and time in space. Experienced farmers develop a new kind of knowing, their bodily knowing, the wisdom which is in their actions. If you interview old farmers, they sometimes can hardly explain, what and why they are doing so. However, they start talking, if you are with them on the land, among their cows, standing in between their machines. They need the surrounding of their daily practice to explain the way they think. Story telling by farmers always should be accompanied by knowledge of patterns based on their doing.

Literature: Baars (2002). *Reconciling scientific approaches for organic farming research*. Volume I: Reflection on research methods in organic grassland and animal production at the Louis Bolk Institute, The Netherlands. Contact: t.baars@fingerprint.nl

The nature kingdoms as a red thread through education

Ruud Hendriks

In our training at the Wamronderhof (NL) we use the four kingdoms of nature as a basic archetype that provides the foundation for the training. We relate macrocosmic archetypes or images to microcosmic and day-to-day details and vice-versa, so we practice holistic thinking.

4 kingdoms

3 for threefold social order

2 for polarities

= 1 farm individuality

I can only tell people what „my anthroposophy“ is. Everybody has their own ideas and has to make their own experiences.

As a soil science teacher a lecture of mine may be as follows:

5000 B.C. in The Netherlands people lived from nature, they were hunter-gatherers. 2000 B.C. there was the transition towards agricultural livelihoods. Small plots of land were used to grow crops, the so called 'celtic fields'. One can still recognize them, 4000 years later in aerial pictures; there are patterns in the way how crops grow, that relate to the position of the ancient celtic fields. The soil has maintained that memory for 4000 years.

The first agricultural fields in history were manured with plant materials, plants were the basis of soil fertility. Only 1000 AC animals came into farming, adding manure to the soil, improving the quality of the soil. We have places in The Netherlands where the formation of one metre depth of fertile soil took place in 1000 years of evolution.

1900 A.C. the human individuality starts to be expressed more and people choose for themselves what they want to do. They can choose between Herbalife, Astronaut food or spiritual food. The mineral fertiliser industry started only after the first World War. A factory of explosives was seeking for another outlet for its produce. They started to produce fertiliser, until the factory exploded in 1927.

The development was towards ever less matter being used, having massive effects. On the one hand side this is the case with the atomic bomb, where about one gram of matter destroyed the whole region of Hiroshima, for example. On the other hand side, the biodynamic preparations were created, where small amounts of matter can have very positive effects.

In this history of agriculture that I've just outlined, we can distinguish four phases, that we can relate to:

1. Hunter-gatherers – mineral kingdom/ using simple tools and taking what is there in nature;
2. Plant manure in initial agriculture – plant kingdom;

3. Introduction of animals in farming – animal kingdom;
4. Conventional and biodynamic agriculture – human kingdom.

Biodynamic agriculture is the logical next step in the development of agriculture. It needs to be discovered and adapted/integrated to each place anew. With biodynamic agriculture, food quality improves, providing the foundation for future human development.

But I worry. Nowadays animals are treated as if they were plants. Their instincts are suppressed, they are just kept alive and made to grow. Plants are treated as if they were minerals. In hydroponic cultures and with the correct light mixture they are taken down to the purely mineral realm. Food quality declines, as a result. As humans we need to handle our feelings and fears. Biodynamic food strengthens our 'I', so that we can be in charge of our lower selves. Conventional food does the opposite, it pulls us down into our lower natures. How can food help us, so that we deal with our fears in a human way, rather than in an animal way?

We use the four kingdoms in many areas of our training, aslo in team meetings:

1st – We speak about physical aspects – Mineral kingdom

2nd – We consider processes: Are things well planned? What is the flow of time? - Plant kingdom

3rd – What are the feelings/emotions that come up and that need to be dealt with? - Animal kingdom

4th – What is the individual relationship of the individual to the topic/intention at hand? - Human kingdom

By working with the qualities of the four kingdoms, we gain an increasing understanding of them.

The 4 elements – an experimental way of teaching the fundamentals of biodynamics

Jean-Michel Florin

Students who have a scientific training often find the Agriculture Course very strange and I try to engage them by providing experiences that can make them understand the way how Steiner presents things. I try to develop the answers together with the students. Here I show you an extract of a seminar I often give, to introduce the four elements: Earth, Water, Air and Warmth.

We start with the question: What are the elements of nature and what is a good method to look at each of them?

Jean-Michel throws a stone into the air. How does it feel? When I catch it, it is heavy. If it falls on the floor, it could break something. I can never see the whole stone. I need to look from all the different angles to get a picture of the whole stone. Can we go inside the stone? Will the stone change by itself if I leave it laying here for a week? How can such a stone change? How can we get to know the stone?

To study the stone, I want to go into all its details, observe it closer and closer and from all sides. I want to perhaps break it up to see all the components it is made of.

What does the stone tell me about the element Earth?

- it does not move by itself
- it is heavy
- there are many details that I can observe and measure
- it is a thing outside of me
- it makes me feel my own connection to the earth

Jean-Michel brings in a glass plate filled with water. He needs to be very careful, so that the water does not splash out. He then transfers water into one cup and gives it to one participant. They now need to pass the cup around the circle, from one participant to the next. One needs to be careful, the water does not hold its own shape and moves. Water adapts to the shape of the recipient.

What is typical of the water element?

- It moves, it doesn't hold a fixed shape (unless it is frozen)
- There are no details, no differences to be observed in it
- It has weight
- It is not a fixed unit
- It stays on the skin, soaks in
- I have to follow the movement of the water

Jean-Michel pretends to catch a bit of air and starts passing it on to a student. The air is invisible. I cannot hold it. It is everywhere around me. It permeates my body. Can you imagine that we would have to breath

Earth? How would that make us feel? Jean-Michel burns some scented paper, the smoke rises in the room and the smell expands. In the smoke we see, that the air is always moving. It carries smell and sound and light...

What is characteristic of the air element?

- It needs something else (clouds, smoke) to make the air visible
- Smell is spread out in the air
- Colour can be seen through the air
- It is difficult to experience air as being a 'substance'
- No details can be distinguished in air
- We are part of the process of air, we don't follow it as something outside of us, as we can do with water or earth
- We are all connected through the air that we breathe

Jean-Michel instructs the participants to touch one hand with the other, palm to palm. One hand feels the other hand, i.e. we focus our consciousness on one hand only. What can we perceive? We feel the warmth of the other hand, or perhaps it is colder. I can create warmth through my attention. I realise warmth is not a substance but a quality.

What is characteristic of the warmth element?

- warmth is definitely no substance
- it expands from a centre to the periphery
- it goes inside us, it warms us (warmth ether)
- warmth creates an atmosphere

Each of the four elements needs a different approach to looking at it, to getting to know it. Each element gives us a different approach for looking at nature. We can look at nature, using the qualities of each of the four elements. Nowadays at school we learn things from an 'earth element point of view'. And this fits only to dead things or to the physical (dead) aspect of everything. Can we learn to look at the world in new ways, that make it possible for us to understand living nature?

Literature: Florin J.-M., Escrivá C. *Rencontrer les plantes*. Ed. Amyris. 2011.
(specially pages 46 to 54)

- Working on our own questions - *Reports from the working groups*

Working group on 'Setting up and developing a biodynamic training'

Ambra Sedlmayr

On the first day three biodynamic training courses presented themselves, the Warmonderhof (Ruud Hendriks), the UK Apprenticeship Diploma (Kai Lange) and the training from Argentina (Simon Blaser); the aim was that paths for the development of a biodynamic training would be presented for those wishing to start a new training.

The Warmonderhof (NL) is a very well established training that is part of a state accredited school. The training takes four years, there are about 250 students enrolled in the full-time and part-time education at any time. They work together with entrepreneurial farms, since their aim is that students learn how to make a living of farming. In the first year and after two months at school, students join a farm for 6 months to gain practical experience of working and living on a farm. In the third year, students become helpers for the students of the first year, explaining jobs. The fourth year is more theoretical, including a project that consists of developing a five-year conversion plan. 40-50% of students do not finish their training. In the training course at Warmonderhof they work with class groups that are made to join the more intellectual students in one group and the more practical students in another group. The teachers are given the subjects they are passionate about, and there are specialised teachers for the key topics (soils, plants, animal husbandry, etc.).

The UK apprenticeship diploma developed gradually, starting with one farm with apprentices and all teaching being donated/unpaid. Nowadays there are four modules on soil, plants, animals and astronomy that are held throughout a two year work-based learning placement on biodynamic farms (the accredited training centres). Only in 2005 the question of accrediting the training came up. At the beginning, trainers were against it, but after about five years the idea was endorsed. The process of accreditation was very valuable for reflecting the practice of the trainers and bringing more consciousness into the details of the training. Now both trainers and students know clearly what they are teaching and learning, respectively. In the last years the training became more centralised, with a core group coordinating it. The students look for holistic understanding, they mostly do not have a farming background. The farms are encouraged to employ the apprentices, so they can pay for the attendance of the seminars.

In Argentina there is a course made up of four weeks of training on the topics of soil, plants, animals and humans. To attend no academic background is needed. Some 30-40 students attend each week-long course. All the teachers are together and attend each other's lessons to learn from each other. Students pay for the training, the income from fees is enough to pay the teachers and subsidise students who couldn't attend otherwise. In Latin America they want to develop a new training in which they involve the social context of people who are being trained; including the community and making all aspects of running the training into a tasks shared with students. Farming is a way of life and the focus of the training should not be only 'productivist'; housework and other 'shadow work' shall have its place in the training.

On the second day, the work group opened with a round of presentations, in which each person who is involved in starting a biodynamic training could explain their situation and their challenges. Smaller groups were formed of people with similar questions, joined by more experienced trainers. In the end in a plenary, the needs of new trainers were collated, these are:

- Teacher training
- Get to know curricula of other training courses
- A list of teachers by subject (to exchange ideas and know who to invite to teach)
- Teaching materials placed on a website (to help and inspire each other)
- Exchange on experiences in tropical areas

Working group on 'Creating a system of peer accreditation of biodynamic training courses'

Sundeeep Kamath

The peer accreditation workshop started with a round of contributions from participants to share the need for accreditation in their countries:

From Spain - a definite need was expressed as there are some courses being offered that are causing dissatisfaction among the people who enrolled, dampening their interest for biodynamics.

From Turkey - a definite need to start a training as most practices were done only in a mechanical way without understanding the concepts & a similar need may arise in other countries where Demeter projects are starting

From India - a definite need for the 2 year diploma course started in Tamil Nadu & the other shorter training courses given by the association.

From China - a definite need as there are people from Australia approaching interested persons and saying that their way is the best and only way of practicing BD.

From France - not required as it is government recognised & supported but will be nice to have one

From Sweden - same as above.

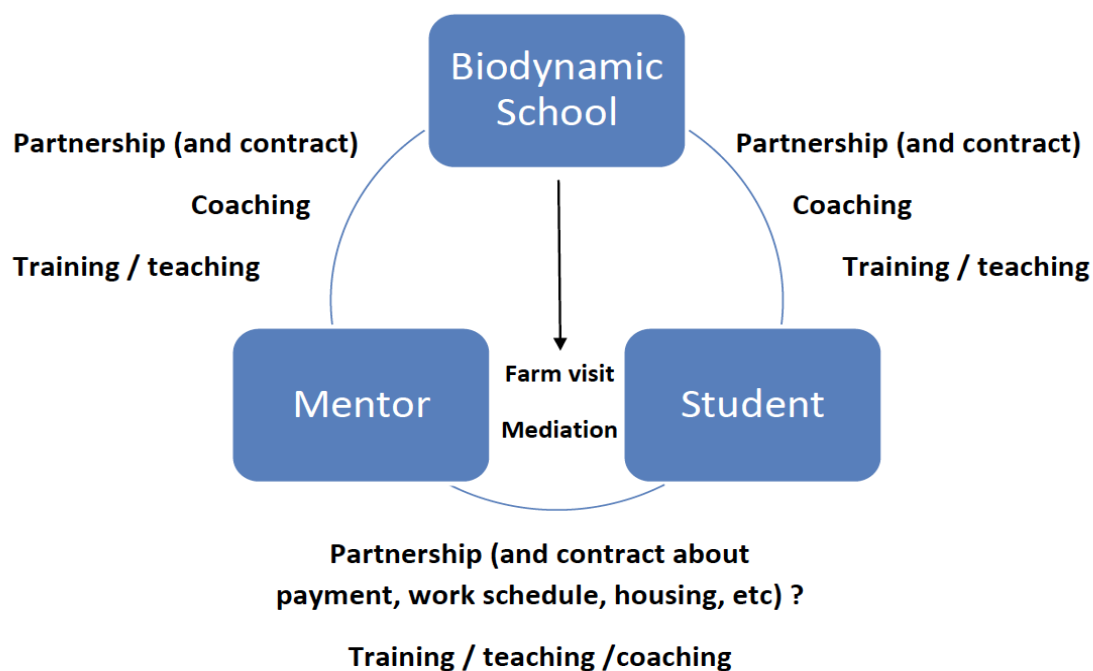
The first day ended with a review of the Charter for biodynamic advisors, which could be used for BD educators & a proposal to study the relevant sections of the model of peer accreditation being implemented by the Medical Section's Social Therapy & Curative Education group.

On the second day, we were joined by Reto Ingold and he expressed similar views from Switzerland as those of France & Sweden. The model by the Social Therapy & Curative Education group was studied and many suggestions were made. It was decided that a team comprising Jean-Michel Florin, Thomas Lüthi and Jakes Jayakaran will take this work forward and present a model for discussion to the group. Post this discussion, a model will be presented to all participants of the next biodynamic educator's workshop.

Working group on 'Supporting farmers to become mentors'

Martin Quantin

On the first session, we got to know each other and expressed our questions on the theme. The situations are quite different depending on the country. Germany and Holland have an official accreditation system for farmers to become mentors, with a specific training included in the general agriculture training. Other countries do not have such a system, and organise the training of mentors according to the circumstances. The analysis is clear: most of the time we do not work enough with mentors. From the school point of view, it can be difficult to help farmers to become good mentors, mostly because it is difficult to gather farmers together for working on the issue. It is easier to make good students! Most BD training courses have capacity lists to check and criteria for having apprentices, but is this enough? Are these tools really used as they should be? From the farmer point of view, there is the question of what is necessary to be a good mentor. On the second day, we worked on this question: what is necessary to be a good mentor? We ended up with a model of relationships between the stakeholders of a training and a list of resources (or skills or capacities) a mentor would need in order to be efficient in his/her role of teaching practical biodynamic farming.



A mentor needs:

- Affinity for (young) people, motivation to train farmers for the future, interest in sharing his own experience
- To work on a farm that is in good health, meaning that social, economic and farming at the farm are going well and the farm is actually not looking for a cheap worker to be able to continue (in the form of a student/apprentice).
- To have time to coach the apprentice
- To be concerned about establishing a balance in the relationship: giving/receiving

***These resources are the basis for a farm(er) to become a mentor
and the school has the responsibility to check that they are actually met.***

Then, a mentor also needs:

- Self-reflection on himself (my temperament, strengths and weaknesses) and on his way of farming. The mentor needs to be able to explain his work in a progressive way.
- Relationship skills like Non-Violent Communication, temperaments and biography tools, how to work with special needs people...
- Adaptation, depending on the status of the student (are they paid or not?), of their level in the training (1st year? 2nd year...?) then being able to show creativity in sharing and teaching the complexity of biodynamic farming, in a progressive way.
- To create spaces for experimentation so that the apprentice can take some responsibility in the work (depending on his/her capacities).

These resources can be trained and learned and the school can take an active part in supporting farmers to develop these new capacities.

In order to facilitate this work, the school can help by: networking and organising meetings and workshops with mentors, so that they can learn these skills. The school can also help through coaching farmers and providing mediation when necessary, and through creating spaces for sharing.

How to facilitate the organisation of a meeting/workshop with farmers who are already very busy???

Some ideas:

- Have good food for lunch or dinner (sharing the products from different farms is always a great experience!)
- organise a farm tour
- Create interest for the meeting (knowledge opportunity)
- organise everything in advance so that it is easy to attend (in France they even buy the train tickets for each mentor 3 months in advance, and send them with the invitation for the meeting)
- Nourish the soul! i.e. we are not just talking technical details about apprentices and problem we have.
- Make the meeting efficient with a facilitator or moderator
- Make the meeting mandatory for all mentors (in the partnership or contract at the beginning).

Working group 'on accompanying students'

Geert Iserbyt

In a small workgroup of 6 people we had a rich exchange about many possible forms of accompaniment of students in long BD-training programs (2 – 4 year). We listed up, discussed and shared many different possible kinds of accompaniment:

- before the start of the training
- during the training
- after the training.

Before:

- The accompaniment starts with a clear message about the aim and structure of the training (= promotion & recruitment).
 - It's important to have a form of selection of the candidates before the start of the training:
 - The selection can be made by farmers (before they can start the training, candidates have to find a farm, where they can do their internship)
 - The selection can also be done by the training (the course leader judges if candidates meet minimum criteria)
- There is a big difference between both !
- A course leader / mentor can help students to find an appropriate internship.

During the training course:

- Support of the group-dynamic process.
- Offering tools for self-education (portfolio-work).
- Offering reflecting talks with a course leader / mentor (structured or on demand).
- Facilitating group-talks (sharing experiences & insights / AHA-moments / looking-back).
- Facilitating DUO-talks.
- Tasks for individual reflection.
- Tools for evaluation talks between farmer and student.
- Intervention-work in smaller groups (5-6 students).
- Support for the elaboration of an individual project.

After the training course:

- Follow-up of the graduated students
(what are they doing? / what do they need? / do they really enter in the workfield?)
- Creating a regional network for young & starting farmers.
- Helping young farmers to find their way to professional advice.
- Creating test-workplaces for agricultural entrepreneurship.

Review and Conclusions

Ambra Sedlmayr and Thomas Lüthi

„We planted a seed.“
Comment of a participant

The review session led to the unanimous conclusion that *„we need to continue“*. An open atmosphere and mood of sharing prevailed in the workshop. Very generous and genuine offers of support were made and accepted. The common goal of creating learning opportunities for biodynamic agriculture was a solid foundation for an open exchange and the wish for lasting cooperation. It was said that the demand for biodynamic training courses was growing, and the biodynamic movement is *„not quite prepared“* for this. People starting up training courses have many questions. Well-established training courses can offer support and thereby also reflect their practices, which can lead to new developments. The special qualities of each training become more conscious when they are seen in contrast to other training courses; development options also become more evident.

It was appreciated that the Section for Agriculture took the initiative to coordinate and organise the workshop, providing a precious platform for learning and exchange. Some people stated *„I'll come every year“*, without knowing that this was a first at the Section for Agriculture and that future plans were open.

The opinions on the timing of the biodynamic educator's workshops differed however; overseas participants prefer the workshop to be near the Agriculture Conference, so they can attend both events; participants from Europe prefer both events to be well apart, as it is easier for them to travel to Dornach twice rather than to stay for over a week. A solution for this is to hold the meeting alternately, one year in June/July (with an European focus) and then again near the Agriculture Conference. A participant commented that developments in setting up schools or training courses don't go very fast, and therefore meeting every two years would be sufficient.

Wishes and suggestions of workshop participants:

The workshop should have a continuity, so that there is a process in which the development of training courses is accompanied by meetings for exchange and mutual support.

With regards to accreditation of training courses, a question could be: how can we accompany the development of training courses so that we can guarantee the quality of the work? Said in another way: we can work together in a way that enables everyone to do the best possible in their specific situation.

Topics and ideas for a next workshop:

- Choose one question to deepen in the workshop, rather than having all topics.
- Share curricula of various training courses and discuss them.
- More time for the work groups
- More time to work with concrete cases and examples from participants
- The biodynamic educator's workshop could run in parallel to a meeting of students of biodynamic training courses, and there could be activities in common; after all the students are our central concern and we need their feedback and input!

- Farmers who mentor students should also be more represented or have space to meet within the biodynamic educator's workshops.
- Lecture-type contributions on specialist topics are appreciated – but not too many and there should be time to 'digest' them afterwards (reflection, questions, etc.).
- There is a big difference between short training courses of just 1-2 days and the long training courses that run over several years; the methods need to be adapted to this. In short training courses there is less time for a process to take place. It would be good to meet in groups concerned with the same type of training.
- There could be an artistic activity, for example 'speech formation' which is of key importance for teachers.

Thomas Lüthi closed the workshop with the following thoughts:

There is a common goal, but the path to reach it is very different and individual.

One thing that was clear here is that if you have worked with a topic in such a way that you can teach it, perform it, then it is not just a programme in your head, but something of the whole of you, it lives in your souls and comes from your hearts. Then this includes recognition. That can be a goal that one can set for oneself: that what you have learned is not something that you have learned and pass on, but it is something that has become part of you and that you can give to other people.

You give something to other people, but it should not include your will. The people should be free. And then life will show if something happens or if it doesn't. If it is real for that person, if it touches something, then the process will go on in an individual way, according to what is real for the other person's truth.

I felt this is something that had the possibility to appear here; teaching is not a question that is standardised: like 'how should one do it?', but that the question of teaching lived here in an individual way: 'how should I do it?' And I was very happy to feel that this was part of what happened here.

I would like to thank everybody very much for participating in this meeting and I wish you good luck with your approaches to teaching biodynamics in your different situations.

Sektion für Landwirtschaft am Goetheanum

Hügelweg 59, CH-4143 Dornach

section.agriculture@goetheanum.ch

www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org