

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

Land and economy

agriculture between
the farm and the world

Report from the Agriculture Conference
at the Goetheanum in Dornach/Switzerland 2019

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Photo: Johannes Onneken

Dear Readers

The Agricultural Conference took place in a special place, the Goetheanum, which takes its name from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This place, perhaps like few others in the world, is a space, a forum for free dialogue between inner questions and outer seeking. Through our inner questioning we learn about the world: by searching and trying things out in the outer world we learn about ourselves. Building a bridge between the inner and outer is a basic characteristic of *Goetheanism*.

We resolved on the topic of Land and ECONOMY. The economy is initially like a threatening monster and we recoil. The economic forces engender fear and dread, especially because we are in fact all involved with them. How can we build a bridge in the Goethean sense, where inside and outside become connected? How can we learn to develop enthusiasm for the economy, for the fact that it supports our daily existence? Can we develop courage and the power of initiative to shape the economy?

To provide guidance through the conference and for working towards our courageous desire to shape the economy, we identified three points in the form of three questions:

1. What is unique about farming? What positive contribution does farming make? We have the opportunity of starting from the economy of the land. It is based on the actual physical ground. It is primary production, working towards the basic need of food.

2. Have I actually understood what associative economics is? The conference aims to be a workshop to create a working understanding of associative economics. It is an impulse given by Rudolf Steiner, as is biodynamic agriculture. No one knows precisely and completely what associative economics is, but everyone knows a little about it. This is why we held a discussion on this topic.

3. Where can I find an answer to my really pressing economic problem? The conference has been organised to provide the opportunity to exchange tips and tricks on the current economic worries and needs of individuals.

When it comes to farming and ECONOMY, acting on the basis of knowledge is only of limited use. Doing often comes before intellectual understanding. This is when we need to look back and develop an understanding from experience. This is why we are called upon to undertake practical research.

The conference was a celebration of courage and initiative, because the field of economics in particular needs cultivation.

Ueli Hurter, Section Leader

Individual Sovereignty as a Pathway to African Self-Reliance

Maaianne Knuth

I work in Africa with the aim of helping people to develop self-reliance. Europeans often come to Africa with the attitude: we will help you, we will give you solutions. This merely reinforces the problem. But it is an inner capacity that is needed: I need to be able to grow as a self-reliant person.

I grew up in Denmark and Zimbabwe. These two countries have different stories and ways of looking at the world. My Zimbabwean grandmother earned less than two dollars a day, she had no education and was a poor woman. But I experienced her as rich, rooted, connected to the land and the work, the relatives, a strong woman. My grandmother in Denmark was well-off, but nevertheless somehow poor, with no family and no supportive culture. This leads to the question of what is prosperity, what is wealth?

Despite formal independence, the colonial legacy creates a gulf between black and white. Black people feel they are inferior. I believe that these people are actually wise, but this wisdom is concealed. I would like to bring out their dignity again, develop their healthy pride. This is why I founded Kufunda Village – a learning village. A village to learn how to be a human being. We have 40 to 50 people. The first to come were the adolescents who had failed at school, now we also have children and a school. It is a long road from inferiority to your own identity. Sometimes doubts arise, outbreaks of anger. We work with telling stories, dancing, pottery making and much more. How do I meet the other person and myself without prejudice, with interest and even devotion?

One of our women is called Skiziwe. She was my mother's maid. Why should my maid go to leadership training?



Maaianne Knuth. Photo: Johannes Onneken

My answer: everyone can be a leader – she is now one of our programme directors. I said to myself: I know that I have now found my life's aim – this is exactly what it is. Another one of our women is Anamarunda: "I thought that because I'm poor my opinion is not important, because I don't have a mobile phone I don't count." She started a crèche, received funding from Europe, attended the Waldorf kindergarten course in Nairobi and now at 60 teaches many young women.

What can we contribute to what is here in Europe? Those of us from Africa, India, Brazil, from the great diversity of the world? Maybe I can put it like this: what we can contribute to the global community is the power to be completely present and to be able to totally accept the other person.



Photo: Xue Li

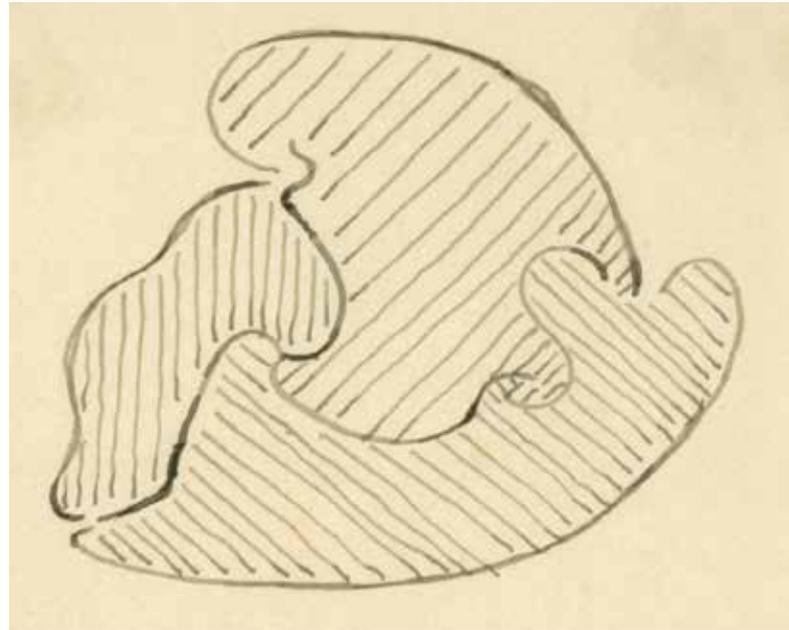
Maaianne Knuth (Zimbabwe): educational pioneer, founder of Kufunda Learning Village. Focus: working with women and exercise medicine.
www.kufunda.org

The threefold social order in our time

Gerald Häfner

A hundred years ago Europe was at war, the world was at war. The German capitulation was already in sight when the navy received the order to leave the port with all ships and crew for the final battle. They refused to obey this order on the grounds that: "We do not want to die for nothing." This took courage and marked the beginning of the revolution which culminated in the abdication of the Kaiser. What would the new social order be? In this quest in Germany, in Europe and in the world, Rudolf Steiner raised a clear voice. He developed a view and a vision of partnership which he called the threefold social order. When he presented this threefoldness in a lecture to workers in the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart on 23 April 1919, many of them went home with the feeling that they now knew where they stood in history and what their task was.

What is threefolding? Two movements have emerged in the social sphere in the modern age. First, everyone pursues their own interests and the greatest possible welfare arises through the invisible hand. Second, no one should think of themselves, all work for the community, thus producing social welfare. Following the USA's entry into the war and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, after 1917 this either-or also caused a pragmatic political split in the world. But the human being is not either free or social, but both, and a third way must be added. In the threefold order, Rudolf Steiner quoted the three ideals of the French revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity. He showed how these three mutually determine each other and where each ideal belongs: liberty in the cultural life – so that our thoughts are free – goes without saying nowadays. Equality in the political life – in a democracy law is not decreed but arises between people. We create law as equals. Fraternity is the justifiable ideal for the economic life. From "I fend for myself" to the economic organisation which extends over the whole world. What do I work for: for me, for my income, the rent, the family, a holiday, etc.? If we really look at our work – planting potatoes for example – then it is always for other people as well. Others work for us, we work for others. The economic life is fraternal and it is global. The actions of each one of us have global effects. In the shop we should be able to take away the shelving and look beyond: where does the banana come from, the kiwi, the chocolate? What are things like for the people involved? We have become responsible for each other and for the earth.



Drawing of threefolding by Rudolf Steiner

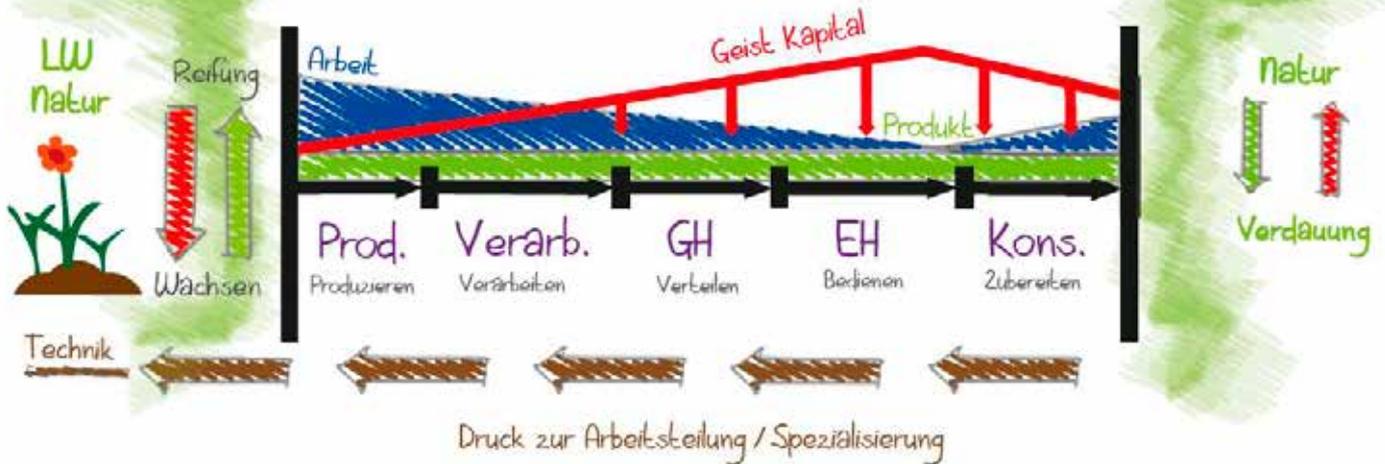
Threefolding is not a programme. Rudolf Steiner looked at the social life with a phenomenological eye. Our social reality is threefold, but we fail to recognise this. Many of our contemporaries are dissatisfied with the economic system, although we have such a high level of prosperity. But we are weary of the economy as a constant struggle. Agriculture occupies a key position: it creates the food for everyone and at the same time has a vital responsibility for air, water and soil. Agriculture can never win the race of increasing productivity. Agriculture is the place where we want to become active out of a knowledge of the interconnections. And in this sense it can be a pioneer for a true and global siblinghood.



Gerald Häfner (Switzerland): = Head of the Section for Social Sciences at the Goetheanum.

<https://sozial.goetheanum.org/en/>

Arbeitsteilige Wertschöpfungskette



New economic forms through associations

Änder Schanck

Here at two ends of the value-added chain we have nature which is shown in green. On the left we have the side of nature which is worked by agriculture and where food is produced through germination, growth and ripening. We know that adding value in an economic sense is work on nature, not nature itself. The farmer does not accomplish the processes of nature himself, but allows nature to do this by ploughing, sowing, harvesting, etc., thus creating the conditions for the processes of nature. On the right, again in green, we have natural or biological processes in the human metabolism of the consumer. Here our bodily nature also accomplishes a range of clever work for free, especially because not only are the substances of nature digested, the body's own substance is built up by the person who consumes. The economic process which creates value stretches between these two poles in nature.

Let us assume that the value-added chain shown here covers the most important stages of how food gets from production to consumption. So we have the farmer, called

the producer here, then the processor, the wholesaler, the retailer and finally the consumer. These players generally have to fend for themselves and each wants to make the best possible deal. I would now like to connect them to the operating principles of economics shown above. The green line shows that a part of nature, foodstuffs as goods, flow from left to right. The agricultural producer has to be more or less self-sufficient because nature, which is to be cultivated, has an inner lawfulness and cannot be arbitrarily torn apart by a division of labour. This applies to a lesser extent to the processor further to the right. However, the further you go to the right, the more division of labour takes place through the use of intellect or capital or technical means of production. While we have to do a lot of work (blue) on the left, there is less and less work as we move towards the right. At the end we have removed ourselves from nature entirely. It is only at the last stage, with the consumer, i.e. in a private kitchen, a restaurant or a canteen, that the nature side of the goods becomes

more apparent again and, due to its inherent character, requires more physical and less mental work. So in retailing in particular, the consequence of this is that a high level of division of labour is reached and the greatest bundling of capital arises. No wonder that there are now only a relatively few huge supermarket and discount chains in the world, which dominate this field and compete with each other. The effect of value equalisation from this competition produces a price pressure on purchasing in the upstream value added stages. One result is that, at all stages, many smaller businesses cannot keep pace and give up. The other is that, in these upstream businesses up to and including the farmer himself, division of labour and technical production methods are used which then have a huge effect on the environmental or biological conditions, as already mentioned. In this economic system the farmer really does not stand a chance. Governments are also aware of this and try to balance things out somewhat with subsidies. In this context the farmer is more of a victim than a culprit.

The contrary of self-sufficiency and division of labour demands associations

If we want to have an agriculture which fulfils its real tasks, meaning if we want to have enterprises which set up their farm as an organism, which in fact do not comply with every division of labour, then obviously it is necessary for



the players in the value-added chain – of which farmers are an important part – to get together or associate in such a way that these at times extreme opposites enter into an exchange. This means simply that we close the chain into a circle, i.e. build an association in which there are no bilateral discussions or negotiations, but those in which all participants share their needs and possibilities and try to find common solutions.

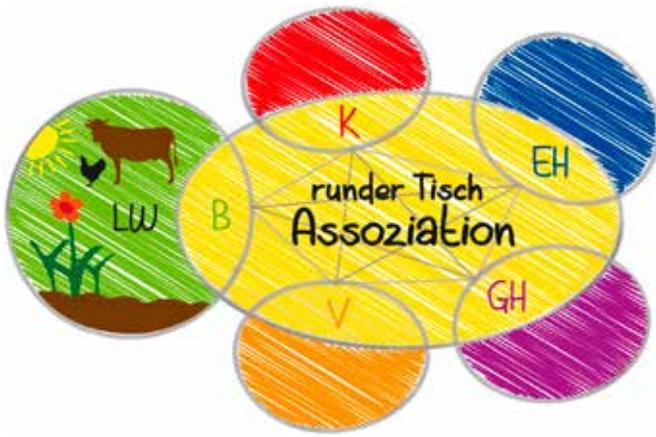
Steiner describes it as follows: "...To this end it is necessary, by direct human experience, to take hold of the economic process as it were in the nascent state — to be within it all the time. The individual can never do this; nor can a society above a certain size. (A society, for example, such as the State). It can only be done by Associations growing out of the economic life itself, and able therefore to work out of the immediate reality of the economic life..."

What are the requirements? In Lecture 10 of the lecture series "World Economy", Steiner describes the requirements for the associations called for by him. It is interesting that he first stresses that striving for benefit and profit is an absolutely essential and justified incentive in every economy and must not be subject to a moral judgement. "...Nor is this profit anything merely abstract; the immediate economic desire of the man attaches to it, and it must needs be so. Whether he is a buyer or a seller, his economic craving attaches to the profit, to the advantage of the transaction. It is really this attachment to profit which generates the economic process and is the force in it..."

Consequently, it is perfectly justified for everyone involved in an association to contribute their own interests, but it is likewise an absolute requirement that everyone also has a feeling that it is a profit situation for all, where the largest slice of the cake does not just go to one person: "...Something else must be contained in the Associations ... the sense of community, the sense for the economic process as a whole. The individual who immediately uses what he buys can do no other than satisfy his own egoistic sense. ... But the moment the life of Associations enters the economic process, it is no longer a question of immediate personal interest. The wide outlook over the economic process will be active; the interest of the other fellow will be actually there in the economic judgement that is formed..." and again "... This will be a community-spirit, not proceeding from any 'moralic acid' but from a realisation of the necessities inherent in the economic process itself..."

The prerequisite for such an overview is that every participant clearly describes his personal and business situation so that all those involved can develop an awareness, first of all of the individual work processes and from them the overall process: "... this can only happen if human beings are united together — human beings who have the economic process within them as pictures, piece by piece; and, being united in the Associations, they complement and correct one another, so that the right circulation can take place in the whole economic process..."

In the next drawing I have now collected all the previously mentioned players at a round table, and in such a way

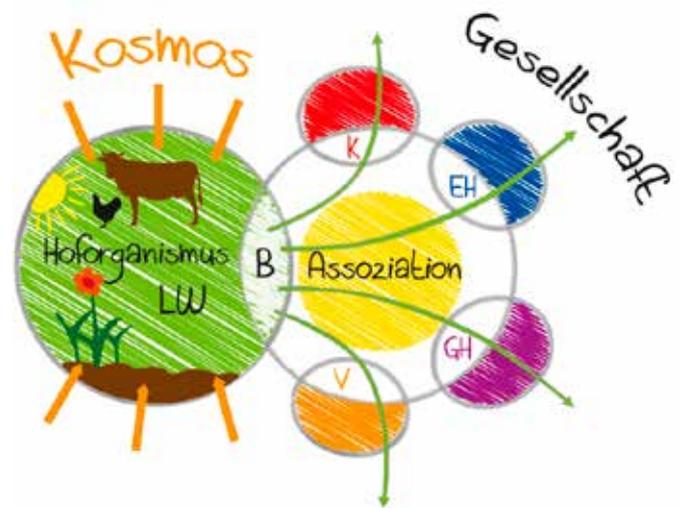


for the benefit of each individual. Steiner said that this is only possible in this way when "...self-active Intelligence is working within [the economic process]..." This self-active intelligence that can form in associations is the real authority which, like the regulator in the human body mentioned by Steiner, controls processes which would otherwise run wild. In a certain sense it is the opposite pole to the invisible hand of the market which appeals only to the egoistic pursuit of individual advantage. Lastly we can add to what I have described above that agriculture, with its organs of soil, plants and animals, exists

that it is clear that each has a real context which is not yet known to those in the joint circle. To be a bit more practical, let us assume that we are talking about milk. The farmer now has the chance to present his actual measures for producing milk. This obviously starts with his natural resources and ends with the technical production resources such as the milking equipment. The processing dairy contributes its background. This naturally includes how the milk gets from the farmers to the dairy, what methods are used, which products are manufactured, but also where any excess milk ends up. The representatives of wholesale and retail can present their opportunities and difficulties in the same way, as can the consumers. This includes e.g. a description of the costs incurred at each stage and the question of what consumers' representative feel about the acceptability of the price for their budgets. A quote from Steiner on this: "Even in Economic Science we must work towards such pictures, pictures taken from what is immediate perception. This means, in other words, that to act rightly in the economic sense, we must make up our minds to enter into the events of production, trade and consumption, with a picture-thinking... There is no other possibility. Economic judgements cannot be built on theory; they must be built on living association, where the sensitive judgements of people are real and effective; for it will then be possible to determine out of the association — out of the immediate experiences of those concerned — what the value of any given thing can be."

Self-active intelligence as the core of the authority in associations

This approach, which is based on voluntary action, makes it clear that even the smallest individual action has consequences for the whole and that finding a joint solution is



in a direct relationship to creation and to the cosmos. The condition for self-sufficiency is based on this. The biodynamic farmer exists and acts in this farm organism. But he is also part of the social organism. If this only functions according to market forces as propounded by Adam Smith, then he is rather lost. But if it becomes possible for the farmer to associate with other players in the value-added chain, then the farm organism works via the association organism out into society and into the future. This is a prospect which is worth becoming involved with.



Änder Schanck (Luxembourg): Demeter pioneer, Chief executive officer of the OIKOPOLIS Group which counts associative economics as part of its business identity.
www.oikopolis.lu



Renewing the local economy in rural India

Choitresh Kumar Ganguly (Bablu) and Manisha Kairaly (Molly)

The Timbaktu Collective (Bablu)

India is a complex and diverse country, but farming takes place everywhere. The farming culture changed radically with the industrialisation of agriculture through the green revolution. Millions of people in the villages lost their occupations and their livelihoods. Our initiative, the Timbaktu Collective, in the southern part of the interior of the country, aims to revitalise the village economy. Nowadays this land is very dry and only has a forest cover of 0.5%. In 1990 we started with a few acres of agroforestry in order to heal this parched land. At the beginning there were only 21 species of plants on this piece of land: today there are 400. We have not really done much, we have simply protected nature and the rest she has done herself. But our organisation has grown and today we work with 175 villages and 23,000 families who have organised themselves in a wide range of cooperatives.

Our aim is to revitalise the local economy, so we have organised various projects. One of these is a community-managed bio-reserve. We have got a 7,500 acre catchment area going with a water retention reservoir. This is enough to irrigate many hundreds of acres. We can once more achieve two or three harvests per year – the landscape is turning green again. This in turn provides feed for animals, hundreds of species of birds have colonised, the grey wolf is there, antelopes and many other species. Another project is a community bank, mainly run by women, with 22,000 members from the 175 villages. They have saved 241 million rupees, it is their money. They make loans to members, in other words people. The bank itself is not involved in the market but it supports people so that they can equip themselves to become active in the economy.

Another project is a farmers' cooperative. This comprises over 2,000 farmers and 10,000 acres of land as well as 3



Timbaktu 1995



Timbaktu 2013



processing businesses. We do a lot of the processing manually: this gives better results and people have work. At least 50% of the final sales price goes back to the farmers. This is unique: no one else has achieved this.

Independent Women (Molly)

Bhavani is the name for the divine creative female energy. We use this energy to work with textiles. Gandhi called spinning and weaving by hand "the freedom fabric". We work with young women who do not go to school, who are disabled, were abandoned by their men, etc. These women earn their living themselves. They manage it! The photo shows a man with all the women. He is our master weaver. Weaving belongs to the higher castes, but these



young women are from low castes. Only he was willing to teach his skills to these women. We also have disabled people. We want to keep them in the dignity of village life and in work and not send them away to homes. They make soap – simple good products which the average household can afford. We support the local production of oils which we use for the soap. We believe in bringing producers and buyers together and organise trade fairs. We have recently opened a shop in the village. Why in the village and not in the town? Because we are proud to live on the land! The shop is doing very well.

The bumble bee flies! (Bablu)

I would now like to tell a story: A group of flight engineers are having a beer together. The window is open and a bumble bee flies in. "Ah, amazing," say the engineers, "can we study how you fly?" The bumble bee replies: "I don't have time, the children are at home and I need to do the shopping." – "We would be very interested, Madame." – "Okay, one hour, but no more." They measure everything, enter it on the computer, connect to the satellite, print it out. "Madame, stay a bit longer, please Madame, we are not quite finished." – "Oh, this really must be very important." At 4 o'clock she says: "Gentlemen, I have to go now. What have you found out?" – "Well, you won't understand this, but if you really want to know: the analysis shows that you can't fly." – "What is wrong, gentlemen, I can fly, my children can fly, my parents can fly." – "Well now, we knew that you would not understand." And she flew away, although she was unable to fly.

We in the countries that have been colonised know nothing, we are stupid – everyone says that and in the end we believe it ourselves. We need to change that. We must start to fly. We want to get our villagers to fly.



Manisha Kairaly (India): Director of business development and design, Timbaktu Collective. Manager of a weaving shop. Founder of the Adavi Trust to preserve the natural landscapes of India.



Choitresh Kumar Ganguly (India): Co-founder of Timbaktu. Director of the Timbaktu Collective and promoter and CEO of Dharani with over 2,000 small farmers.

www.timbaktu.org, www.timbaktu-organic.org, www.adavi.org

Regional collaboration with supermarkets

Christian Butscher

Demeter Schweiz's most recent development in the cooperation with the two large chains *Coop* and *Migros* is no break with tradition, but a continuation of history. In 1930 the *Oswaldhof* was converted to biodynamic methods, thus creating the first Swiss organic farm. In 1937 the *Verein für biodynamische Landwirtschaft* was founded. In 1955 the *Konsumentenverband* (consumers association) was set up with the aim of developing and helping to organise the local economy. The consumer groups made binding agreements for purchasing products, which was a great help to the farms. This was the start of associative economic approaches. In 1976 the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (*FiBL*) was founded and the *DOK* study was started soon after in 1978. In 1981 the *Verein für biodynamische Landwirtschaft* became a founder member of *Bio Suisse*. In 1993 *Coop* began marketing the "Bud" products. This label is 100% owned by *Bio Suisse*, i.e. the farmers, *Coop* does the distribution and sale. It is a partnership with different areas of expertise and a common aim. These are the milestones of the success story of organic agriculture in Switzerland. When I became president of *Demeter Schweiz* in 2012, we promoted the label vigorously at all levels as new sales channels were needed. In Switzerland there is no route avoiding *Coop* and *Migros*. We set the key points of the contracts, e.g. the creation of the range, staff training, round table participation. We have not accepted any exclusiveness in this process.

In conclusion: it is possible to build up an associative partnership with a range of partners. I have met people everywhere who truly stand by this partnership. We need to have the courage to bring our values to the partnership.

Aline Haldemann

The *Demeter Schweiz* market coordination covers four topics: quantity management, communication, extending the range and market discussions. Everything starts with the farmers: we support farmers during conversion e.g. with making the preparations, with introductory courses and further training. We give the processors specific support for their quantity regulation activity between growing and trading. We support trade in communication at



the new sales points. For communicating with the public we focus on websites, newsletters and social media. Our target was 3 million contacts but we have now reached 36 million. We provide training so that people have an answer to the question, "What are these Demeter products?" Each product is also backed up with digital information. Demeter quality is improved and developed via projects. The stimulus for this is usually provided by innovative questioning farmers: e.g. the project *Bruderhahn*. *Migros* wanted the eggs. I asked "Will you also take

the meat? Their answer was "yes". There is a similar project with *Coop* with veal and cow meat; *Coop* also funds biodynamic plant breeding.

Demeter quality should not only be maintained with the expanding market but also developed and improved. We hold discussions with the market. As a first step in this, the farmers made full cost calculations: cost awareness is an important basis for the discussions. The farmers describe their production and present the cost calculations. They ask the processors and the representatives from *Coop* and *Migros* an important question: "How much do you think we should earn per hour? And how much do you think that we actually get?" As business partners we learn that we have a responsibility for each other. The prices that were set after the market discussion – not in the market discussion because of competition law – were different than before. I would like to wish you courage for these kind of market discussions! The association is not a cartel. Our movement needs both an expansion of the market and an increase in quality. These developments need all of us.



Aline Haldemann (Switzerland): Co-director of *Demeter Schweiz*, head of marketing.

www.demeter.ch



Christian Butscher (Switzerland): Managing Director of *Demeter Schweiz* until the start of 2019, on the executive board of *Bio Suisse*.

www.bio-suisse.ch



The farm economy – from limitation to diversity

Christoph Simpfendörfer

The Reyerhof is in Möhringen, a district of Stuttgart in close proximity to the automotive industry. The farm has been run biodynamically since 1955. We have the privilege to work on top quality loam loess soil, currently 22 ha arable and 16 ha grassland. We grow cereals, potatoes and vegetables as well as some fruit. We have ten dairy cattle with followers for meat and milk, with the milk being processed into yogurt, quark, cheese and ice cream. Eight people currently work on the farm, corresponding to a quota of five full-time jobs of which two are trainees. We run a farm shop with a full range, providing full-time work for a further five people. I come from a family of teachers and theologians. As the post-68 generation, we wanted to change the world through practical action. I encountered farming in Africa in 1981 and in 1982 started working on the Reyerhof.

When we acquired the farm we chose the legal status of a limited partnership. This comprised a fully liable farmer as general partner and approximately 50 families as limited partners who had contributed 5,000 German marks as an investment. This legal status enabled the creation of a fruitful relationship between the abilities of the farmer and the needs of the people for whom the farmer wants to work. At the annual general meeting the farmer gives

a full report of all the developments and challenges on the farm.

A few years ago a group of young people who were looking for a place to found a community supported agriculture project came to the farm.

For half a year I refused to meet them because I believed that we farmers need to work associatively with the processors and retailers. However, thanks to their persistence, one day we finally had a meeting. I was very impressed with their motives. They wanted to take on responsibility, to help to avoid food waste, to learn more about farmers' work, support fair payment in agriculture, implement transparent and participative decision-making processes, contribute to a different food culture and eat vegetables straight from the field. I was inspired by this globalised awareness which wants to act out of a responsibility for the whole.

I think that most people in this room know the principle of community supported agriculture. In our case this developed as follows: in November what is known as the bidding round takes place in which everyone who wants to share in the harvest of the following year takes part. The farm presents its budget. A theoretical average monthly contribution is calculated per share of the harvest. How-

ever, each member can bid freely. Everyone gives what they think they can. This gives rise to an element of solidarity between those involved. Anyone who is short of money pays less. Anyone who has enough contributes more.

Every Friday each member receives a link to an Excel table where the farm's product range is listed and which can be adapted depending on the needs of the member. Anyone who needs more increases the share, those who need less or do not like something reduce the share. The list is closed on Monday evening and the farm then knows what and how much to harvest. On Thursdays the goods ordered are delivered to 15 different distribution points. In addition to potatoes, vegetables and salads there are cereals, flour and bread plus apple juice. In 2018 there were 380 members.

The budget is prepared in a participative process. All those who are interested can take part. What impressed me most was what happened when it came to paying the farm co-workers. At the first budget meeting we went through all the items and in answer to the question about payment, I described what the earnings of the co-workers were at that point. When I revealed the hourly rate – which at the time was not much above the current minimum wage – there was silence.

"It's just not right that the people who produce our food should earn so little," was the reaction. "Would it not be possible to increase the hourly rate by a euro for everyone from next year, as a first step?" As around 10,000 hours were being worked on our farm at the time, this meant a budgetary increase in expenditure of 10,000 euros. "We'll pay that!" And so the staff budget was simply increased by 10,000 euros.

If, after considering the labour costs, we now look at all the other costs in the agricultural enterprise, there are basically a large number of contractual relationships. If I buy e.g. seed, then that is a contract. We could see that all the expenditure items which we planned in our budget were work contracts for other people. Prices are earnings. And the prices are fair if all those involved in the creation of a product have a comparable income.

Another question which concerns us when drawing up the budget is, how far into the future should we plan? As the human mind is always active, we are constantly developing our enterprises. This needs investment. So this must also be allowed for in our budget. But is there a criterion for how much capitalisation is healthy for our farm? Agriculture already has the jobs with the highest capital requirement. The profits are what create the future. That is why it is so important that decisions about the profits are made in terms of the whole: what share should be given



away to enable the development of a free cultural life? What share of the profit should be passed on or returned to the value-added chain because it has built up at some point? What share should be invested in our own enterprise? The question is always: who should be allowed to develop? But in preparing our budget we are only at the start of these questions.

Our model does not aim for any profit. All costs should be covered and the harvest shared out. How do we know whether we have done good work if there is no longer any profit which would normally indicate this? The most obvious answer is: as long as all members are satisfied, that is our yardstick.

At this point I would like to add a couple of thoughts on the matter of needs. We like to look first at a person's physical needs: food, clothing, somewhere to live. To have these the person requires an income in order to engage others to produce the necessary things for them. But there are other needs, e.g. for fresh air and clean water, for a cultivated landscape, but also the desire to participate in taking on responsibility, to be part of a whole. Satisfying these needs is something we can provide with our biodynamic agriculture.

All these outcomes of our work are *included* in the shopping basket which people receive each week.

Further considerations produced the following conclusions: the farm must constantly create its means of production itself, improving them in the process. Soil, plants and animals are the natural means of production which, through human activity, have further developed from the natural resources into cultural goods. This is what we call agri-culture. If we make progress over the years in the three realms of soil, plants and animals, then we can say that we have worked well. But is that enough? We improve the natural resources not – or at least not only – for our own purposes but we want to produce foodstuffs to feed people. So a further aim needs to be that we produce



as much food as possible from the given farm organism. We need to intensify our farms.

So we wanted to know how many people our farm would then be able to feed.

A very rough calculation showed that this would be possible for around 160 people. But then I was perplexed: it is always said that a hectare should feed five people. With our 38 hectares we would never achieve this, even with our fertile soil. It soon became apparent that the statement that one hectare feeds five people refers only to arable land. But as over half the agricultural area is grassland, this way of looking is inadequate. If I look at our 22 ha of arable, then with 160 people we are well above average. This is partly because a proportion of the calories are produced on the grassland.

Another finding was that we ought not to keep any more animals than we can support with our fodder which is not suitable for human consumption: "Feed no food." This knowledge came to the fore when we followed up the question of what our menu would look like if we wanted to feed ourselves 100% from the Reyerhof. We have wheat, potatoes, vegetables, salad, fruit, milk and meat. What is missing? The basic Swabian food item is "spaetzle": a pasta made with flour, water and eggs. There are

no hens on the Reyerhof! No problem: it is simple to acquire a small mobile hen house with 200 hens.

How much do 200 hens eat a year? 15 tonnes of feed, more than half of which is grain. We harvest approx. 30 tonnes of best wheat for human consumption. This brought our musings to an abrupt halt: I would never feed this wheat to hens. So we had to think again: how many hens could we feed from the "wastes"? If I include the waste grain, the whey from the cheesemaking, vegetable wastes and a clever pasturing method, then I might get to 50 or 60 hens. As we don't want to shred the male chicks, I can perhaps raise 40 hens and 40 cocks. (The cocks only live a couple of months.) The hens of this dual-purpose breed lay around 220 eggs a year. Those who are good at mental arithmetic can quickly calculate that this results in an egg per week and a quarter of a chicken per year per person which the Reyerhof could feed. So anyone who wants to eat an egg for Sunday morning breakfast cannot eat any spaetzle that week. And the only poultry meat in the year will be either a birthday meal or at Christmas. In contrast, although we keep relatively few cows, each person on the Reyerhof gets approx. 300 g of beef per week.

You can object to many of the details of this example. What I liked about this train of thought was that, if we link a closed farm organism with the group of people that it aims to feed, we get a quantity from this which can help us in creating the economic relationships. Criteria are the key figures which help us to orientate in relation to our performance. They form relationships.

430 people have already taken part in the new harvest on the Reyerhof. If things continue to grow in this way, the farm will soon reach its limits. A limit again! And then the question arises as to whether a second community supported agriculture will form or whether cooperation between several farms will develop. But we will need prices again for this. We need prices so that we are able to cooperate and discuss. This applies to the entire food chain. When my job requires me to work for others, to satisfy the needs of my fellow human beings, then the job of farmer is also one of the best from this point of view. Most importantly, because we also have the privilege of using the biodynamic method to do something for the needs of the beings that support us from the nature side.



Christoph Simpfendörfer (Germany): Independent farmer on the Reyerhof, Stuttgart from 1986 to 2017. Secretary General of Demeter International e.V. www.demeter.net

Working from the past and the future

Helmy Abouleish and Mona Lenzen-Abouleish

We are wrestling with a new understanding of the economy and the question is, where can we find this new approach to ourselves and to the world? In the Michael letter “The apparent loss of spiritual knowledge in the modern age” Rudolf Steiner describes a large historical arc which helps us to understand our current situation. Nowadays we are focussed on natural science. In ancient times knowledge was directed at the spiritual world. We could understand the Egyptian culture of the sentient soul, the Greek culture of the intellectual or mind soul. Thinking awoke with Socrates and his successors, when his attention turned to the ego instead of to the gods. And the question arose in this thinking of how to penetrate to the spirit through knowledge.

In 529 AD Justinian closed the last philosophy school in Athens. The bearer of Greek wisdom emigrated from the Roman Empire to Gundishapur. In the process of translating Aristotle, the content changed in such a way that it was able to be fruitfully combined with eastern wisdom. In Steiner’s description, this impulse from Gundishapur was a premature development of intellectualism and was therefore a temptation, inasmuch as a great deal of the outer technology of civilization is given before human beings are culturally ready for it. This impulse continues to this day, but it was tempered by the emergence of the Christ impulse and Islam. In Baghdad in the 8th and 9th centuries a mixing of these impulses took place and from there this Arabism arrived in Europe via North Africa and Spain. We can see the medieval struggle around nominalism on the one hand represented by Averroes, and realism on the other represented by Thomas Aquinas.

Where do we stand nowadays between nominalism and realism? Nominalism looks at the world as though from outside, and so comes to a knowledge of nature and denies the possibility of knowledge of the spirit. Realism postulates the reality of ideas: but how can this way really penetrate from the mental ideas to the reality of the spirit? Here anthroposophy finds itself wrestling for spiritual knowledge in the modern sense, in other words in terms of the consciousness soul.

The consciousness soul means the ability of the human being to look at their own thoughts, to reflect: it becomes reality through what is true in the thoughts. Where does the feeling for truth enter into my thinking activity? Which of my individual thoughts would exist without me? Which of my actions are good for the world irrespective of me?



How can I understand the events in my life and the encounters with other people so that the future in terms of the occurrence of truth is expressed there? In art, in artistic feeling, how can we bring the long past from which we come and the future which comes towards us into inner activity? These qualities are the focus of our work. This is the manner in which we grapple with penetrating to the spirit.

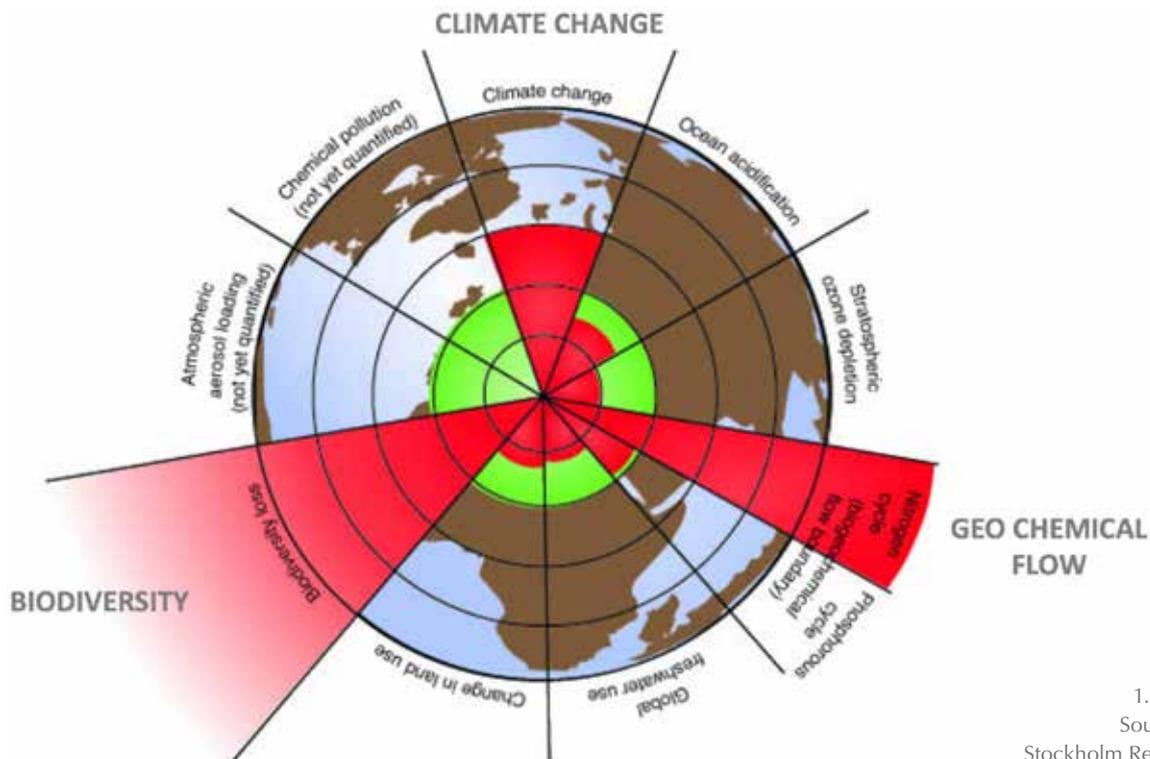
Can we succeed with this penetration or are we prisoners of the intellectual soul? What happens here at this economic conference when we talk about price, value creation, property, etc.? Do we succeed in winning real spiritual dimensions in economics? We work in Sekem (Egypt) at the meeting point of Orient and Occident and are deeply occupied with these questions. We will take back many ideas from this conference for our work and hope that we have also brought further impulses to the conference for many participants.



Mona Lenzen-Abouleish (Egypt): Eurythmist, co-worker at the *Heliopolis University*, “Eurythmy in working life”, Waldorf teacher, artistic projects.



Helmy Abouleish (Egypt): CEO of the *SEKEM Holding* with 1,500 co-workers, www.sekem.com; chairman of the board of *Heliopolis University*, Cairo; President of *Demeter International e.V.*

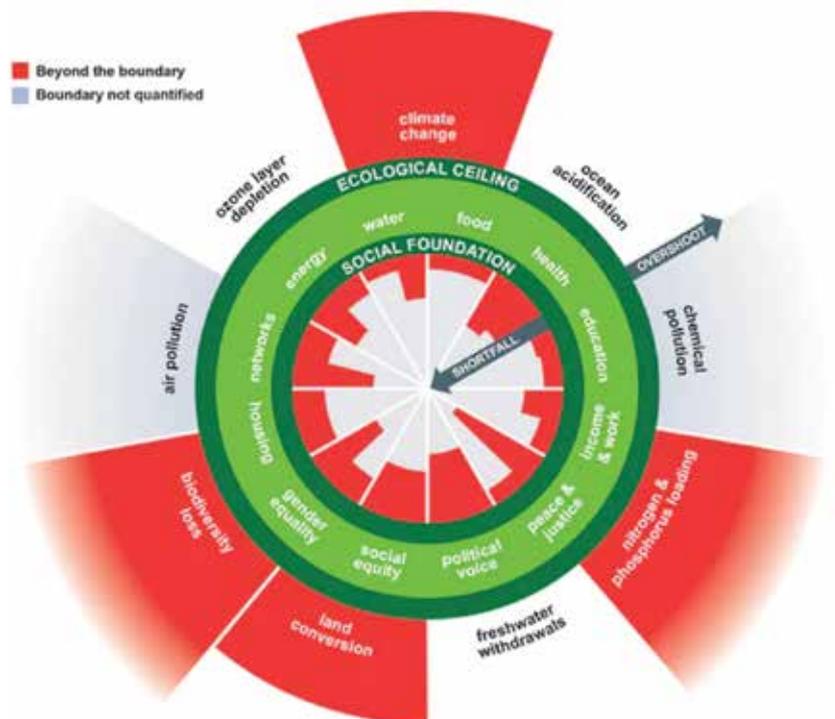


1. Planetary Boundaries. Source: Johan Rockström, Stockholm Resilience Institute, 2019

What is agriculture's role in the global economy?

Volkert Engelsman

Our planet is limited. The diagram by Johan Rockström shows the sectors in which we as human beings have left the green area and how far we have come into the red area: in biodiversity, in the nitrogen balance and with climate. These are the challenges. It is not true to claim that nothing is being done, for instance there is the Paris Climate Agreement. But now a problem appears from a different side. When President Macron in France wanted to introduce an environmental tax on fuels, the "Yellow Vests" took to the streets asking: "How can we ordinary citizens pay for that?" So there is also a social deficit. The second diagram by Kate Raworth shows both dimensions combined. The overshoot of the ecological ceiling is shown towards the outside, the social shortfall towards the inside. These social deficits are also a re-



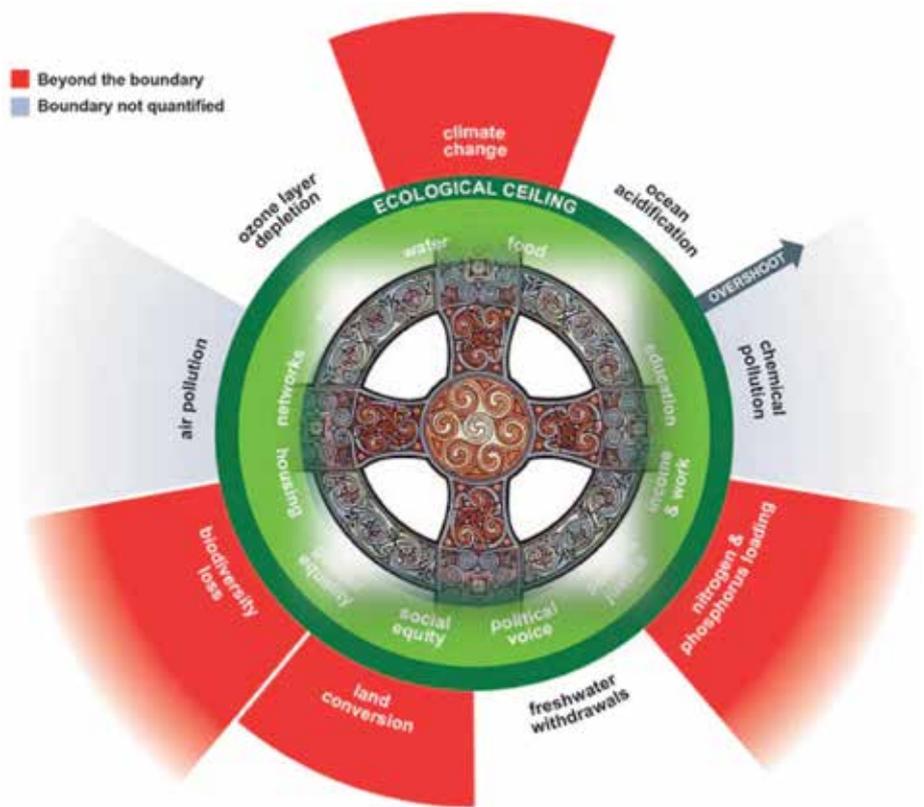
2. Doughnut Economics. Source: Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics, 2017

sult of our economic activities. The gulf between those who have and those who have not gets steadily greater. This paralyses our social capacity to act, something which can be observed in many countries and especially internationally. This type of economy harms both the social and environmental balances.

The third diagram is a reference to Daniel Dunlop. He was an anthroposophist and industrial entrepreneur in Steiner's time. He had a grasp of the big picture. He said: "We will only create a global economy if we understand the earth as a living whole."

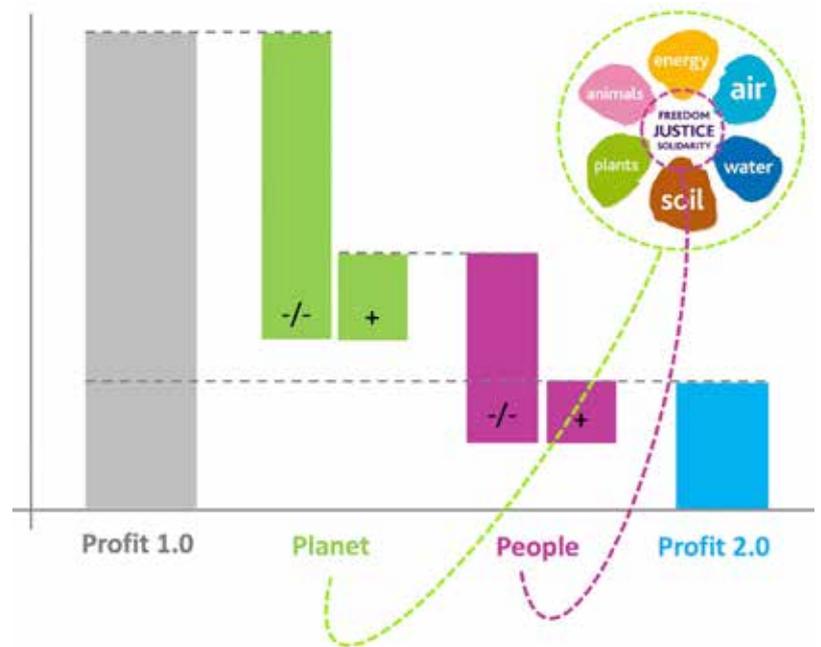
Today we can say that it needs an agenda with three dimensions, these being an environmental one, a social one and an individual human one. For unless each one can develop their potential freely and openly, we will lack the human strength to tackle the challenges of our time. These three dimensions are summarised in a certain way in the sustainable development goals of the UN.

The fourth diagram comes from the work of our company Eosta. It demonstrates in principle how with True Cost Accounting it is possible to calculate profit and loss in a new way. The inclusion of the costs which are normally externalised is not just something taken into account by the organic sector. There are more and more sectors of the economy, such as the insurance sector or investment funds, which create these kinds of balance sheets and act accordingly. I believe we should take courage and enter into dialogue with these players. After all, we live on the same planet, in the same society, where everyone has their life's tasks to fulfil. Let us be aware that we as an associative biodynamic movement, as a small group, as pioneers in a new inclusive economy, also have the task of leading the way in the hope that we can make a contribution to a sustainable global economy.



3. Planetary Evolution.

Source: Daniel Dunlop, Walter Johannes Stein: The Earth as a basis for world economy



4. Re-defining Profit



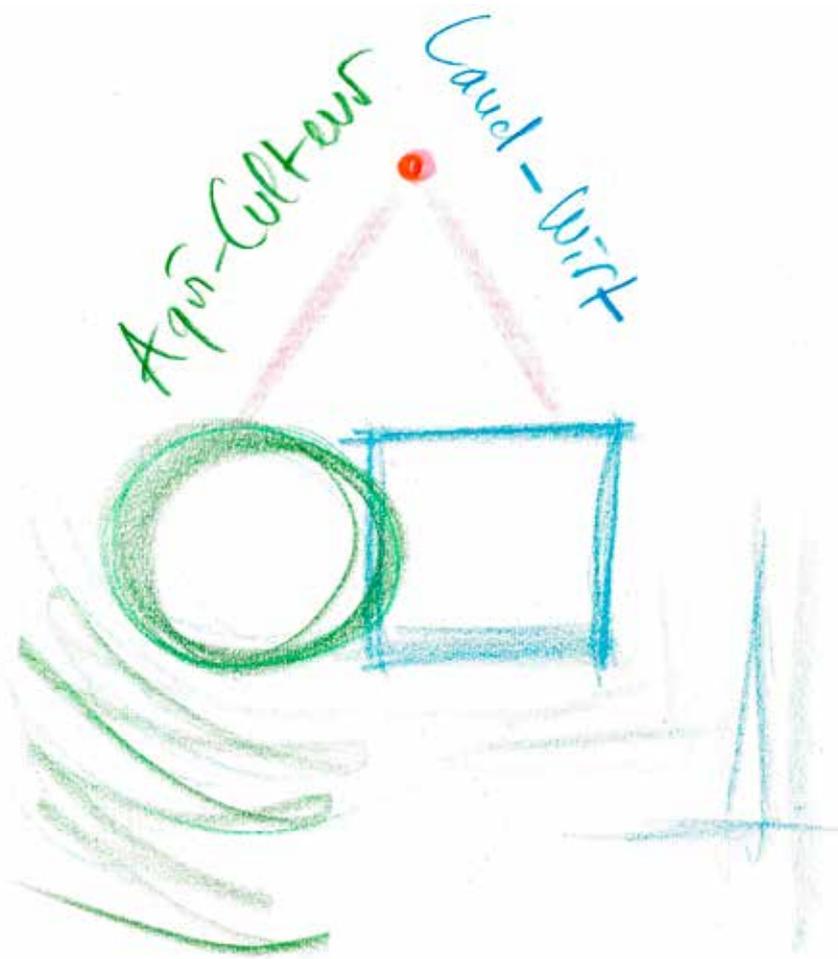
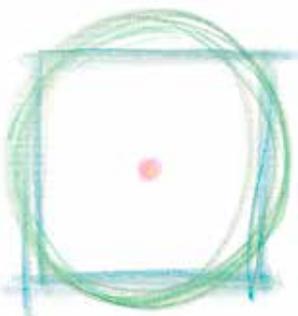
Volkert Engelsman (Netherlands): CEO of *Eosta* with the campaign *Save Our Soils* and the Initiative *True Cost of Food*. www.eosta.com
www.natureandmore.com · www.soilandmore.com
www.saveoursoils.com

Farming between cosmos and market

Ueli Hurter

Farmer and land manager

The farmer is situated right at the nature end of the economy. He is a primary producer. But at the same time he is not fully awake in nature, but rather in a dream. He is like Abel. Pleasing to god but unfit for the market. He brings the products that ripen in his hand lovingly and innocently to market. On the one hand he is treated kindly and we are happy to buy the simpleton's "produit régional". On the other hand he is shamelessly exploited when he supplies raw materials to industry because there even the lowest price is still too high. The farmer is also a manager. He works the land efficiently. He undertakes economic activity. He is a producer. He is like Cain: displeasing to god but fit for the market. This farm manager adjusts his production to the market. The farm manager sells his products and generates income to cover the expenditure. He manages and organises his enterprise. He must fulfil the owner role. He can also be a business manager. The business manager stands on the periphery of his business. He sees and manages the effect of the business on society and is aware of all the questions and expectations which society directs at agriculture. We find ourselves pulled in two directions, with one foot in nature and the other in the market. This is our basic existence. We need to make ourselves repeatedly aware of this image.



In daily life everything is mixed up together, the agricultural organism and the agricultural business are entangled with each other and the farmer/farm manager (red dot) is in the middle – and we may strive for the ideal that everything should complement and support everything else.

The farm manager as guardian of the threshold to nature

Agriculture is very much part of the social and political debate. Why is it that so many social groupings want to pull agriculture in one direction or another? I do not believe that this is about agriculture in the narrower sense: many people nowadays sense that our values, the economic values in particular, are empty and meaningless. And this uneasy feeling about life, which is not really a clear knowledge – and every one of us is up to our ears every day in the mill of economic necessity – finds a kind of projection screen in agriculture. We sense that farmers have a kind of custodial function in their relationship with nature, with creation or simply with the dimension of being, which is not fully available to us. What moves us is a care and longing for what we cannot have. And this feeling is not wrong, as a feeling it is in fact quite correct. If I were to put this into words, I could simply say: life should not serve the economy, but the economy should serve life.

From this viewpoint agriculture is not the victim of the utterly rationalised economy, an agriculture which pitifully tries to fight for its survival but is subject to ever greater marginalisation. It is the sensitive social setting where the imbalance that a usurping economy imposes on the entire social life becomes apparent. Instead of being a victim, it offers the chance for self-determination and a new way of thinking, perhaps similar to the tragedy in the Greek polis. Agriculture holds a mirror up to us as a society characterised by homo oeconomicus, in which we look ahead full of fascination with a mixture of self-admiration and disgust. How can we find a way between the lost innocence as beings of nature and the hubris of self and world destruction through our obsession with profit.

The economy of agriculture

Agriculture here is viewed as an attitude which is not new but requires renewal in every era. And we acquire a viewpoint in which this cultivation is active in the direction of nature on the one hand and in the direction of the social organism on the other, with an economic approach which does not usurp but cultivates. Associative economics in this sense – and other economic approaches which tend in this direction – can be seen as an opportunity to bring measure and meaning into our economic activities. And this thoughtful management which takes overall context into account, finds that agriculture provides a particularly suitable soil in which to flourish. This was stipulated by Rudolf Steiner when he demanded that the entire value creation in economics must relate to the earning power of the soil.

The economy of agriculture could be a kind of focus for a human management in general, and we need not just complain and demand better prices, but we must develop and give something which could work like an enzyme for the whole of society and the economy.

Human beings today have become socially isolated and their integration in nature has also been lost. This is where we are. The question is: how do we go forward?

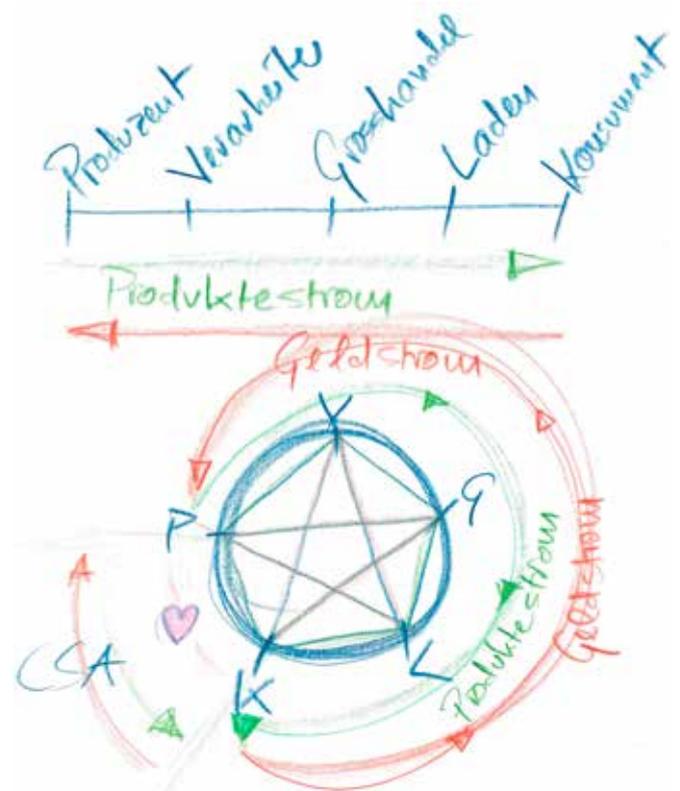
This is where biodynamics comes in. We do not merely need to care for nature, protect it, ... but also to cultivate it. Cultivation from this viewpoint means adding something to nature which it does not intrinsically have, something it gets from human beings. Biodynamics means opening up a possibility for nature, where we cultivate it, where we produce using it, that it does not have out of its own nature. If I might express this view: a cultivated place, an agricultural organism, an agricultural individuality – are these places of the future, the further development for nature? Not places where we exploit nature, but on the contrary where we bring it a step forward in evolution through our

activity, specifically and especially using the preparations and in the production process itself! Not in some kind of contrived conservation programme alongside production, but in growing for the market we cultivate nature in such a way that a new future comes towards it, at least in places. Would this be a way to paraphrase the productivity which we aim for and work towards?

Three types of associations

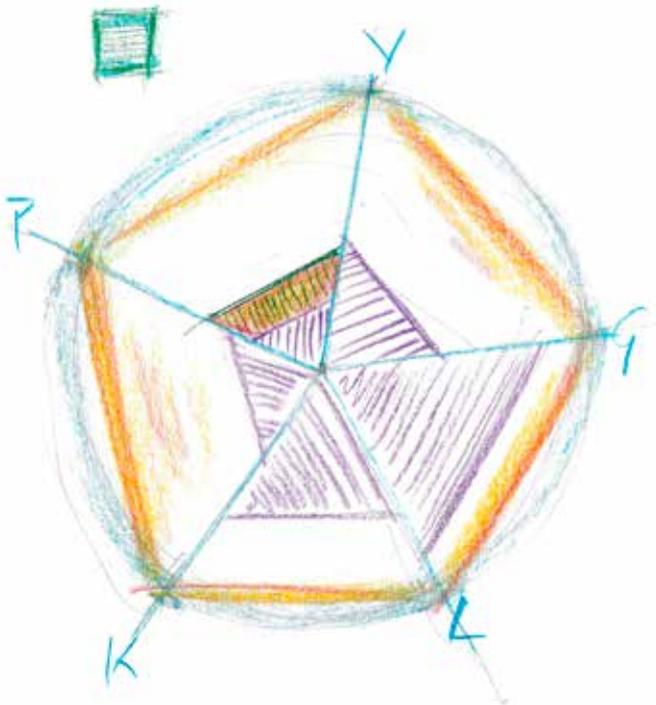
Associations in the value-added chain

The chain – production, processing, wholesale, retail, consumption – needs to be bent into a circle, into a round table. The same happens as previously, but now each person sees the others, can see and understand their way of belonging to the economy and in time come to see their partner with a certain objectivity. A sense of community is thus added to the sectoral egoism. If we succeed in creating these kind of associations, small, medium or large, they can develop a very strong carrying force. It is not always possible to establish a formal association quickly, but the principle of association can be included in every economic relationship. This associative action in terms of a balance of interests of all participants is a possible practical answer to pushing the conventional market forces into the organic market. Each associative approach will be individual, but we should take courage to join these unfinished and limited associations in particular. There is no other way.



Associations for credit, land and capital

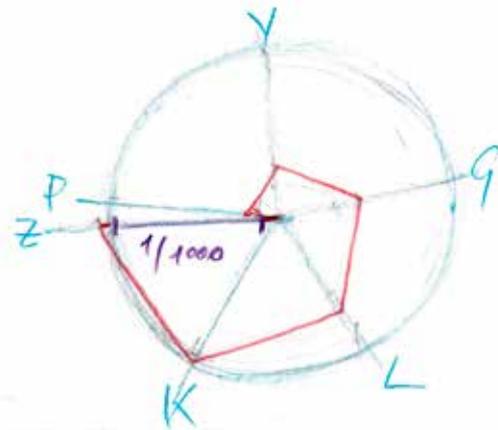
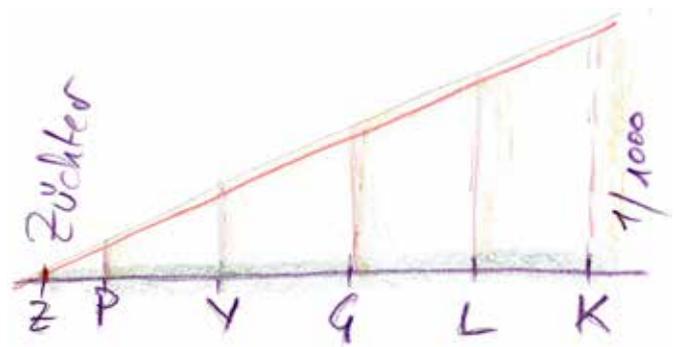
When the farm managers realise that the other stages in the organic value-added chain – processors and trade – also need capital, also need to solve the problem of generation succession, also have the question of the right to and responsibility for the capital invested, then associations can be considered where it is more a matter of furnishing the means of production than just about the production flow. These kind of associative clusters for large long-term investments with borrowing and lending capital are just as necessary and possible as the associations in the value-added realm, where it is more a matter of purchasing money.



The investment requirement for P (producer) with all the attendant questions on the future can be assessed and paid out of the associative system.

Associations for research and innovation

To maintain innovation potential in an entire movement, such as the biodynamic movement, requires basic research, practical research and specialised scientific research. The associative idea is also catching on here, but it needs to be extended even further. This kind of association needs to have an intellectual and entrepreneurial sense, ask and research questions which are not just the day-to-day ones and at the same time develop the will to fund the work on these questions. Business surpluses can arise in the economy through the application of the intellect. How can these surpluses be used to promote the new intellectual productivity? The way



The funding need of the grower at the farming level is very high – at the consumer level it is only a thousandth part of turnover

in which this question evolves is crucial for the further development of the biodynamic movement and all of anthroposophy.

Human commitment

Just as in biodynamics we have an approach for cultivating living nature, in associating we have an approach for cultivating social and economic nature with biodynamics. We do not undertake either of these with the aim of creating an ideal world, but as the logical implementation of our, albeit only newly-gained, sovereign intellectual position towards living nature and social nature. In acknowledgement of our responsibility for the earth and all people.

As an expression of our determination as a human being not to subside into a banal existence but to strive time and again to be a worthy human being.



Ueli Hurter (Switzerland): Head of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum; farm manager on the *Ferme de L'Aubier*. www.aubier.ch
www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org

The vision: a 100 per cent organic world

Patrick Holden

Our organisation, the “Sustainable Food Trust”, aims to set directions in economics, policy and culture in order to change the global agricultural and food systems in a organic sustainable direction. I myself come from London, but have been an organic farmer in Wales for over 40 years. We have 75 head of dairy cows and produce cheese from the milk on the farm. I do the milking in the byre at four every morning on our farm. The combination of practical work and involvement suits me, it gives me energy: the most important thing is spiritual striving. The inner and outer ways are connected in our personal life, but also in the life of our society. I see it as a personal matter to build bridges: as a farmer between the cosmos and the earth, as a campaigner between organic and mainstream, as a person between my spiritual conviction and all my contemporaries. We need a language that is understandable, a language that is open. What Rudolf Steiner and others have brought is too important not to be understood.

Volkert Engelman described the limits to growth for our planet earth. A great many things have to change, otherwise we will no longer have a planet. Why do these changes not happen faster? It is also a financial problem. The most profitable way is still to farm with artificial fertiliser and chemicals. In many places organic agriculture cannot compete. But we know that we get different results if we use a true cost approach. We now need to fight for the introduction of a different standard for the agricultural economy. Just as we had to fight for the introduction of the organic standard a few decades ago, we now need to lead the way and campaign for the introduction of a global calculation as the reference for the agricultural and food industries.

There is also political work. In the United Kingdom we have this situation with Brexit and we need to think how we are going to organise our own agricultural policy. We



Foto: Charlotte Fischer

are in contact with the minister, Michael Gove. He seems to understand that we need to change the policy completely. It appears that Brexit will bring a taxation system: a points system for sustainability, which would reward or penalise the individual farm. I am convinced that this approach would lead to farms again becoming mixed enterprises. This is exactly what organic farming is aiming for, and it would apply to all farming in the UK. We have a meeting with Michael Gove and the president of the British Farmers Union on 21 February 2019 with the aim of setting a target for all UK farms to be CO₂ neutral by 2040. Culturally we are applying Prince Charles’ “Harmony” approach. He is our friend, and two years ago we were able to assist him in writing a video message for the Agricultural Conference at the Goetheanum. “Harmony” is a call to everyone to develop a new view. To see that underneath the visible surface the world is connected, has a harmonic structure, lives from sources which are hidden but which it is possible to approach.

I am convinced that incredible developments will now be set in motion. We need to believe in this. We need to be prepared to change our role in order to be equipped for a larger social change. Here in this conference I sense a mood which goes in this direction, and I would like to express my thanks for this.



Patrick Holden (England): Founding director of the *Sustainable Food Trust*. International working focus is sustainable food systems.

www.sustainablefoodtrust.org

What effect do marketing channels have on farms?

Themed session with Klaus Wais & Alexander Gerber

Opening the marketing channels: blessing or curse?

Migros, Coop, Globus, Kaufland – recently, biodynamically farmed products have increasingly appeared on the shelves of large supermarket chains. There is scarcely any other topic which is currently occupies the biodynamic movement so intensely or is so hotly debated as this development. As Klaus Wais stated in his introduction to the themed session, the Agricultural Conference offered the opportunity to gather the various viewpoints of the distribution and marketing of biodynamic products in one room and to start a discussion on both the motives and the concerns. Klaus Wais reminded us that it was always the farmers who developed the marketing channels. Originally it was not consumers who demanded organic products, but farmers who wanted to farm their land differently and looked for buyers for their products. It was also Demeter farmers who created the opening in the supermarkets because they could not get rid of their products through the specialist organic shops.

Unwritten laws and selective distribution: how did the marketing policies of the German Demeter e.V. come about?

Alexander Gerber explained the reasons, aims and content of the new marketing policies of Demeter e.V.: they were intended to prevent Demeter products being sold at will by any market participant. This would have been possible under trademark and cartel law before the marketing policies were adopted. There was only an unwritten law that stated that association products could only be sold in places agreed by the association. Selective distribution of this kind is only possible when common criteria are defined which apply equally to all market participants. The German Demeter trademark association decided to adopt this kind of distribution system and defined criteria which draw a line at discounts. A quality-oriented food retailer can sell Demeter products if they have a minimum organic turnover, train their personnel in biodynamics and position Demeter products as premium products. The business development meeting and the questionnaire on the quality of the cooperation are particularly important, because this is the way in which elements of associative economics are included in the trade relations. The limits could have been drawn in such a way that the sale of Demeter products would only be allowed in

specialist organic shops. But Demeter Germany made a conscious decision against this for four reasons: first, over 20% of turnover was already being made in supermarkets and second, not all Demeter certified goods can be sold through specialist organic shops. Consumers should also become aware of Demeter where they shop, and we believe that there is a cultural duty to disseminate our associative economic approach.

Farm individuality and the market: why farms choose differing distribution channels

At the end two farmers described how they organise distribution for their farms:

Lukas Dreyer recently took over the Reyerhof in Stuttgart-Möhringen and developed a Community Supported Agriculture (German: Solidarische Landwirtschaft - SoLaWi) there (cf. the impulse presentation by Christoph Sempfendörfer on p. 12). He believes that SoLaWi is the marketing concept which can counteract farm specialisation and enable diverse management. SoLaWi allows a farm significant liberation from the market – and so corresponds to the idea of associative economics. Jona Kreis from the Heggelbach farm community reported how his farm's traditional relationship to the specialist wholefoods trade had been expanded through the regional conventional retail trade with Feneberg and Edeka, because this was the only way to develop the farm's economy.

Julia Unseld reported on her experience as owner of a Demeter bakers and an organic shop. The associative – in other words fairer – relationship with each other often works well between producers, processors and consumers, but usually ends when trade comes into the equation: regardless of whether this is specialist organic shops or conventional retail trade. For example, baked goods with Demeter sunflower seeds from Germany can be successfully sold directly in the bakers shop. But due to the higher price they cannot be sold via the wholesalers.

Last, conventional trade had its turn with Prof. Dr. Horst Lang from Globus. Globus has been selling Demeter products for around a year and is convinced they are an ideal partner for the association's growers because the relatively independent branches can buy and sell from individual farmers at a regional level.

The themed session ended with a lively public discussion, with a key theme being the critical attitude of the

specialist trade and of some producers to sales via the conventional market. If more and more shelf space were to be filled in the supermarkets – meaning that the biodynamic acreage could grow – the consequences for the shelf space in the specialist retailers should not be forgotten. Various voices from the podium and the floor also drew attention to the fact that the specialist retailers

had not strategically absorbed the biodynamic growth. At the end of the themed session there was quite an optimistic mood in the room, which Boris Voelkel from the floor summarised with the words: “Let’s stop licking our wounds and instead look ahead and start to get things moving.” This session therefore also produced a mood sustained by associative ideas.

Mindfulness as a Quality of Associative Economics

Workshop with Jean-Michel Florin & Rachel Schneider

Many of us are aware of the importance Rudolf Steiner placed on developing new, “associative” economic forms based on real interest in one another rather than on “self-interest” as the motivation for collaborative action to change our current industrially-based food systems. Our workshop was based on the idea that new forms require new inner capacities for listening, for speaking, and for the kind of structured dialogue that can open the doors to truly productive solutions to specific economic challenges. This definition of “mindfulness in action” was the basis of our work together over the three days of the workshop. Each morning we began with some inner, centring exercises to bring participants into a “held space” in order for our work together to proceed. As facilitators we felt that holding open-minded, open-hearted “space” for each other is key to any real associative work. The first thing is to allow that space within each individual to open up in order to jointly build a “vessel” or “container” that is renewed each time a group comes together for collaborative action. Once the space is built, questions, challenges, concerns and conflicts can be “poured” into the centre and held by all in a creative space filled with an “intention for the good.”

Our method throughout the three days was to be highly interactive within the group of participants. Small group discussions, one-to-one “dialogue walks” and a structured conversation called a “case clinic” were all used as social techniques to bring members of the group into dialogue.

On the first day of the workshop we had a brief presentation of a project in the Hudson Valley in New York State, USA, called the “Rolling Grocer 19”, a mobile grocery shop based on a three-tiered pricing system for a city that has been termed a “food desert.” As a case study it demonstrated that when members of a given community, including the most marginalised members of an unjust food system, come together in a conscious way, it can be tremendously empowering. As a group they can find solutions to challenges within themselves, rather than adopting pre-fabricated solutions imposed on them from well-intentioned players from outside their communities.

With this example in mind, on the second day we gathered a list of the challenges faced by different participants in the room – farmers, shopkeepers, food processors, agriculture students and others. We then asked six individuals to really delve into the particular challenges they brought with them and to talk and work through the challenge with a small group of five people to help them.

On the third day we “harvested” the results of the case clinic for content, but also for reflections on the methodology. Generally speaking, we felt that our participants had been able to see the incredible importance of “how” we choose to listen and to speak to one another as being a determinative factor in successful collaborative action to transform our current food economy. Building individual and social “soil” together is key to success.

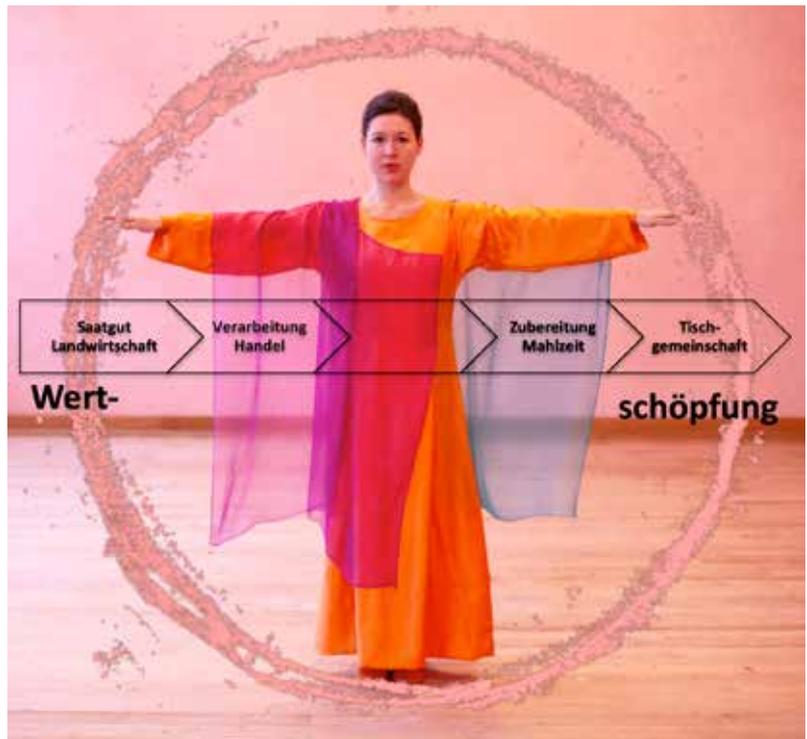
From Field to Plate – Food Systems

Themed session
with Jasmin Peschke

Food systems include all processes and infrastructures involved in feeding human beings. Every food system has its own very individual structure and only functions by cultivating relationships. It covers the entire value-added chain from agricultural production via processing and trade to the community at the table and the cooking course. Strictly speaking, value creation starts with the seed and goes all the way to the shared meal. Agriculture produces foodstuffs that are processed and prepared until they end up as a meal on the table. The connecting element in the food system is the human being who feeds themselves. The human being is at the centre. And they can become involved and have an influence at every stage. Because, in planning what to eat and paying at the till, it is the human being who decides what farming will look like. Anyone who wants to eat a cheap steak every day says “yes” to intensive livestock farming with soya feed from GMO seed. An appropriate buying behaviour supports a diverse species-rich landscape which is valued, not least for the buyer’s recreation. If the consumer is included, then associations – as presented in this conference – are a type of food system. The topic of relationships as a common element in all food systems has been strikingly demonstrated in the themed session.

Patricia Flores, IFOAM coordinator for South America, reported how, in Peru, biodynamic advice has made it possible for small farmers to recreate their lost relationship to the soil and therefore to the production of healthy food. They learn to feed themselves from products they have grown themselves and are also given training in healthy eating. She believes it is important to raise awareness in Europe – where the cocoa is drunk – of how the people on the land cope with daily life.

Anna Perret from the Swiss Jura leads projects on the sustainable design of food systems and organises guided excursions for consumers. An authentic relationship to the origin of products like vegetables, bread and wine can be formed on farms, and with bakers and winegrowers. “The baker describes baking in his bakery with such heart and soul that



In his uprightness the human being combines the spiritual and the physical, thus creating a bridge from thinking to logical action. When he stretches out his arms he spans the entire value-added chain. The creative power which only the human being possesses reaches out from the heart to all its elements. The whole forms a food system.

I absolutely have to try the bread,” the participants report and are inspired about the way the business comes to life. “If children are taught to cook, they learn the tools for changing the world,” according to Heidi Leonhard, lecturer in sustainable cooking. For instance, through baking brownies, subjects like sugar, sweets, fair trade (where does the chocolate come from?) can be introduced to the pupils in a practical way.

Under the heading of “relationship creates the future”, Margarethe Hinterlang, head of the school farm belonging to the Freie Landbauschule Dottenfelderhof, integrates children and young people in the day to day running of the farm, including jobs like preparing the feed bunk, shovelling muck and weeding. “That was the best day of school ever,” announced one girl, seeming not to care about the dirt on her little golden shoes. The roles in the class also change through learning by doing and experiencing. The perpetual troublemaker who can’t sit still suddenly turns into the resourceful manager of a tricky practical problem.

Soil as a common good

Themed session with Matthias Zaiser

The themed session presented an overview of the history and current status of agriculture managed as a common good in Europe. Two practical examples were used to present the concept and working method of two organisations supporting land as a common good. First, Gabriel Kaye explained the work of the Biodynamic Land Trust Ltd in Great Britain and then Titus Bahner gave a vivid description of the work of the Kulturland eG in Germany. Next Thomas Rüter described the areas of expertise and the issues facing agriculture managed as a common good and developed six hypotheses from this:

Land as a common good does not legally exist in Germany. Land ownership assigns land to a specific person with the right to deal with it as they see fit within the law and to exclude others from its use. Under the law, land is therefore not a common good but people can treat it as though it were.

The commons literature discusses how a farm can become a common good. According to this, many things can become a common good: knowledge, e.g. through Wikipedia, an urban grass strip through urban gardening or even the land of a whole farm. Generally speaking this requires

A resource which people want or must use together and self-made rules with which they want to do this.

If a common good arises through people using a resource according to jointly agreed rules, then commoning is the process by which a common good comes into being.

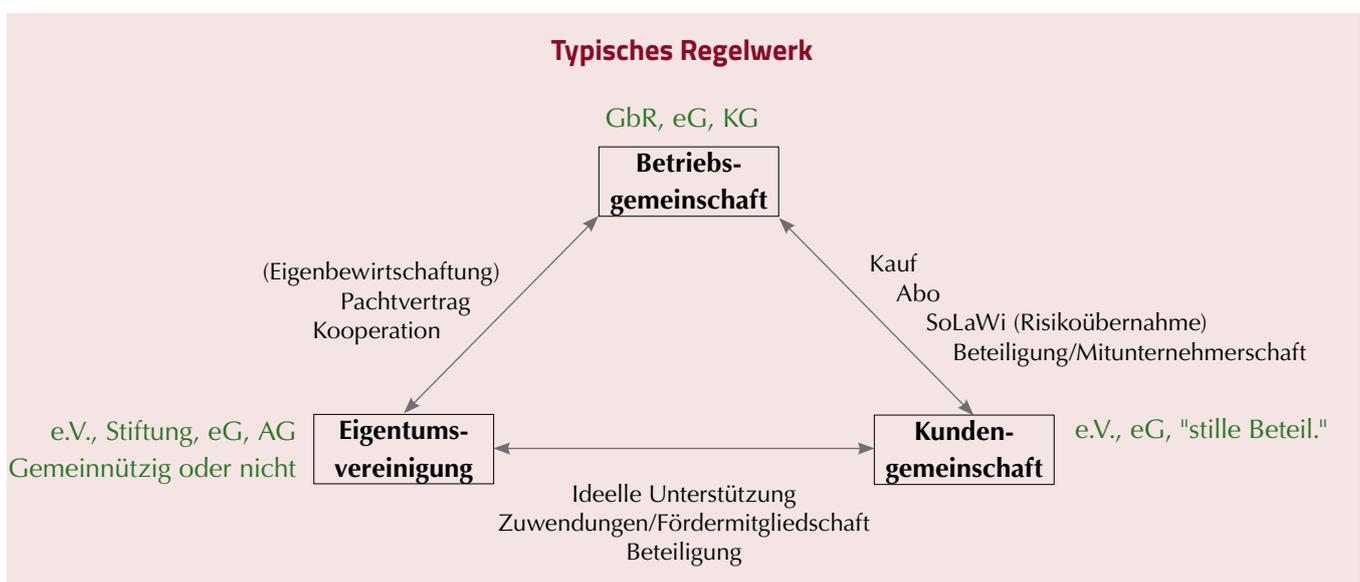
How could we describe the process of finding rules, the commoning process, through which an entire farm with

all its land becomes a common good? At first the farm is a business. Most Demeter businesses have a link to the common good e.g. the aims of conserving environmental resources, developing the landscape, preserving genetic diversity. Some people put their farm into a foundation in order to secure its long-term viability. Does the sustainable connection to the common good turn it into common goods? Many Demeter farms open their doors to "the people in their surroundings" to cultural interaction, to the permanent connection to their produce or in order for people to become partners. Does this make the farms into common goods?

The basic legal pattern of agricultural enterprises develops in the direction of specialisation due to the increase in rented land with outsourced marketing and considerable supplementary purchasing. In Demeter farms there is a different tendency: business, lessor and customer – although legally independent – are integrated as a community farm at a higher level by means of the idea of the closed farm individuality.

What constitutes the commoning process now comes about: what one farmer originally organised now has to be negotiated by the many participants – the rules under which the common use of the land takes place.

Farms can become common goods if the social alliance of the business initiative goes hand in hand with the surrender of the possibility of privatising the ownership of the land and the business environment.



The charter for associative economics

Themed session with Jonas Vach

Right at the start of the themed session, Udo Herrmannstorfer, head of the Institut für zeitgemässe Wirtschafts- und Sozialgestaltung, put associative economics in a nutshell when he described it as, “complementing the process of separation through division of labour by a process of bringing together”. Similarly to biodynamic agriculture, where the realms of nature – torn apart by a highly specialised agrarian world – are reunited in a self-supporting farm organism, the individual players in economics – who have justifiably specialised due to the modern division of labour – need to be brought together again in associations. Three participants described how this can happen in practice.

Dr. Sassa Franke, who has headed the Märkischen Wirtschaftsverbund in Berlin-Brandenburg with the initiative “*fair & regional*” since 2015, turned the spotlight on the market meeting as the most important associative instrument. Farmers, processors, traders and consumers gather at a round table for the market meeting. The aim is fair and supportive trade relations. Over the years the association has developed a successful structure for the market meetings with an agenda, a chairperson and minutes. The topics covered by the associative cooperation range from crop planning to joint marketing. At the end of each meeting, everyone votes on whether the trading relationships between them are felt to be completely fair. Aline Haldemann, co-director of *Demeter Schweiz*, spoke next. The issue that had sometimes led to emotional debates amongst the pioneers of the Demeter movement in Germany is a reality here in Switzerland: since 2016 the association has been cooperating with the two large conventional supermarket chains, *Migros* and *Coop*. When asked whether the relationship with the new trade partners was really a basic correction to their trading principles or simply about getting a larger piece of the “organic cake”, Haldemann appeared optimistic. The step from a niche to the conventional market would only function by opening up to new trade partners. This would enable more products to actually be marketed as Demeter products. *Demeter Schweiz* currently sees less of a challenge in the lack of a willingness to cooperate by the conventional market – after all, their trade representatives are sitting down at a round table alongside local processing partners and a delegation from Demeter farmers. Of greater concern is the very restrictive competition law which harbours suspicions of secret price agreements behind the associative round table discussions per se.



Meeting of the Economic Circle in the Netherlands 2018

In his contribution, Gregor May from *Premium Cola* vividly described how associative economics is also happening outside the anthroposophical movement. *Premium Cola* is a true collective which has neither a boss nor a physical company headquarters. All the decisions – from the choice of ingredients for the drink to the design of the glass bottles – are put to the vote in a democratic consensus via digital communication routes. May made very practical suggestions for restructuring food trade: first, *Premium Cola* pays heed to the needs of all those involved in the value creation, whether raw material supplier or consumer. Second, prices are calculated “as they are” – without any component for advertising subsidies, listing charges, refunds, dividends or “other gimmicks”. Third, large customers with cost advantages through economies of scale are not given further help through bulk discounts. In place of this there is an anti bulk discount for small and newly established retailers.

It is to be hoped that the ideas from the themed session will continue to have a profound effect and provide the courage to break away from the mainstream into a fast-changing (organic) food market through associative economics. This is precisely the aim of the *Economic Circle* of the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum, which has established its *charter for associative economics* as a framework for the exchange of ideas and cooperation for all those working associatively.

The spiritual in agriculture

Biodynamic agriculture has developed from the anthroposophical spiritual science of Rudolf Steiner. The lectures which form the basis for this are published under the German title “Geisteswissenschaftliche Grundlagen zum Gedeihen der Landwirtschaft” (Spiritual-scientific foundations for a flourishing agriculture) (translated into English as The Agriculture Course, GA 327). It is this spiritual content which arouses the interest of many people for biodynamic agriculture.

A broad range of themes

Nowadays there is an increasing wish for an expanded conception of the material world view – whether due to the longing for a spiritual world; whether based on personal spiritual experiences; whether due to the absurdity of materialism with all its excesses in science, economics and the social realm; whether arising from practical experience with biodynamic agriculture; whether based on epistemological insights; or whether simply due to the recognition that spiritual forces are required in order to ensure the existence of humanity. In Rudolf Steiner’s words “... we can see how necessary it is to derive forces from the spirit, [...] so that human life on Earth can continue at all, since as physical beings we depend on what the Earth provides.” There is a broad array of reasons for interest in the spiritual in biodynamic agriculture and for devoting our attention to this.

Between opening up and remaining true to yourself

Since the start of the 21st century the biodynamic movement has increasingly become a global movement. It is developing rapidly in Asia as well as in South and Central America, South Africa and many other regions and countries. This has brought it into contact with the traditional spirituality of native peoples. How can we, as a biodynamic movement, develop an understanding and a relationship to this kind of spirituality? Can the meeting of biodynamic agriculture with these kind of ‘traditional forms of spirituality’ lead to a mutual enrichment, from which each person can find their individual path in new freedom? Are there any examples of this kind of successful personal integration? How can the biodynamic movement itself and its roots in anthroposophy remain true to itself without getting stuck in old traditions? And lastly, how can the human being in this search for the spiritual

do justice to the wakefulness and power of judgement of their present-day consciousness?

The culture of the spiritual in daily life

How can we learn from each other? How can we keep a sympathetic ear for the spiritual experiences of the other person and how can we develop a proper mutual understanding for this? This kind of support for one another can be the basis for developing a culture of the spiritual in daily work.

The whole human being is needed

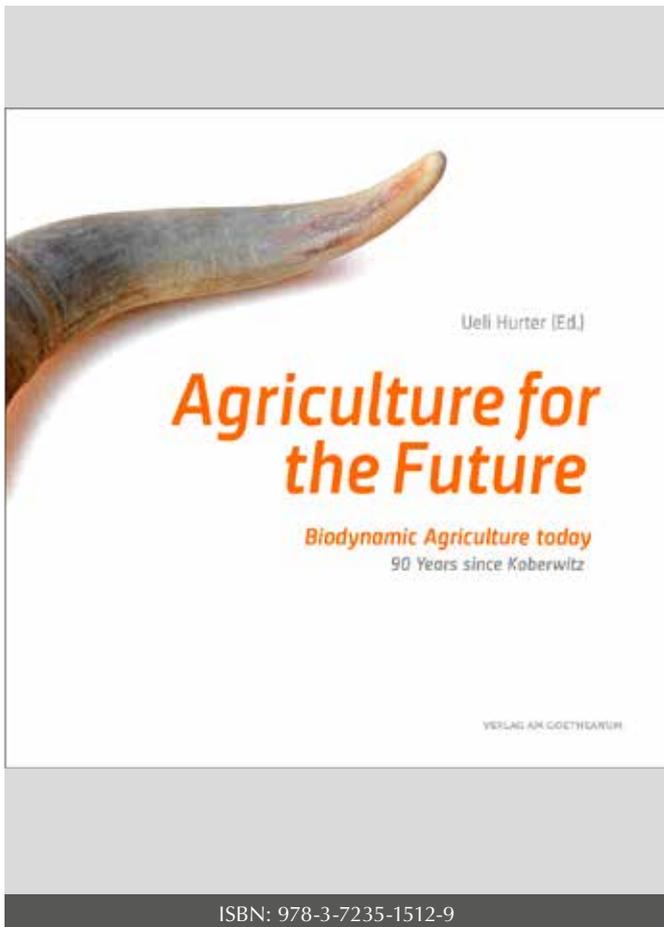
The search for the spiritual is often linked to the idea of losing our down-to-earth and practical qualities. It is often associated with a flight from the earth and intellectual abstraction. However, when we are dealing with the experience of the spiritual in the world around us, then there is always a need for the whole human being, the creating active willing, the feeling, and the contemplative reflective human being. And the nature of the spiritual experience differs, depending where the emphasis lies: some will have relevant experiences in the working application of the content of the Agricultural Course, others will come to visions of occult perceptions.

Taking responsibility

Working in agriculture nowadays presents us with great challenges: from the environment (e.g. climate change) via myself (e.g. personal competence) all the way to co-operation in the social realm. How can the intentional inclusion of the occult or spiritual dimension of reality be a real help for coping with all these challenges? How can spiritual faculties and exercise paths help to strengthen me, considering the current confrontation with the virtual and digital world and the increasing nervousness and loss of concentration?

And finally, how can I combine the material world with the spiritual reality in order to find a better basis for my practical actions in agriculture, in order to be able to act confidently, with self-consciousness and responsibility?

The theme of 2019/2020 is related to the following Michael Letter: “Historic Cataclysms at the Dawn of the Spiritual Soul” and its three Leading Thoughts (GA 26).



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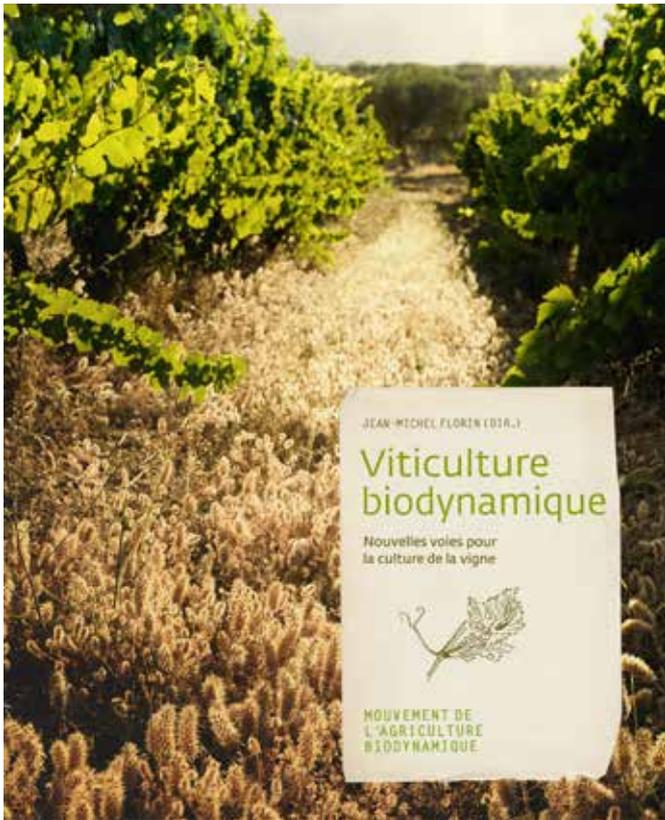


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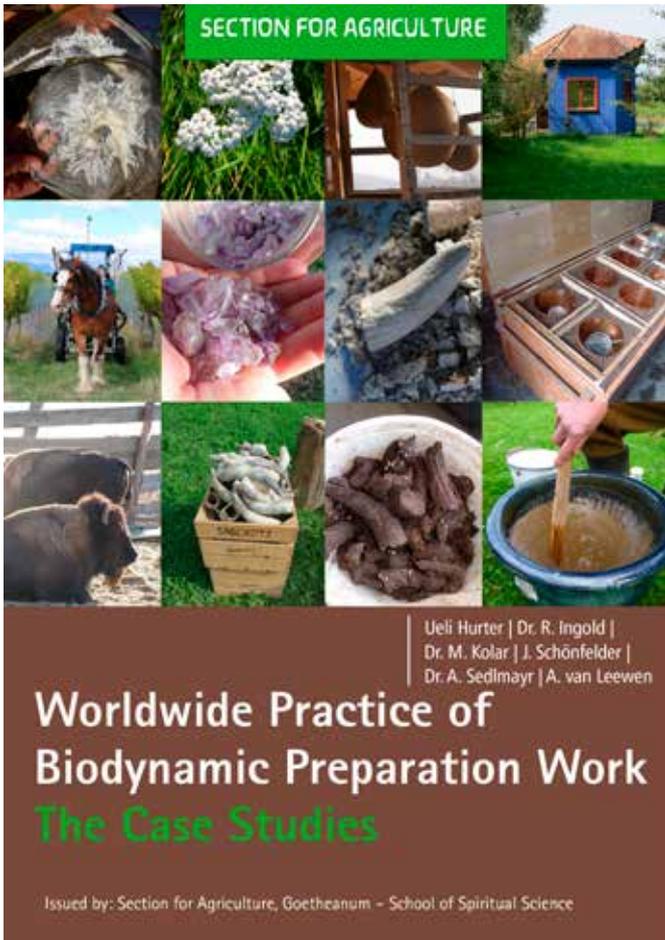
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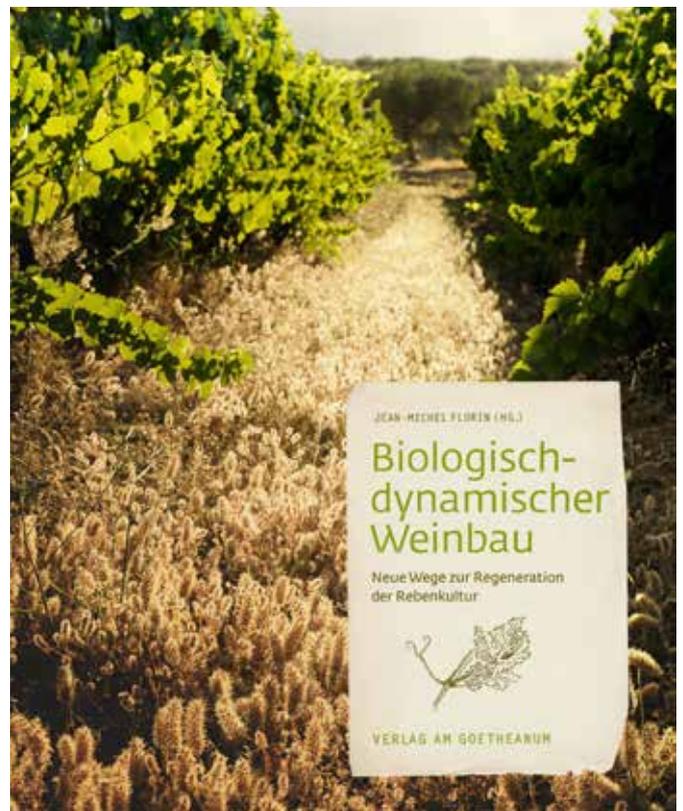
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