

Youth Section
Section for Agriculture
at the Goetheanum

Breathing with the Climate Crisis

ecologically – socially – spiritually



Report from the Agriculture and Youth Conference 2021



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Vedic fire ritual in India during the conference



The Goetheanum in the snow during the conference

Breathing with the Climate Crisis – ecologically – socially – spiritually

Have we discovered how to breathe at the conference and through the conference? Because this was the hope that we formulated in the title “Breathing in the climate crisis”. And this was also intended as an objective, by looking for this possible breath in three dimension: ecologically, socially and spiritually.

These moments of free breath did indeed arise at this conference. Personally, I felt a deep breath at the moment when Clement Vincent from southern India said: “No, I shall not leave this dry, barren region. Because although I go away, the soil remains, it cannot leave. But we belong together, the soil and I, the earth and we human beings.” Breathing spiritually in the climate crisis means saying yes to my apparently difficult situation, because this situation amounts to the full spirituality. Where am I, who am I, who do I live with, where do I go at the end of my life?

A breath for the future also flowed through the conference – the earth is a living being. For example, the contribution by Hans-Ulrich Schmutz presented tables and figures revealing the breathing of a living being. This being has been breathing for a long time, for millions of years. It has succeeded in creating a CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere that enables a very great variety of forms of life. Let us help this breathing living being to rediscover its planetary breathing rhythm. This task must be achieved and it concerns us all, young people and farmers alike.

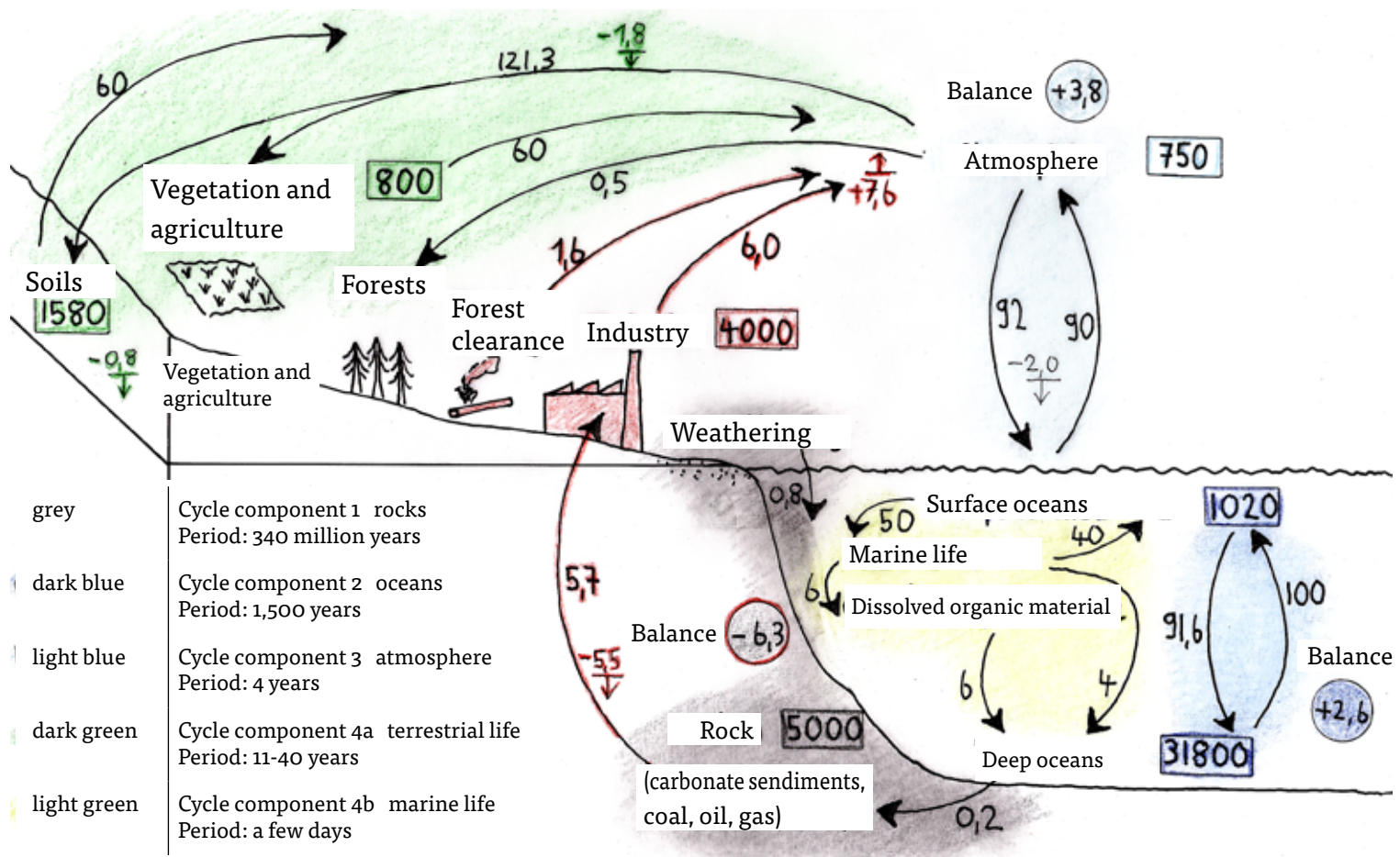
We are not alone – the cows help us. In the contribution by Anet Spengler the breath became visible: it ebbs and flows between the plants that breathe carbon in and the animals that breathe it out. This symbiosis supports the climate: no grass without the cow and no cow without grass. The complementary relationship of plants and animals is required to create fully breathing life: only then can we justifiably speak of carbon farming.

We have discovered a generational breath. Young people are in the process of breathing into the earthly conditions, they seek the ground where they can put down their biographical roots. Older farmers need to learn to raise their lowered gaze to come to an atmospheric awareness. A question of courage for both – but the other person is already in the place where I want to go.

This was a frequent experience at the conference – the other person was already in the place that I am trying to reach. So we move forwards, each for themselves and all together. The conference created a place to breathe and the digital format of the climate conference 2021 enabled a global breathing space with and for many people who would otherwise never have met. We hope that this conference report will convey some of these events.

For the Climate Conference team
the Youth Section and the Section for Agriculture

Ueli Hurter



The diagram shows the different speeds of carbon dioxide transformation in the four realms: the earth's crust, the oceans, the atmosphere and the photic upper zone of the oceans.

From climate change to climate breakdown

Hans-Ulrich Schmutz

The phenomenon with which we are now confronted can no longer really be designated as "climate change". The climate was always subject to rhythmical changes but modern mankind has broken with this. We need to take an interest in this break and heal it.

Those who do not appreciate the past have difficulties in shaping the future. So it is helpful to trace the long evolutionary phases of the earth back over the last 500 million years in order to understand the present day. This shows that the earth, despite the great variety of vegetation and animal life, has always had an autonomous heat balance with variations in average temperature of plus or minus 5 degrees Celsius. 500 million years ago, however, the atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration was much higher and then dropped rapidly to the major extinction event on earth about 250 million years ago. Following this, first mammals and later flowering plants evolved.

In looking back at the earth's atmospheric conditions various rhythms can be discovered, an important characteristic for understanding the present-day climate breakdown.

Copernicus described three major rhythms which arise from the relationship of the earth and the sun. The rhythms of the day and the year were joined by a third very slow rhythm: what we call the 'Platonic world year'. There are also effects from the slow rhythms: the rotation of the apside line, the variation in position of the axis of rotation and the eccentricity of the orbit of the earth around the sun. All these rhythms are superimposed on each other. Using measurements from ice cores or marine sediment profiles shows how these rhythms took place, more in a musical way than a mechanical pattern. After each great ice age there followed a very rapid rise in temperature to a warm period and then a rhythmic drop in temperature over four varying stages to the next ice age. The last warm

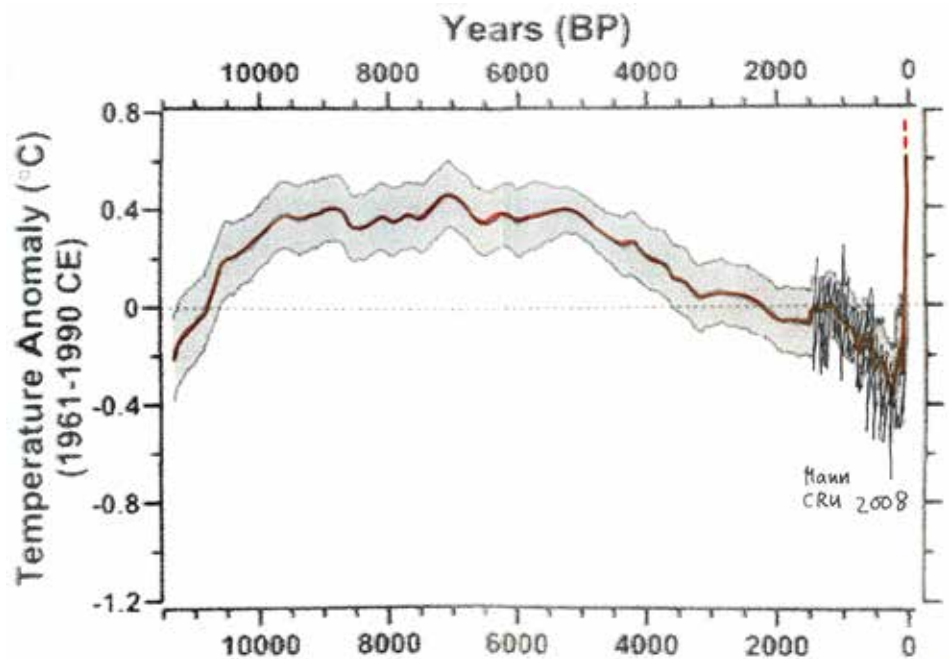
period began about 10,000 years ago. The values of carbon dioxide trapped in the ice run in parallel with these rises and falls in temperature with relatively small fluctuations.

Due to these rhythms, the earth has already contained the driving force for a new ice age for a few hundred years. This is documented in what is known as the 'Little Ice Age', which lasted until 1850. What is needed to understand this is not a cause-and-effect thought process but a relational thinking in rhythms. These great cosmic rhythms do not cause the ice ages and warm periods, but they trigger them. For the change which has been triggered to come about requires other conditions on the earth itself.

For several hundred million years, carbon dioxide was transformed into coal, gas and oil in the depths of the earth, and thus removed from the atmosphere. A third of these materials has been brought to the surface and burnt at a comparatively rapid rate, meaning that the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere has risen sharply again.

This slowest rhythm of carbon transformation on earth was disrupted during the last 150 years due to the massive exploitation of fossil fuels. We now have carbon dioxide at levels that have not been experienced for 7 million years. Although the conversion of fossil fuels has risen less rapidly over the last 30 years due to nuclear power, solar energy and energy saving, the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere and the world's oceans is still increasing dramatically. Since around 1985 the seas have undergone a significant change due to the increasing input of carbon dioxide and therefore an increasing acidification of the water. Living conditions for plankton and microbes have deteriorated, thus inhibiting the conversion of carbon dioxide to biomass.

The rapid warming of the earth cannot be explained by natural causes because the cosmic rhythms would indicate a new ice age: the warming is due to human activity. A graph of the temperature over the last 10,000 years shows a change in the curve in the last 100 years from a rising and falling wave to a perpendicular increase.



Graph of global temperature change over the last 10,000 years.
Taken from Marcott, S. A. (2013): Science 339, 8.3.2013

At the same time the cosmic rhythms point in the direction of a tendency to cooling. This is climate breakdown.

Brokenness can be healed if we make an effort and take an interest in what is happening. So it is our duty to take an interest in the causes of climate breakdown. This also applies to other realms such as present-day species extinction, which is currently taking place about ten thousand times faster than previous extinctions in the history of the earth. We need new ways of conscious attention to the earth. We need to get away from intellectual mechanical thinking and move to a thinking that creates mobile concepts such as rhythm, metamorphosis, life and development. This mobile thinking is the source of insight into what is needed and the ensuing action. Without mobile thinking we have no chance: technical solutions merely provide temporary treatment of the symptoms. Because mobility in thinking leads to mobility in feeling and willing. I hope that these human forces will make it possible for us to create the change. Climate breakdown is the call to human beings to reach a new relationship with the earth, to change themselves. There is much to do: let's make a start!

From the individual to society: a holistic perspective for climate change

Lin Bautze and Adrian Müller

Climate and connectedness in a globalised world

During recent years and, perhaps more than ever in facing the COVID pandemic, we realise that we live in a globalised world. We are connected in several dimensions: through our climate, the atmosphere, soils, biodiversity, economies and the human beings who live in this world. Unfortunately we have done a great deal by over-using and exploiting the natural resources that we are dependent on. Besides depleted agricultural soils, a constant loss of biodiversity and an increasing number of polluted water bodies, our atmosphere has absorbed a large share of our unsustainable management practices. As a result, there is a scientifically proven rise in global temperatures with varied but generally adverse effects on agriculture production, infrastructures and human health. Although the extent of the effects may differ from region to region, their implications for our food systems locally and globally will be challenging if we do not act now and change the direction of the current system.

We therefore recognise that separation from nature, as witnessed throughout the last few decades, can no longer be considered a solution for our human society. We need to realise that we are not independent of nature's resources. Instead, we must rapidly invest all our human capacities for healing the earth's atmosphere, the nature around us and our social climate in order to improve the system.

Is the agriculture system perspective sufficient?

If we would like to change the current system, we first need to realise how it is constituted. To date, agricultural production emissions are politically accounted globally and locally mainly from greenhouse gas emissions from animal husbandry and soil management practices.

However, this does not give the whole picture. Indirect emissions from the production of agrochemicals such as fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides, and emissions from transportation, heating, the use of machinery, land-use and land-use change and storage, plus emis-

sions from consumption and food waste are not accounted for in the agricultural sector.

By integrating these factors, the amount of global emissions from food production, processing, storage and consumption contributes a much larger share of global emissions than agricultural production emissions alone. It is therefore essential to integrate the various indirect emission sources in the food system to work out where and how emissions can be reduced in future.

At the same time, it is essential to extend the view of sustainability beyond the emission reduction targets. Climate change adaptation, building resilience, increasing soil fertility and enhancing biodiversity should become equal targets in addition to a fair and equal social, economic and political system. A future sustainable agriculture and food system therefore needs to encompass the various dimensions of overall environmental sustainability and economic and social justice.

Combination of sustainability goals and biodynamic agricultur

At first sight, the combination of these various sustainability dimensions seems to be a complex challenge. Luckily, organic and biodynamic agriculture have been scientifically proven to reduce emissions while enhancing soil fertility, protecting biodiversity and water bodies, and supporting a fair price for agricultural goods.

Organic and biodynamic agriculture reduce the energy demand and thus carbon-intensive production and the use of nitrogen fertilisers. The number of animals held is also reduced through legal certification standards all over the world. In addition, comparative studies using long-term experiments with conventional, organic and biodynamic practices have shown that biodynamic production systems sequester more carbon in the soil and assimilate more carbon in biomass via landscape elements (e.g. hedges) and agroforestry systems. These types of agriculture also promote the idea of the circular economy along with emission-reducing practices, such as promoting seasonal and regional production and consumption patterns.



Lin Bautze and Adrian Müller during the presentation

However, research also tells us that the potential of organic and biodynamic production systems is not enough on its own to create the change. To achieve a sustainable future, every one of us in this world needs to get involved. In some parts of the world we need drastic dietary changes towards a much lower proportion of animal source food and a clear reduction in global food waste. If we want to feed the world with organic and biodynamic food, we cannot afford to continuously waste 30% of the food produced at a global scale.

From knowledge to transformation

Once it is recognised that a global effort is needed to achieve the above-mentioned goals and that solutions such as biodynamic farming already exist, the meta-question arises: why are we not already utilising approaches that are non-harmful and proven to be successful for the sustainability of our environment, society and economy

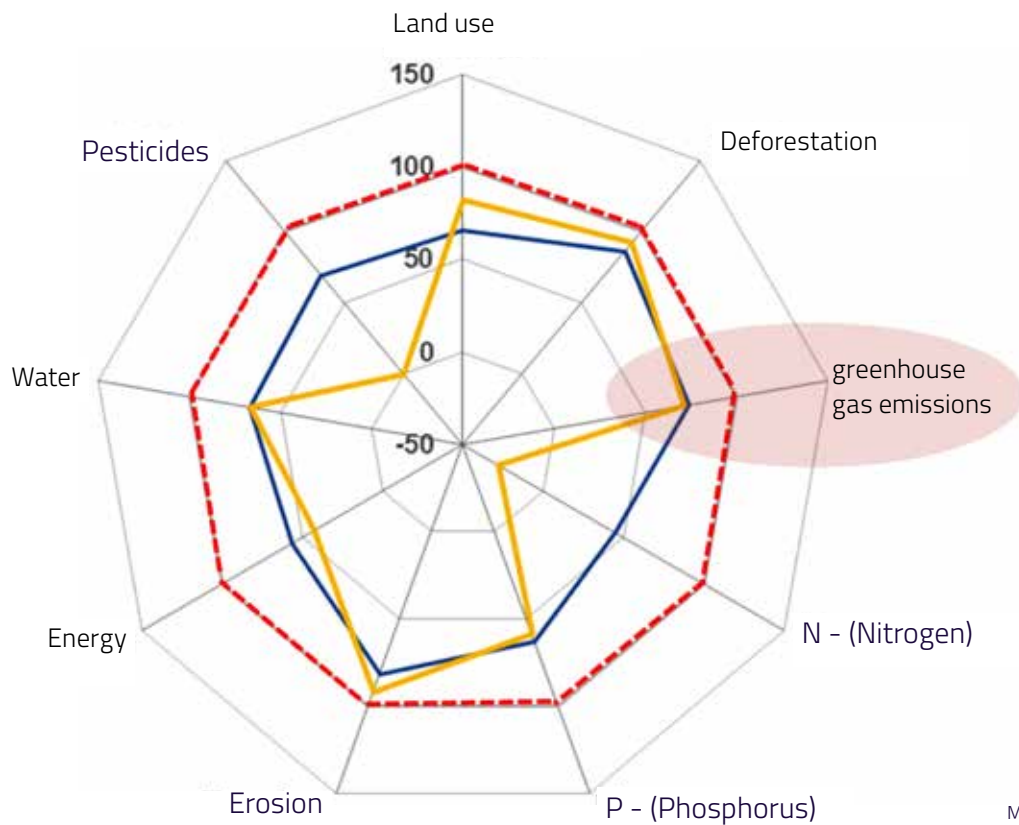
On the one hand, this holistic thinking may challenge our perspectives. It calls us to make a joint effort and take responsibility quickly. This perspective is different from individualistic thinking and goes in the direction of a collaborative approach. It asks us to act individually out of our free will but to think and feel globally at the same time in order to include the whole world in our thoughts and actions.

On the other hand, we may need examples of individuals who are transforming existing knowledge into practical strategies, plans and action: people who can help us to visualise how change can be brought about and describe their successes and failures along the way.

This was the reason that the Section for Agriculture at the Goetheanum set up the “Living Farms” project. The project presents a diverse range of biodynamic farmers throughout the world. Their ideas for sustainable agriculture in the near future are visualised by means of short documentary videos along with the diversity of farming systems. These individuals thus help to transfer knowledge into practical action. This action can be applied on farms or as individuals in our society, regardless of location, the current system or where the individual stands in the climate change and resilience debate.

Some of the lessons learned so far are:

- Watch, reflect and adapt! Get to know your landscape, farm or person. Where do you stand? What do you see? What has changed over time? If you love it, stick with it. If you feel that a change is needed, do this. If you cannot change it, leave it and let it go. This may mean adapting your life, farming decisions and organisational structures according to your needs and the needs of your surroundings.



Without any changes, by 2050 our global food system will be producing too many greenhouse gas emissions (red line). Conventional agriculture (blue line) and organic agriculture (yellow line) can reduce the emissions. This requires a reduction in food wastes (-50%) and a complete end to the use of feed concentrates in conventional farming.

- Move outside your comfort zone! Get in contact with people outside your own fields. Be inspired by them and use this chance to further develop yourself or your farm.
 - Develop curiosity! Make use of your inherited curiosity and test new things, methods and systems.
 - Be brave but stay rational! Sometimes you will have to make changes that the rest of society finds unusual but that make sense from a broader perspective on your farm or in your world-view. Stick to your beliefs, but test new things in an appropriate, economically sound way. It is better to do something small every day than do nothing. For example, test a new crop on 10% of the area.
 - Communicate and share your story! Share your successes and failures. Let others be part of the process of developing shared knowledge of how to improve our current system.
 - Engage with others! Organise yourself with like-minded people to receive support from networks or communities around you. This helps you to increase your social, environmental and economic resilience.
- Some of these lessons can be easily applied in our everyday lives, while others may take time to be implemented on an individual and societal level. However, if we take this collaborative approach to accept our responsibility in the global challenges that we face, we can outgrow the current system and move towards a healthy food system with a healthy atmosphere, soils and societies, so that we are able to breathe again in the post-climate crisis.

* Muller, A., Schader, C., El-Hage Scialabba, N. et al. Strategies for feeding the world more sustainably with organic agriculture. Nat Commun 8, 1290 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-017-01410-w>



Earth and heaven

The earth is the foundation of our destiny

Constanza Kaliks and Ueli Hurter

This dialogue had polar starting points: Ueli Hurter, as a farmer, started with the connection to the land; Constanza Kaliks, as a representative of young people, started with what is not yet on the earth, what is still to come. In the central part of the presentation both these gestures meet in the theme's social dimension. In the third parts, those dealing with the spiritual dimension, young people find a decision to join the earth and farming discovers the atmospheric realm to be spiritually fruitful.

Being on the earth – seeking the heavens

From farmer to climate guardian

Ueli Hurter: As a farmer my gaze is downwards. I work with the land. The fruits of the earth are my harvest. I am rooted in this earth. The history of this piece of land is also my history. Year after year over many generations we have cared for this land, built it up, made it productive.

Now in spring 2017 I find that the soil is parched, that the sun does not warm it but burns it, that even in April there is a cloud of dust rising from it when the cows go out onto the meadow. Even before this, in early summer 2016, I had to watch the soil in the potato field being washed away by heavy rain. These are not isolated events. On our travels in many regions of our earth

the farmers tell us similar stories. If, a few years ago, it was still a question as to whether this might be climate change, nowadays it is clear: this is climate change.

The lowered gaze turns upwards. If nothing comes from above, or only destruction, then I have to look upwards. Because the agricultural yield no longer comes from the soil but from the skies. We have to learn through experience, through losses, through reflection. The pictures are no longer correct, I need to revise them and create new ones.

Old picture: the plant grows from below upwards. New picture: the plant grows from above downwards. I cannot see this, but it is nevertheless true. I can gradually expand my understanding: the plant creates its green body by assimilation from light, air and warmth, forming sugars and starches. It literally grows from above downwards. It then sends this flow of substances downwards. A considerable proportion of these substances is excreted through the root hairs. The plant's sweet light substances awaken the soil to life. This soil life releases substances such as potassium and calcium from the mineral soil and nitrogenous proteins from the soil humus. These salty substances from the earth are absorbed by the roots and sent upwards. The plant enables the earthy and watery elements to be brought to life, because it originates in the heavens and the earth

has received it. I learn to turn my gaze upwards – the plants grow from above downwards.

This is a new view for me as a farmer. I learn that from now on farming also means taking care of the climate. Such and such an acreage of land is also linked to a piece of weather, to the climate, to the skies. I am connected to this just as much as I am to the land. But the sun, clouds and wind do not belong to me like the land does: nevertheless, I am just as responsible for them as I am for my land. I go from being a farmer to a guardian of the climate.

And what about my beloved cows? How can I see them in a new way? When the herd lies there in the meadow, peaceful and dreamy, chewing the cud for hours on end, then as a guardian of the climate I apparently have a problem, because a cloud of methane gas is evaporating from the herd and adding to the negative side of the climate balance. Even our colleagues from WWF and Greenpeace are convinced that cows impact negatively on the climate. And if you calculate with today's standard figures, then an individual cow has a negative climate footprint.

With my new view I can see that the cow is actually very light. She brings the plant substance created above into herself. She brings the heavens into her big belly. She almost lifts off. So she has to release the methane in order to stay on the ground, so that she can concentrate the humus-forming power for the earth in her dung. Her cycling power via feed, digestion, dung, composting, soil and plant growth enables us to be settled here at this place. Without the cow we would all need to be nomads, hunters and gatherers. This is actually what we are when we are young. But when you want to put down roots, then you need a force that draws the whole world together in one place. The one place becomes a representative of the whole earth. The cow is our great helper in this. She brings the whole of the heavens into one point and into the ground. And this creates a place where I can be I, because there is a living mantle that bears and supports me.

An effective climate ecology needs places that have a mantle where the great relationship of earth and climate takes shape in the spirit of a genius loci.

To be a guardian of the climate means allowing the great global climate to stream into a piece of land at a single place where I am active, breathing it in to the life on the farm, not in order to consume it, but in order to breathe it out again with new life forces. As a guardian of the climate I have the task of managing a place for

the climate to regenerate. And I ask you, dear younger generation, can you help us to bring about this new picture?

Wanting the earth – coming to earth. Being wanted

Contanza Kaliks: The conditions for existence need to be found on this earth. Here, on this earth transformed by human beings and its climate, my destiny will be inscribed. Climate youth: will the earth be in a condition to permit my destiny to take shape there? Creating conditions for existence, conditions for realising potential.

Entering life is only possible for the human species through the care of the environment. Coming to earth means entering a place of dependency – it is an act of mutuality. We need the mantle of the other, we need to be wanted, be loved.

Receiving those who come to the earth is a continuous challenge to society. Are we capable of fulfilling this task?

It is a question to the immediate environment – but also a question to the future. What responsibility do we take on as a society so that those who come to the earth – with their impulse for renewal through which the world is sustained and does not collapse, this power of what is to come, of what is coming into existence – find the conditions that enable them to bring what is not yet present into the evolution of the world, to weave it into reality?

Education always takes place in the tension between preservation and conservation, change and transformation. We speak about what is already in existence: learning about this is becoming part of the evolution of mankind. Can this engagement be done in such a way that it is a helping hand to what cannot yet be told, because it is newly arrived?

This created world is like a mantle for the newborn – a physical mantle but also an emotional enveloping. From the very start the fact that there are other human beings is what enables us to become human beings, to exist. A mantle is warmth, it is the affirmation of the existence of the other, it is loving attention.

It is always distinct: it is addressed to this one unique individual.

If, nowadays, millions of children are hungry, if millions of children do not attend school because they have to work or because their environment does not permit it, if there are millions of children fleeing their homes, then our protective mantle is missing.



Constanza Kaliks giving her presentation

Creating this mantle is ecology in the widest sense. The condition of existence that relates specifically to this child, is an ecological matter from the start. The fact that this child cannot receive this mantle, that it cannot experience being wanted, is a result of all our present-day circumstances.

Living on the earth – learning to see – being seen

“No being that appears exists for itself; every being needs to be perceived by someone. It is not a person who inhabits this planet, but people. Plurality is the law of the earth.”*

If the newborn grows, it enters the childhood years. Now the condition for its existence is that it is seen, perceived and taken seriously in what it is and how it appears. And the child learns to see. To see that there is a big world filled with all kinds of outward forms, a world for which one wants to learn, for which one wants to learn to be. A world that fills me with wonder at its diversity, at its incredible beauty, at its endlessly new horizons to discover and also at the abysses that open and reveal themselves.

Are we still able to be filled with wonder? Does reality fill us with wonder, a wonder that makes us wish for reality, that lets us repeatedly experience a longing to exist for and with the reality of the world?

If the climate crisis has focussed on the question of whether a place will exist that enables human beings to be wanted, the pandemic and its consequences of isolation pose the question: how can the children, the young

people be seen, recognised, heard? Who sees me and in such a way that I know that I am?

Millions of children and young people are now unable to go to school – and do not even have the possibility to experience in a digital form that someone knows about them. Millions of children are invisible to the awareness of the institution that society has given the task of teaching children to see the beauty, the diversity of the world. They feel that they are not seen.

And it is not only children who are invisible. Millions of people are affected daily by existential hardship. Poverty and isolation in all kinds of forms make people invisible.

Young people all over the world are facing a future with very little hope: due to the fact that they cannot go to school, the opportunity to be able to work will very likely remain closed to them.

These people are the first to be affected by environmental disasters, the first to be affected by missing school, which for millions of children also means missing out on the daily meals that they only get at school.

On 25 March 2020, Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, said in an address that the current situation demands a global coalition for education requiring innovation, partnership and solidarity.

Education is a social issue – this was Rudolf Steiner’s starting point for his pedagogical approach 100 years ago. Becoming part of the diversity of the world is a question to society – they must take the responsibility for each and every one to know that they are seen.

If this does not happen, the breath falters.

* Arendt, *Vom Leben des Geistes*, p. 29). “Plurality is the law of the earth”.

How can we breathe socially?

Hurter: Yes, social breathing falters. Yes, the social climate falters. Can we maintain it, or does social cohesion slip away from us? And in particular between us as the older and younger generations?

I am an older farmer. And I sympathise with the climate youth. If I listen more carefully, what I hear is: "There is an absolute necessity for emergency measures to combat climate collapse. This has been proved scientifically." This is how Greta Thunberg speaks and many others along with her. I have a problem with this. Does this not risk us running directly into a social collapse? Are we to violate the social climate in order to save the environ-

mental climate? I know that the environmental climate cannot wait, but the social climate is also fragile. Everyone is in their world, every group has their priorities, everyone is right in their own eyes. How can we accept, protect and promote this diversity and at the same time have a common will?

This is a real question. I do not have an answer.

But I know that in the social realm we always have to be able to breathe. Our conference is called "Breathing with the climate crisis". Breathing means breathing in, breathing out. Means listening, speaking. Means taking, giving. Means you and I. Means that each person breathes, but we have the same air. How can we as human beings have a common will so that we are able to breathe socially?

The pandemic has caused many people to become homeless. It shocked me to see the pictures from India, where millions of migratory workers have become unemployed and homeless overnight due to the lockdown. The social fabric of the cities spat them out and cast them onto the roads to the countryside. And because the trains and buses had stopped running, they made their way on foot back to their home villages. They walked for hundreds and thousands of kilometres across that vast land back to their village. Why? Because in the village there is at least a hope of land. A piece of land gives me my human dignity. What am I as a person, without access to the land, to the soil?

In relation to the land we are separate: in relation to the climate – the great global climate and the pandemic virus climate – we are united. How can we bring this about in the social realm?

Food comes from the earth on the one hand and is a gift from the heavens on the other, the gift of a healthy climate. And we have a common responsibility for the climate. Can we do this? Can we find a common will for this? We need a new "contrat social" as Jean-Jacques Rousseau called it. By this he meant a social motivation by all and for all.

But food also comes from the soil. In relation to the soil we are not all equal. Some have land and others not, some have a lot, others little, some have good land, others poorer land, etc. While we are equal in the face of the climate, we are unequal in relation to the land. Food is produced between heaven and earth, between climate and soil. But food is not produced for all, but for each one. In relation to food we are many individuals. If I have eaten the apple, it is gone. But all apples grow and ripen under the same sky in the same climate. Socially we need a new breath between that in which we are different and that in which we are the same.

Deciding to take part: the earth is the foundation of my destiny

Kaliks: We now come to the condition for being in this space in which we are different but united.

If the newborn was able to know that it was wanted and loved, the child could feel that it was seen, then the young person will find the condition for being-on-the-earth by experiencing recognition. I, who I am and who I become in meeting the other and the world, I, as a unique reality, am recognised. This is how I learn to recognise who I am – and for whom.

Who am I? Who am I here for? – two questions which cannot be separated.

In 2014 the French social scientist Alain Touraine published an article in which he discussed this issue: How can a society exist where it is not the equal value of all individuals in the public sphere on the one hand nor the isolation in the private sphere on the other, but in which the equal value and the difference can be understood and experienced as two aspects of the human being themselves? "Can we live together, equal and different?" – is the question that society asks every day, which I ask myself, which time asks us.

The call that comes from the other urges me to take responsibility. The other is the other person, it is nature

The conference opened my eyes to a new world of doing agriculture. I am nourished with lectures which mentioned about the people power, the connection between human being and cosmos, regardless to religion.

Luong



Youth Conference 2019

for the other people, is nature with respect to their future.

The other asks me – I take responsibility. This is where connection originates, this is where destiny takes place. Shared destiny. We thank the synchronicity of living with others, with the earth. In assuming our responsibility, it becomes the foundation of our destiny.

The earth needs my footprint

Hurter: We live in a climate that is both cultural and spiritual. Our culture is built on our I. The I as the central point is the solid ground from where we look out into the environment. If we look into the distance, then the I is influenced by the many other Is. It is now I and You. The I is in a constant exchange with the other and others, it is changeable, breathing in, breathing out. If we look upwards – does our I not dissolve? Can I achieve an atmospheric I experience, one from the periphery? We cannot solve the climate problem and many other challenges of our times from all the individual earth-I-consciousness points. We can no longer manage our earthly destiny by means of addition and subtraction. We need to take our consciousness out of space into counterspace in order to be able to think, feel and will from the whole into the parts.

Our gaze rises up to the ear that sways on the stalk, it drifts over the edge of the treetops to the heights of the distant mountain peaks. We raise our eyes further

to the clouds in the blue of the sky with the sun as the day star. And our gaze goes further, to Saturn and the fixed stars beyond. Our consciousness can still follow this far. The I can still be held as an inner gesture in the twelvefoldness of the zodiac and, instead of allowing it to disperse in the infinite, it can turn and be supported in the centre, the earth, which no longer appears as opposite to the I – as non-I, merely the environment – but it appears in the I as though taken up into the spherical I consciousness. The earth belongs to me. To my own cultural or spiritual dimension. The old creation myths of all cultures and lands – of which we are also a part – know this, and we know it with those who have died, who cultivated the land before us and whom we meet in the consciousness of the spheres. And envisioned from the future – along with all the unborn, with all those who are still to become children of the earth, to link in to your remarks Constanza – the earth, our earth with the soil, the plants and the animals and its climate also belongs to my I. It is not a not-I, it is also I. And from this awareness, the earth does not say to us: I cannot bear your footprint, stay away. It calls to each of us: I am waiting for your footprint. And I can answer: I want to go to the earth and make my contribution for our common future. The earth is the foundation of our destiny.

Spirituality for our common earth

Clement Vincent

As the founder of MUHIL, the Movement for Universal Health Integration & Liberation, Clement Vincent has been working with the rural population of southern India for 30 years. He is a Catholic priest and leader of the biodynamic association in India.



Spirituality reminds us of God and the church, but if we look beyond these images, it is a global reality, a reality that has accompanied me my whole life. As a Catholic priest my faith is only shared by three per cent of the Indian population, but all cultures in fact are concerned with the elements of the earth, from the soil to the fire, and all these elements have a cosmic side. In his book 'The Grand Design', the physicist Stephen Hawking asks about the will in the cosmos. There are two principles in the cosmos: one is immortality and the other is eternity, and all religions talk about both of these. In India we talk about the cosmic energy Shakti. We carry this energy in us and around us. It is the basis of spirituality and the eternal feminine force in the cosmos. It is the reality of this force and its dynamics that we work with in biodynamic agriculture. The masculine side of this energy is the god Shiva. What is known as anima in Europe, the soul, has its counterpart in India as atma, the cosmic force that is individualised in all life. We build our surroundings, our society from these forces of the soul. In biodynamic agriculture we share these forces and they turn into a common force, into people power, that is not to be equated with a political force. This force carries us forwards together. The climate crisis calls on us to work together.

MUHIL has started to work with medicinal plants, especially grasses, for health. We have developed this together and thus saved the soil. The idea behind it is to enliven ourselves from the inside outwards. We need to create peace within and also around us. It is an inner quiet but also a dynamic movement.

Even though the climate crisis is global, we need to mitigate it locally. We need a balance between the micro-

cosm and macrocosm. Agricultural activity must help everyone to feed themselves, even if it is only in small plots. This is connected to spirituality: where am I, who am I, who do I live with, where do I go at the end of my life? Our reality is that spirituality is immortal and eternal and makes it possible to approach life dynamically. Spirituality becomes reality when we make it a reality.

Life continuum

We exist in the great cosmic realm, and yet we must act in the here and now, in the place where we are. It is very dry where I live. People ask me why I don't move to a place where the soil is better. I can move away but I cannot move the soil. We live in the place where we find ourselves and this we make our home. We must include nature and set it free. How can we use our human strength to good purpose here? If you live beside a waterfall you can use hydropower. If there are millions of people around me, then I need to recognise people power. We do not need tractors, but have to employ the people here, bring them together and build their energy together. We use spiritual energy when we do something that is for the benefit of all people. We need to express things so that they gain importance, so that they will be passed on. I bring people together who want to learn from each other, share with each other. This is how we achieve a new future. This becomes an experience for young people.

When I become more and more authentic as a person, then I move from the material world to the spiritual one. What I identify as 'I am' is part of a continuum. The divine spirit becomes a human spirit. The place for this is the environment and my relationship to God is social, environmental and spiritual. The break in the continuum due to the pandemic is a global phenomenon. Everything has come to a stop. Historically we are an important generation and need to be very responsible in the way that we begin anew. We are required to develop a new history, to shape a new future – especially the young people.

Text: Wolfgang Held

An awareness of the atmosphere

Johannes Kronenberg, Petra Derkzen, Jean-Michel Florin, Ioana Viscrianu and Anet Spengler

Johannes Kronenberg (Youth Section) talked to Petra Derkzen, Jean-Michel Florin, Ioana Viscrianu and Anet Spengler about young people's desire for change and farmers' desire to take action in the climate crisis.

Climate crisis is a collective concept that not only relates to the atmosphere but also the social and cultural realms. Fifty years ago there were already calculations about environmental protection and warnings of the risks. Petra Derkzen and Anet Spengler recalled that, as far back as the 1980s, young people - themselves included - felt conventional farming and intensive animal husbandry as painful, because everything was viewed solely in terms of profitability.

But there was little discussion about it. Farmers felt themselves under attack if demands were made that they change their approach. At the same time many people moved to the cities. Iona Viscrianu described how, in her homeland of Romania, farmers were seen as people who had not made it. In the 1970s when an awareness developed that nature needed protection, modern mankind was already half-way to believing in economic growth focused more on quantity than quality. The question was no longer whether something was good, but whether it could grow. But, as Jean-Michel Florin explained, the loss of a connection to nature can also be seen as breaking free of nature. This resulted in the situation where we now need to decide for ourselves what we want to do with this freedom. As a biodynamic farmer, he made the decision to improve the relationship between the realms of earth, plant, animal and mankind, which also means creating a 'climate' that is healthy, that makes people happy.

Feeling the climate

In Jean-Michel's village if a horse leaves droppings on the road, people get annoyed about the smell, but they no longer notice the reek of car fumes. Being aware of what is around me is the beginning of caring for the climate, he believes. From this point of view the question about breathing in the climate crisis is also a question about our ability to reconnect to the world with our feelings. Ioana believes that, in order to work from reality, we need a humanised science, so that we know and also love the research objects that we deal with. We need to include our heart in our thinking.

Every person is a farmer

In speaking about the development of community supported agriculture, Anet Spengler points out that the small movements do in fact have power - people power. Farmers in India are protesting about poor economic conditions. The biodynamic association there is supporting them by adding other dimensions to their protest such as the social one and environmental protection. Young people in India are returning to the land because the cities can no longer feed them. Biodynamics enables them to regain a relationship to spirituality.

"We need to move out of our comfort zone and get involved, act and then see how it worked out. As a farmer I can't think theoretically about everything and only then put it into practice: I need to interact with reality and the constantly changing conditions," says Jean-Michel. The consumer is also linked to the farmer. Young people are aware of the question: who are we supporting when we buy products? Petra Derkzen explains that, "If eating is an agricultural activity, then I need to know where my food comes from. If I am a 'consumer', then I am already part of the economic mindset. However, if I see the farmer who produces my food, then I act differently and with more responsibility with and for him than I previously did as a consumer."

Practical future

Johannes Kronenberg mentioned a young farmer who sees a problem in that older farmers do not want to transfer their farms to younger people. How can we learn together? How can young people develop the ability to be attentive to the atmosphere? Jean-Michel concludes that, "We learn that we ought to focus on things. But we need to learn to see between the things: between the people, between the animals and plants, between sky and earth: we need to develop an awareness of the atmosphere in between."

We are always taught to focus on things. We need to learn to see between the things, to develop an atmospheric consciousness.

Text: Wolfgang Held



Spraying preparations

Michael letter “From Nature to Sub-Nature”^{*}

Petra Derkzen, Johanna Lamprecht und Jakob Bergsma

Day 1

With our breath we are deeply connected to the atmosphere. We breathe in, and out, we breathe the climate crisis in and have to live with it – somehow. We are connected to it even if we try to ban the thought of it.

What does the last Michael letter of the series written by Steiner say to us? Steiner writes about how we are deeply connected to earthly forces just by being born on earth in a physical body with which we can walk, stand and move. These earthly powers bring a sensation of the mechanical to our functioning as a human being. We are confronted with the power of gravity, with balance, with speed. We can sit on a bike and see how the wheel turns in relation to the chain and how this mechanism lets us cycle through the city. Being able to develop and think in a mechanical, technical manner, Steiner says, is a natural part of being born in a physical world.

“The Mechanical is thus characterised as that which is of a purely earthly nature. For the laws and processes of

Nature as they hold sway in colour, sound etc. have entered into the earthly realm from the Cosmos. It is only within the earthly realm, that they too become imbued with the mechanical element, just as is the case with man himself, who does not confront the mechanical in his conscious experience until he comes within the earthly realm”.

While we are able to think mechanically, we are no longer connected in the same way to the other pole, the Cosmos. The mechanical comes to us as a natural fact, it is just present. In previous stages of human evolution, we also took being able to sense and see the spiritual in everything around us for granted. It was just there, as our current way of being able to think mechanically is still here. The work of the elemental beings would just be obviously there for us, in the same way as we experience cycling through the city. By losing this, we became one-sided, only naturally connected to the earthly pole.

“In the age when there was not yet a technical industry independent of true Nature, man found the Spirit within his view of Nature. But the technical processes, emancipating themselves from Nature, caused him to stare more and more fixedly at the mechanical-material, which now became for him the really scientific realm. In this Mechanical-material domain, all the Divine-Spiritual Being connected with the origin of human evolution, is completely absent.”

As a farmer, the biodynamic preparations confront me with my own mechanical-material thoughts. I worked on a farm with 130 hectares of arable land, cereals and large-scale vegetable production. This size means that the preparations cannot be sprayed by hand or with a backpack sprayer. I had my own tractor for this, the oldest one on the farm, a very light Eicher tractor without cabin, specially made for spraying preparations.

Last year, the biggest field was 17 hectares of pumpkins. It lies besides the conventional Dutch research station for fruit production. It was a beautiful fresh and sunny morning in May and the tank of the sprayer was filled with horn manure. I was driving in front of the seeding machine, spraying the preparation with a nozzle at the bottom of the tank which swipes left and right throwing big drops here and there. A group of busy workers at the research station stopped and stared at me every time I passed by. They must wonder, what is she doing? I thought. They must think, why is she not taking every row? I thought. They must think, why is the sprayer swiping left and right, what will these few drops really do? I thought. Not even sprayed accurately everywhere. What am I actually doing, I thought? Is it not crazy what I am doing? Slowly scepticism entered. Doubt entered. I tried to get rid of the outsider helicopter view. To get rid

of the imagined judgements. But it had a firm grip on me. I was unable to be in the action itself anymore, in the spraying moment. The scepticism of what I was doing from a mechanical material viewpoint constantly pulled me away, making me look critically at myself from the outside. I felt sad.

With our breath we are deeply connected to the atmosphere. We breathe in, and out, we breathe the climate crisis in and have to live with it – somehow. We are connected to it while we all have the me-

chanical-material in some way or form in us, it is part of being born on earth.

Would it be possible to observe these earthly forces in ourselves?

Day 2

We hope you are somewhere comfortable, in front of a screen. You are watching us, Petra, Johanna and Jakob, who have prepared ourselves over the last few months for these days.

This is how it seems. Are you sure that you are looking at real people? Are you sure the music was really made by Jakob and Johanna and not programmed? How can you tell if that is true, on your side of the screen?

I seem to be Petra. But maybe all this is just made by programmed artificial intelligence. Computers that are fed with millions of pictures, have now learned to create fully unique faces of non-existing people who talk to you as if they existed in the flesh. In which world have we landed? What is your anchor point?

In the last Michael letter, Steiner is very clear about what happens to us in this current moment:

“By far the greater part of that which works in modern civilisation through technical science and industry – wherein the life of man is so intensely interwoven – is not Nature at all, but Sub-Nature. It is a world which emancipates itself from Nature – emancipates itself in a downward direction. Entering the purely earthly element, he strikes upon the Ahrimanic realm.”

So says Steiner, but who is Ahriman? Ahriman and Lucifer have appeared in esoteric traditions for thousands of years as two characteristics of evil and counterforce. They have a clear function. Born on earth, we experience duality, day and night, light and darkness, good and evil, so that we are able to see contrast and learn from it.

Ahriman tries to capture us and leads us to use our intellect for purely egoistic reasons, even at a cost to others, the environment and our climate. Does this sound familiar? We learn to make rational choices and show calculable behaviour. I do the right thing when I fly to Barcelona for 25 euros to a weekend party. I am encouraged to buy the cheapest food – otherwise I would seem quite crazy. Success in society is measured in material terms. I learn that I have the right to do as I please, that the sky is the limit and that ever smarter technology can organise us out of the climate crisis.

"I want to thank you all (...). You have succeeded in creating a spiritual bond, bringing together people from all over the world. I felt at one with the world and the cosmos."

Yevgeniia



Johanna Lamprecht



Petra Derksen



Jakob Bergsma

Ahrimanic forces, it seems, create their own logic and rationality. Who can really understand fully how our smart phone functions? We can no longer fully think through how the technologies we use daily were built. Well, you maybe now think, why should I need to know how it functions, it just works.

But use without understanding leads us to slowly slip away from life itself – “the paths of life” says Steiner in the letter. From being alive, awake, present and really connected with what is around us. The usual joke that someone completely lost his way when the navigation in the car had no signal is symbolic for the forces of Ahriman. If I am not present, can I know what lives inside me? How can we see spirit through matter, if I am not there myself? What happens to you in the use of devices – how do they influence us?

“Electricity, for instance, celebrated since its discovery as the very soul of Nature’s existence, must be recognised in its true character – in its peculiar power leading down from Nature to Sub-Nature. Only man himself must beware, lest he slide downward with it.”

At this point in the evolution of mankind we have never been deeper in materialism than we are now. We need to experience this deep relation to materialism, says Steiner in the Michael letter.

“Man needed this relation to the purely earthly for the unfolding of his Spiritual Soul. With his own being he must now acquire a right relation to the Ahrimanic. He must find the strength, the inner force of knowledge, in order not to be overcome by Ahriman in this technical civilisation. He must understand Sub-Nature for what it really is. Needless to say, there can be no question here of advocating a return to earlier states of civilisation. The point is that man shall find the way to bring the conditions of modern civilisation into their true relationship – to himself and to the Cosmos.”

So the letter is very clear, we are deeply connected to the technical civilisation we live in, we have to live with it. We have to find our relation to it, without being overwhelmed by it, or slide down with it.

How do you find the right relation to the Ahrimanic?

Day 3

Yesterday we tried to come nearer to a feeling of Ahrimanic forces. Ahrimanic forces are often characterised as cold, from a rational intellect, only from the head, without soul and heart being involved. In another Michael letter, Steiner writes: “indeed man thinks with his head, but it is the heart which feels if the thoughts are light or dark”.

What happens when we look at the climate crisis from our hearts? Maybe we can’t bear what we see unfolding. We are connected to it, but as individuals we feel powerless in view of such an urgent global problem. Thankfully our heart is beating, thankfully we can allow ourselves to feel this pain. Can we honour this? It is a sign of how deeply we are connected to the earth and nature. This is absolutely necessary for being able to heal the earth. Anna Cecilia Grün wrote recently in *Lebendige Erde*: Only when we can meet the earth as a friend – acknowledging its inner life, its soul, only then will climate protection measures take effect.

We have read in the Michael letter that we are strongly embedded in the earthly forces, where we can feel the mechanical naturally by being born in a physical body. Our meeting with materialism is needed so that we can develop our Spiritual Soul. We have lost the immediate sense of seeing the cosmic forces within Nature. It is not in us as a habit. It needs to be acquired anew, but the good news is that everything is potentially available in us!

“From his former lives on Earth, man brings with him the faculty to conceive the Cosmic – the Cosmic that works inward from the Earth’s encircling spheres, and that which works within the Earth domain itself. Through his senses he perceives the Cosmic that is at work upon the Earth; through his thinking Organisation he conceives and thinks the Cosmic influences that work downward to the Earth from the encircling spheres. (...) He (needs to rise) in spiritual knowledge, at least as far into extra-earthly Supra-Nature as he has descended, in technical Sciences, into Sub-Nature. In the Science of the Spirit, we now create another sphere in which there is no Ahrimanic element”

I once attended a day workshop about the silica preparation, which culminated in stirring a big barrel with water and the silica preparation, taking turns with all the participants in order to spray it in the garden where we were. We did meditative exercises and, just before stirring, we practiced being as fully with the garden as we could, sensing the garden, plants and atmosphere. How did this speak to me?

Then we started stirring in turns, until the hour was over. The backpack was filled and we again took turns in spraying the silica preparation in the garden. After, we were again asked to do the same exercise: observe, sense and connect to the garden plants and atmosphere. How did this speak to me?

I was suddenly overwhelmed with a gulf of gratitude that brought instant tears to my eyes. It was as though the garden was loudly cheering with joy and happiness and the atmosphere was filled with it. I drove home with a heart filled with gratitude. Only much later I realised that it was a life-changing experience. It became an anchor point.

That sceptical part in me could no longer deny that an experience with the spiritual world is possible. It had been so profound that even over time it stayed as an authentic experience beyond any doubt. Much later, I am responsible for large-scale preparation use on 130 hectares on the biodynamic farm with my mechanical stirring barrel, the Eicher tractor and the preparation sprayer. Most times I do not reach an inner state that is remotely near to this epic moment in the workshop. But I try again and again, especially with the silica preparation, because I had a special connection to it from the start, which is why I went to the workshop in the first

place. I especially love to spray the cereals. Last summer the spelt was in an almost fully enclosed field with trees and bushes which gives a cosy private atmosphere. Early morning, there was no wind yet and the sprayer produced little clouds of mist which drifted slowly sideways lightened by the first rays of the sun. I drove slower and slower to give less attention to the tractor work and be more observant of this beautiful moment. All of a sudden it happened again. Tears rolled down my cheeks. It was as if the trees around the field tapped me on the shoulder saying, thanks for doing this. This little moment keeps my inner fire burning and is the counterweight to all those moments where it does not function. Not because the atmosphere is not ready to talk to me, but because I am preventing myself from hearing it.

With our breath we are deeply connected to the atmosphere. We breathe in, and out, we breathe the climate crisis in and have to live with it, honour our pain, feel deep into our heart, allow ourselves to feel our love for the earth and nature.

A few sentences of Steiner from the Foundation Stone meditation:

“Man (must recognise) the wonderful secret that prevails between the lungs and the heart (...) one can hope that by grasping this wisely with the heart as an organ of knowledge, man can then

experience how the world images, the God-given ones, actively reveal the cosmos out of themselves. (...) (To discover) the mysterious transition between the rhythm of the world and the rhythm of the heart, and through these in turn the rhythm of the human being, which takes place mysteriously in the soul and spirit between the lungs and the heart.”

"I repeatedly experienced really profound moments of a "sense of the threshold", e.g. during the Michael Letter events... So this is really possible online as well."

Veronika

Text: Petra Derkzen



Zebu cattle, Senegal

How cows become our partners – a dialogue

Anet Spengler and Ronja Eis

Ronja Eis is a student of international relations in London and works on the Youth Section (Re)Search project on the youth-led investigation of the view-points of the upcoming generation (see Goetheanum No. 49/2019). **Anet Spengler** is a farmer and researcher at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL focussing on livestock breeding.

Anet Spengler: “It is simply unfair if we humans destroy the earth and all the other creatures are destroyed along with us. – We could still change.” These were the words of my 19-year old flatmate and he is right: it is a matter of preserving the developmental area of the earth. And what changes are we talking about? That, in the areas where it is possible, we really try and improve things. We human beings have the possibility of understanding the world and its creatures, not only in an outer way, but truly, from the inside. We can imagine what it is like for other beings. And we can become aware of what our thoughts and actions set in motion, we can accept responsibility for this. It is up to us to develop these abilities. Nature beings help us in this: they always give us true answers. Climate breakdown is an answer from nature to our past thinking and action. Can we preserve the living conditions on the earth for long enough so

that we have developed to the point where we and the other realms of nature can develop without the earth?

Ronja Eis: The will to develop is there, something clearly shown by our (Re)Search project, and there is a diverse relationship to nature. How do the interviewees in the age range from 18 to 35 from over 30 countries speak about nature, what is the I-you relationship? The most striking quotation describes nature as a kind of womb: “I always think about my mother’s love. It is the same love that the earth has for us. The earth gives us everything, it supports us – there is so much love every day.” Nature was also described as a challenge – “... I always need this wind and this rain that challenge me and demand my strength.” – that makes me feel small compared to the long Polar winter: “You understand that you are a tiny, tiny piece of the whole world.” It was also described as the place of spiritual development in which, according to one view, in the search for yourself the answer can only be found within. These opinions came from 2017 and were focussed on personal development. With Fridays for Future in 2019 and 2020 the mood changed, with the focus increasingly on doing good in and for nature. A 35-year old Italian said: “Nature is waiting for us humans to change ourselves.” And

a young person from Norway described it as follows: "I feel the urgency: this can lead to action or to paralysis." In the conversations since the start of the corona crisis the most important question was regarding what a life might look like that leads out of the crisis and can preserve life. How must we change the way we live together? "I want to accomplish good acts," said a 17-year old Rumanian and a 19-year old continued: "What is the sign of a good deed? When it is performed out of love."

Spengler: After the oceans, the greatest share of free carbon is fixed in fossil materials such as oil, coal and natural gas. Millions of years ago the first microorganisms and plants assimilated a large amount of carbon from the atmosphere and deposited it in the earth, thus enabling the CO₂-poorer and cooler environment required by higher organisms. Of the 1,500 billion tonnes of carbon in the form of fossil fuels, human beings have already released 20 per cent, increasing CO₂ in the atmosphere and warming the climate again. Now we understand this, we must stop doing it. We also need to store more carbon in the soil and conserve soil carbon. This also helps to stabilise the soil. Grassland is a very important carbon store and forms two thirds of the global usable agricultural area. Twenty four per cent is made up of arable for human food and eight per cent is arable for animal feed. Arable land stores far less

carbon than grassland and managing it uses a lot of fossil fuel and reduces biodiversity. If we were to manage and conserve grassland using domestic animals and stop feeding them with arable fodder, we would have more arable land to feed nine billion people and less arable would be needed than at present. The grassland could be used to keep and feed the ruminants naturally. We would have to keep far fewer poultry

and pigs as they also require a lot of arable fodder, while a somewhat larger number of ruminants would be required for good grassland management. In a scenario like this we would need to reduce our consumption of animal products by about two thirds on average. This scenario would allow us to improve almost all environmental parameters including climate gasses, it would be good for the animals and good for human nutrition. Keeping ruminants is also good for the soil because

"Ronja Eis brought us messages from all over the world. Since this turn of the year we are again at the start of creation. Each one. From love of the individual to love for all (...). Thanks to all for many spiritual pictures and moments!"

A participant



Ueli Hurter, Anet Spengler and Ronja Eis

well composted dung from these animals helps to put organic matter and therefore a lot of carbon into the soil: it not only conserves the life of the soil but stabilises it and protects it from extreme weather events and erosion. In the 40-year DOK study, the FiBL compared conventional, organic and biodynamic farming. Only on the biodynamic arable soils were humus levels (the carbon in the soil) maintained and even increased over a number of years. The DOK trial also showed that the release of climate gasses from the soil was lowest on the biodynamic plots. Up to 1,200 kilograms of carbon per year can be added to the soil from one cow if we make good compost from the dung. But the correct composting process is essential: for example, if the compost heap smokes, then carbon is lost to the atmosphere. Or if it forms white areas inside then the carbon has already been burned due to excessive heat, and in this case carbon has escaped to the atmosphere instead of becoming stable in the compost. This can be prevented by proper layering in the compost heap and regulating the moisture content. If we do it well, then the cows can become our partners in protecting the climate! They help us to manage and conserve the grassland, they produce good fertiliser for our crops and so help to stabilise the soils and enrich the humus content.

The living earth

Charles Eisenstein

Charles Eisenstein, one of the most influential environmental thinkers of the USA, recalls his publications such as *Sacred Economics* or, most recently, the essay *Extinction and the Revolution of Love*.

Wearing a knitted jersey and standing in front of a tapestry depicting trees and people, images of a “natural” world, Eisenstein starts to speak.

It is not a matter of being cleverer in how we treat the earth, but rather about completely changing our relationship to the earth – the way we understand it and ourselves. “Why are we actually here? What is the purpose of humanity?” Even two generations ago the answer would have been very simple: we are the lords and masters of the earth. We are here to transcend all natural limitations and imprint our intelligence on the world, because the world has no intelligence. This attitude of conquering nature appeared unproblematic at the time. And, in Eisenstein’s view, taking part in this conquest was a matter of personal ambition. In fact, something more: this dominance gave people a sense of their own meaning. Now we discover that the earth is alive and that meaning consists of contributing something to this life, to this beauty of the earth. This idea is naturally not new but has existed in different cultures for thousands of years. Eisenstein opens his arms: “There are beings all over the earth and the world itself is a being: the plants, the animals, even the wind and the clouds. All this is alive, possesses consciousness and is sacred.” Charles Eisenstein has the gift of being able to address the dignity of all beings and natural phenomena so simply and fundamentally but at the same time without pathos.

The earth will become how we think about it

Eisenstein continued by recalling that there have always been people who reminded us of this living state. Rudolf Steiner was one of these, and the biodynamic agriculture which he founded sees the earth as a being and those who practise it therefore contribute to the life of the earth.

This is in contrast to the present-day scientific idea of a dead earth. This view, this modern scientific story that we tell ourselves about the earth, is extremely powerful. If we say: “The earth is dead!”, then we will shape the earth according to this picture and it is easy



Living swamps – organs of the earth

to see the signs of this kind of dead world nowadays: monocultures create a desolate landscape and food is produced in factories. In response to climate change, a mechanical world view calls for a reduction in the CO₂ levels in the atmosphere. A world view that focuses on the living earth calls for an increase in the health of the climate, soil, seas, forests and animals. This kind of world view recognises that all beings are related. If we simply reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases to zero and continue to damage and destroy the organs of the earth by treating animals as though they were pests, draining wetlands, etc., then the organs will fail.

Eisenstein went on to compare the earth to an animal in which we make a million cuts. However, we ought not to focus solely on climate change, otherwise we run the risk of being content when global warming slows down. The point is to understand that the earth is a being with a physiology, which requires us to protect every precious place. This kind of story of the earth leads us to heal the earth and the soils, because we understand that we are connected to the earth. What

we do to the soil ultimately comes back to ourselves. Today's industrial agriculture produces a lot of calories, a lot of macronutrients. From a superficial angle it appears successful. However, because we are not separated from the earth, from the soil, we notice that impoverishment of the soil also impoverishes our society and our bodies. We try to counteract this with culture and medication, but this is not sufficient, as long as we continue to damage the life of the earth. Eisenstein then talked about biodynamic agriculture: its practices only reveal their meaning if you understand the earth to be a living being. This is essential for grasping the value of biodynamics. In his childhood and that of his father, the occupation of farmer was seen as the lowest profession, and "farmer" was used as an insult. As a result, everything was geared to having your own children go and study in the city to become a lawyer or engineer, in order to avoid having to dirty their hands and to leave materiality behind. Now, when more and more people try to find a connection to nature and the land again, this reveals a new purpose of humanity, an aim to serve life. This common purpose gives us meaning, a motive for why we are on the earth. With these words Eisenstein ended his presentation. Questions follow:

What is your message to farmers working biodynamically?

Your work is important! Sometimes we hear a voice inside that makes us doubt whether there is any point in working organically on our little farm or our little garden. But, I now speak from the earth as a being: how would I feel in the position of this being? When I have been continuously tormented and poisoned, when I have been forced to experience such a burden and hardship and would then see that someone respects me and recognises that my body is sacred? Then I would say: "maybe they actually do love me! Maybe there is still hope!" So every little service, every little act contributes to the life of the earth. You yourself act out of a movement, a story that says that the earth is alive. It would be impossible to farm biodynamically if you did not feel that the earth is alive. Burying a cow's horn filled with manure – that is something you only do for a being.

The Agricultural Conference was exquisite. I was not expecting to feel its spirit so clearly sitting on my porch in Zimbabwe with my small BD team, but we did. (...) The essence did not feel compromised by the medium. I deeply treasure the capacity your team have to bridge the spiritual with the material and this meeting through the conference really brought something to my team here. I also very much appreciated and was moved by the Michael Letter and how it was offered. It gave me an inspiration for much of my own work that has had to move online – so seek deeper in terms of what is possible to convey and bridge.

Maianne Knuth – Zimbabwe

How do we make the policy decision-makers aware of these insights?

The most important thing is that we, as a community, remind each other that we are not crazy. We have an English idiom that says we should not just preach to our own choir but to the whole of society. This is right, but at the same time we also need to preach to the choir so that we can make beautiful music together, enhance and improve life.

Because this attracts people from outside. The first step should never be to convince an "important" person to change policy, because they will always talk about constraints, EU directives and financial markets. Change does not start there but here, where we change the culture amongst ourselves, where we serve up healthier food. Someone who has eaten Demeter food and learned to appreciate it will put up resistance to the next EU regulation.

How do you return to the land when it belongs to so few?

I only know the situation in the USA. There the average farmer's age is 67. The children leave for the cities. So who is going to take over the land? The land does not care whether we own it or not. When you have an authentic desire to find it, then opportunities will appear.

'Back to the land' is the privilege of few, don't you agree?

We need to ask why economic opportunities are only to be found in the city? Because, to put it briefly, the economic system and free trade agreements are no more nor less than colonialism and imperialism. They make farming throughout the entire global south impossible, they force those who work on the land to leave their land and move to the cities. For example, the Bill Gates Foundation is attempting a type of land consolidation where communal land is transferred to private ownership and the people who originally farmed it are driven out. The agricultural programmes with genetically modified organisms push down prices so that farmers get into debt.



Living forests – organs of the earth

Farmers whose families have lived on the farm for 20 generations are committing suicide. When it comes to privileges, we need to look at the system that extracts wealth from the third world and brings it to the west, finally causing urbanisation. As a matter of fact, migration from the countryside began in the west right back in the 17th century and has now taken over the whole world.

In China 30 years ago 80 per cent of the population were farmers and now it is only 40 per cent. In the USA it is only one per cent. We have to turn this trend around. Farming needs more attention and an awareness that it is not a matter of industrial production but of the living nature of the earth. Then you realise that something that applies at one place need not apply 100 miles away. The industrial revolution taught us that all processes that require a lot of work are bad. The main question was: how can we do it with less work? But why should agricultural work be bad? Naturally it is tedious to produce monocultures. My brother has a farm where I also work. What matters there is diversity, the variety of nature. As a society we should try our best to make the one per cent that work in agriculture back to ten per cent again. And at least 50 per cent should have a garden!

What we feel to be a privilege is linked to our values that underlie privilege. One such privilege is to have everything you need ordered via the computer and not do any work. Does something like this make you happy? Is it fulfilment, joy? No!

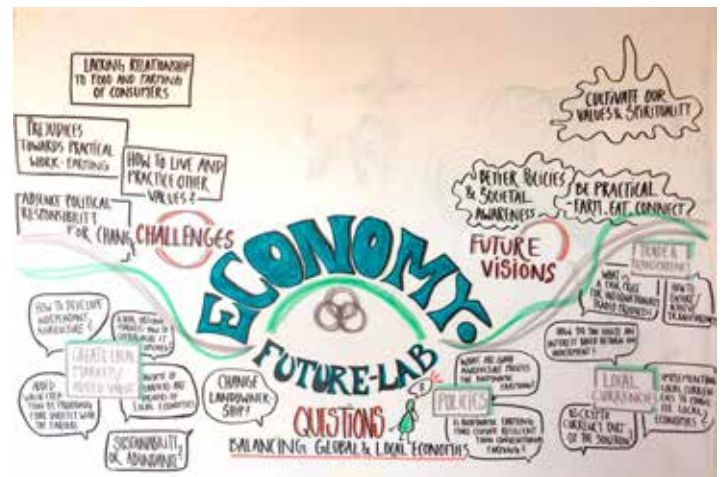
Where do we start in order to tell a new story about farming?

One part of this story is the climate issue. The only way to get carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere is to bind it to the soils again via agriculture.

A very important matter is to keep systems that are still intact alive: the Amazon region, the Congo basin, these organs of the earth that are still healthy. It is equally important to restore the damaged organs. It is not numbers that change the world but the stories that touch what lives in our fellow human beings, especially in those fellow humans who want to dedicate themselves to life.

The first step is not to convince an “important” person to change policy.

Text: Wolfgang Held



Future Labs

For our first fully digital conference of both the Youth Section and Section for Agriculture we tried a new interactive format that we named 'Future Labs'. The initial idea was to design this format for the in-person conference but we created it from the start so that it was possible to host it through a digital platform as well, in this case Hopin.

The aim was to go beyond the format of a conversation group where you reflect, share content and discuss, but also beyond the format of a traditional workshop. We wanted to create a space where participants could move beyond the climate crisis and be guided and inspired towards practical action on their farms and in daily life.

We therefore created group work over three days with a total of 21 groups hosted by a moderator where the content was guided by an expert in the field of focus. There were four main themes in relation to the climate crisis: social, ecological, economic and spiritual. In each of these themes participants could choose between five topics formulated as questions, such as, 'How can we work together with the environmental movement?' or 'How do we live with the sun? How can we understand the warmth regulation of the earth and the human being and its relationship to the sun?'. See the list below for all the topics, moderators and experts.

Over the three days the groups worked individually and together, firstly exploring the focus topics then, on the second day, working on future visions in relation to the climate crisis and the specific topic and, on the third day, working on the next steps in order to achieve the future visions.

Due to the conference being a collaboration between two sections, most groups were very diverse and filled with young people, farmers and enthusiastic participants with an interest in transforming their daily

practices. For example, there was a group working on a degrowth economy and how to transform ones own impact. One of the participants in this group wanted to address the challenges he was facing on his farm and came up with constructive new ideas to totally restructure the relationship to his workers, payment practices and decision making. Other groups, such as the one focussing on the Representative of Humanity, had a more reflective character. Yet other groups worked on expanding awareness and understanding of, for example, the ecocide principles and the concept of local futures where the aim is to bring the local and global into balance again.

Below you can see a variety of results by the graphic harvesters who artistically summarised the future visions, next steps and also the broader interpretations and reflections from the different groups.

Our first experience of using this format was very positive and gave us the opportunity to work in detail on these important topics in the online world. Our hope was that the encounters and common discoveries would enable the participants to form new alliances, collaborations and initiatives together. It is naturally not easy to have an overview of where this has happened, but we know of several initiatives, such as one in North America, where groups of farmers and young people have started a series of ongoing Future Labs on GMOs and a basic course in biodynamics. We are therefore hoping that this joint effort of creating a new format that works on current needs and possible perspectives and solutions, will develop further and be included in different gatherings and conferences held at the Goetheanum and further afield. The concept is available if required and can be requested by sending an email to the Section for Agriculture. *Text: Lin Bautze / Johannes Kronenberg*



- Andrea de la Cruz | Roy Straver
1 #social **What is the Drawdown Project and how can we engage with it?**
- Omer Eilam | Alexandra Gavilano
2 #social **How can we work together with the environmental movement?**
- Paul Stender | Hans Ulrich Schmutz
3 #social **Was ist die Rolle der Bildung in der Klimakrise?**
- Clemens Gabriel | Ueli Hurter
4 #ecological **Jeder ist ein Landwirt - welche Rolle spielt die Landwirtschaft?**
- Andre Tranquilini | Sergio Gaiti
5 #ecological **How can we support biodiversity?**
- Regina Lutke Schipholt | Jasmin Peschke
6 #ecological **Wie können wir Ernährungssysteme für die Zukunft schaffen?**
- Ami Cochrane | Gerald Häfner
7 #economic **Social threefolding as a pathway through climate change?**
- Henry Coleman
8 #economic **How can we balance the global and local economies?**
- Tim Bauer | Stefan Ruf
9 #spiritual **Wie können wir zu einem atmosphärischen Bewusstsein kommen?**
- Johannes Wirz | Matthias Rang
10 #spiritual **Wie kann die Goetheanistische Wissenschaft uns helfen, die Natur zu verstehen?**
- Janne Bierens | Clement Vincent
11 #social **How to overcome divisions between the global South and global North and constructively collaborate?**
- Lin Bautze | Henri Murto
12 #social **How can you develop Community Supported Agriculture in your region?**
- Laura Armengot | Juan Botero
13 #ecological **Cual es la importancia de los bosques en relación con el cambio climático?**
- Thomas Vergunst | Thomas Schmid
14 #economic **How can we do business with the earth?**
- Louise Romain | Ronja Eis
15 #ecological **What is the Ecocide Law?**
- Ester G. Mecias | Jacinta Gorchs | Joan Mele
16 #economic **¿Cómo podemos volver a comprender el significado del dinero?**
- Till Höffner | Theodore Fischer
17 #economic **How can we realise economic degrowth?**
- Roi Schmelzer | Georg Soldner
18 #spiritual **How do we live with the sun?** (How can we understand the warmth regulation of the earth and the human being and its relationship to the sun?)
- Jean-Michel Florin | Etienne Fernex
19 #spiritual **Comment pouvons-nous comprendre le rôle de l'humanité dans l'évolution de la terre?**
- Uli Johannes König | Constanza Kaliks
20 #spiritual **Wie können wir dem Menschheitsrepräsentanten als Leitbild unserer Gegenwart begegnen?**
- Tobias Hartkemeyer | Peter Guttenhöfer
21 #social **Why should we think about community farms as schools?**



The virtual conference – a conversation

The organisers of the conference* describe their experiences with this form of large online event resulting from the constraints of the corona crisis. The questions were asked by Wolfgang Held.

What was your experience?

Constanza Kaliks Those of us in charge of the conference sat at the side of the stage and could watch everything. It was interesting to see the many layers of abstraction. You saw the cameraman and what he had seen, then the detail on his screen, the speaker and her image on a display in Brazil and her message to us: “Finally I’m in the Goetheanum!” That was an interesting contradiction. These many layers of abstraction and at the same time the very real connection of a person from the other side of the earth with what was actually happening here: this contradiction was physically tangible.

Verena Wahl I was able to imagine that the conference would ‘happen’, that the technical side would work out, but I was not able to imagine whether it would actually feel like a conference. My own feeling and that of much of the feedback was clear: “It is a conference!” I was really surprised by how effortless it felt.

Ueli Hurter Three things caught my attention: will this Ahrimanic technology swallow up all our inner efforts – this was a question I asked myself, in fact we all did. We really didn’t know! Before the conference we recorded the contributions for the Michael Letters in the Rudolf Steiner Halde. This work on Rudolf Steiner’s very condensed texts naturally formed some of the most profound moments of our conference. The three speakers were justified in asking whether their contributions,

which are almost like shared meditations, should be recorded on video. Our experience of this is: it is possible! There were very few people who felt differently about it. It was interesting to note that dealing with technology was also the subject of the Michael Letter ‘From Nature to Sub-nature’. So there was a close correspondence between our conference situation in these Corona times and this spiritual scientific study. The second thing was that some people had the idea or rather the inspiration that we should turn round on the stage of the Goetheanum, in other words not speak to the auditorium, but have it at our backs. This allowed the coloured windows and motifs on the pillars to be visible behind the speakers. That was really fantastic! It reminded me of our conference ten years ago with Nicanor Perlas and Klaus-Otto Scharmer when we organised a world café on the stage with 300 participants. We tried out a whole series of new formats at the 2011 conference, formats which then became part of the culture here at the Goetheanum. I wonder whether this conference on the climate will also turn into this kind of turning point. I suspect it will. And I suspect that there will be no going back. The third point is that it was very important for all the speakers and conference co-workers to be there in person. This produced a team spirit such as I have seldom or perhaps never experienced before. At the end we section leaders had the paternalistic reflex of thinking we needed to thank all the co-workers. But at the debriefing we were told: “You could have left that out, we were a team!” – which was true. This teamwork dimension is new territory.

Kaliks I think this is due to the fact that for almost all of us, even the cameraman Philip Wilson, this form was something new. So we were all in the same boat of not knowing or not yet knowing. It is so different and probably everyone felt that it was a risk in a certain sense.

* The organisers of the conference included Constanza Kaliks, Ueli Hurter, Verena Wahl, André Hach and Johannes Kronenberg. André Hach was prevented from participating in the interview for scheduling reasons.



It was not a repetition of what we can already do, but everything was new. That was wonderful and brought people together.

Johannes Kronenberg The originality and newness of the conference format were matched by the thoroughness with which the speakers prepared themselves. Weeks before the conference Anet Spengler and Ronja Eis held several meetings on their joint presentation in order to coordinate their material. Something that applied to all areas was that the preparation was more time-consuming than for a traditional conference. This was rewarded by a more relaxed conference experience.

Johannes, where was your attention when you were presenting Charles Eisenstein?

Kronenberg Mainly the audience, because I tried to put myself in the position of all those people who I don't yet know. Then I followed the questions in the chat. The questions, however, are delayed: someone listens to Eisenstein, thinks of a question, tries to formulate this and, by the time they have typed it in, the lecture or conversation has already moved on. The question is always how to integrate these 'delayed' questions.

What old conference characteristics and habits have come to an end?

Kaliks One speaker and all the others as listeners, that is something that needs to change. There were almost always two of us at the rostrum in this conference and that is completely different.

Kronenberg There were over a 1,000 participants – so quite a large number – and this included people from unexpected places. For instance, there was a big group from the Philippines. These people could never or very rarely take part in person in a conference at the Goetheanum. However, it was not only geographically but also from a timing point of view that the online format provided new opportunities. For example, a working group was set up at short notice to discuss the cow and

its polluting methane output. This is a more complex issue in biodynamic agriculture. 140 participants joined in on this on an ad hoc basis.

Wahl Another thing that changed on account of this was the languages. We had interpreted the meetings and lectures into English, Spanish, French and Italian. French and Italian only applied to twenty participants each. It would have been better to have a translation into Hindi. Time zones are another issue. Although we took this into consideration for the main presentations – they were scheduled in the afternoon so that interested participants from both Asia and South and North America could take part. This is when the greatest part of the world is awake. But we had paid too little attention to the fact that the conference life continues even though we have gone to sleep. Participants from the Pacific area took over the support at night and moderated the chats. A lot needs to change in the event organisation.

In this respect, where do we need to make changes, plough a new furrow?

Hurter The two teams are ahead of the game here. It would be good if all the experiences that we have made could be used for the benefit of the whole Goetheanum and become a learning process for the whole organisation.

Kronenberg Up to now, we have been physically limited to 1,000 participants. This can assume other forms for online events. However, the online conferences should not oust the existing events. We have experimented to see how individual working groups can form spontaneously at a conference. This needs additional experiments. What would happen if we were to have 10,000 participants at a conference in three years' time? How could we manage and support that? This is a question, because even online there is a good level, an upper limit.

Kaliks In retrospect I've thought of some things that we need to take into account. The opening lecture could have been given in English as this is the language which can be understood by most participants without translation. This conference has attracted people who have never been to the Goetheanum. This produces a duty, a responsibility. Now we have new friends! We need to keep up the contact with them. The new friends who now talk about the Goetheanum as 'their' Goetheanum expect something. So here at the Goetheanum we need to think about a great deal more than previously.



The online attentiveness space – a comment

A notice attached to the door of the side stage states 'No entry, recording in progress' and 'Quiet please'. If you go in anyway, you see the youth section technicians and stage technicians at screens connected by hundreds of cables in all colours. The atmosphere is concentrated and calm. "Do you want to get onto the stage? Hold on, I'll take you. Is your phone off?" They appear to be completely in control. Is this partly due to the technology? We open the door to the main stage. The technology is even more impressive. Three cameras are aimed at the two speakers, and again there is this calm concentrated bearing of the camera crew and the large number of other technicians. The camera's field of view is taped off. An imaginary defined space where some global consciousness is taking place. Everyone is quiet. What an attentive space: you can almost feel that the 1,000 conference delegates are present on the stage with their eyes and ears via camera lenses and microphones and pick up every stray cough and rustle. It is really worth being present at this kind of 'conference shoot' to notice that, just like in a temple, the silence here also becomes

a commandment, just like in a temple, the routes are laid out and, just like in a temple, all those present are aware of the value of attentiveness – and in the centre a screen counting down the remaining minutes for the speakers' presentations. But it is not a temple, it is now a studio.

With the video recording and digital distribution of the images, thoughts and words across the whole world in a matter of seconds, much of what we know from the temple or the church reappears in a digital guise. There is devotion and attentiveness on the Goetheanum stage, there is silence and strictness, and there is – and this is something new – a lightness and emotional immediacy, qualities that we have longed for at events for years.*

Wolfgang Held

* Note: this text first appeared on 19 March 2021 in the newsletter "Das Goetheanum" issue 12 and is reproduced here with the author's permission. Thank you Wolfgang Held for this wonderful commentary!



The quality of biodynamic products and what it means for the earth and for human beings

The aim of this new theme of the year is to explore the quality of biodynamic products in depth. Biodynamic agriculture enjoys great popularity all over the world. The area farmed biodynamically is constantly expanding, specialised enterprises are converting to biodynamics and biodynamic products are in demand on the market. Besides quantity, the quality of a product is always important: after all, food should taste good and do us good.

Quality: complex and dynamic

A variety of influences contribute over time to the development of quality.

In arable agriculture, for example, where the farmer tends the growth and ripening of the crops between earth and cosmos year after year, quality arises from a seed that develops under unique growing conditions and human care and produces ripe fruits. Quality is produced by the way in which the living organism develops. The human being, their relationship to the product and to their surroundings as well as their intention all play a decisive role in the development of quality.

The meaning and evaluation of quality change depending on the context in which they are viewed. This is easy to experience when you break fresh bread and the warm moist scent of the baked grain rises into your nose. For a brief moment all the senses are involved and we are immediately curious about how it will taste. This explosion of the senses is not merely an experience but also the final quality check before eating the bread. If you wanted to use up old bread and feed it to an animal, for instance, you would proceed very differently.

You will receive a different definition of quality, depending who you ask and in what context. What to one person tastes good, does them good or is good, is subject to numerous factors such as type of diet, world view, profession and environmental awareness. The question of what quality is, how we perceive, experience and improve it, is complex and dynamic.

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of biodynamic agriculture, gives an important stimulus to study quality in greater depth and to develop biodynamic quality.

A holistic quality for human beings

At the end of the fourth lecture in the Agriculture Course, Rudolf Steiner expressed his views on the characteristics of high-quality food as follows:

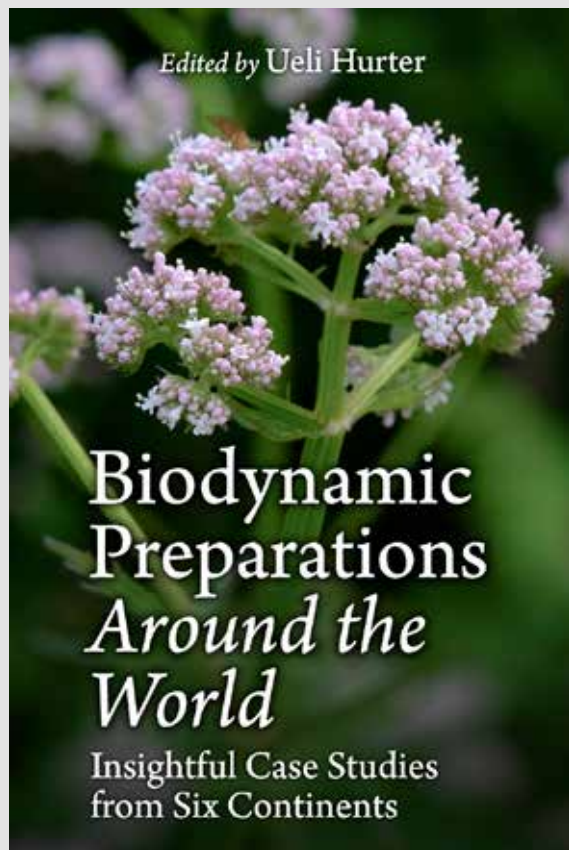
"The important thing is, when these products get to man, that they should be beneficial for his life. You may cultivate some fruit ... [that looks really attractive], and yet, when it comes to man it may only fill his stomach without organically furthering his inner life."

Steiner's concept of food goes beyond material and sense-perceptible properties, such as taste and smell. He expands the concept to the transformation and development of the food in the body. His description can serve as a vision for the quality of biodynamic products. If we want to achieve this, it is important to explore what "organically furthers the inner life" and what this means in real terms for production, processing, trade and consumption. The Agriculture Course and the many developments and initiatives that are based on or connected to it provide a valuable source for this research.

Over the next year the topic "The quality of biodynamic products and what it means for the earth and for human beings" will be explored by the Section for Agriculture and the Circle of Representatives and forms the theme of the Agricultural Conference, the international event organised by the biodynamic movement from 2 to 5 February 2022. We cordially invite you to explore this topic.

At the conference we will read and work with the Michael Letter "At the Dawn of the Michael Age". (Steiner, R. (1998): Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts)

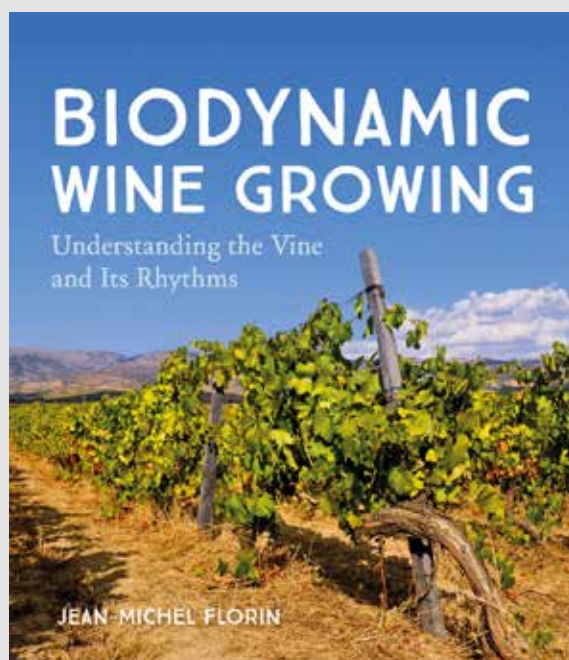
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