BIODYNAMIC INITIATIVE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION NORDIC
Biodynam Initiative for the Next Generation Nordic (BINGN) is a 3 year, farm-based education in the Nordic countries.

Herba is the journal of The Norwegian Biodynamic Association. However, this is a special edition that goes out to all the Nordic countries and beyond.

Denne gangen kommer Herba på engelsk. Det er for at våre venner i Finland også skal kunne lese bladet, og fordi engelsk er undervisningsspråket til BINGN-studenter.
BINGN AND THE FUTURE OF FARMING

EDITORIAL: MAREN LØHRE

I was lucky to become one of the first BINGN students, and like that, I could enjoy the wonders of a pioneering education. Looking back, I know one thing for sure! Or actually two: it was very much worth the effort – no doubt would I do it again. AND: I warmly recommend the education to all other dedicated and adventurous people who wish to get their hands connected with the soil and acquire the skills needed to make the finest food, a meaningful life and to run a farm!

This issue of Herba is quite special. It is written, edited and produced by eight, newly graduated students of BINGN. As the education program is a collaborative project here in the North, and the teachers being people connected to the movement, it felt only natural to make this magazine a cooperation between the Nordic Biodynamic Associations. And I am happy it will be distributed all over Scandinavia - and beyond.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A BIODYNAMIC FARMER?

Biodynamic agriculture is a developing project. It must be. Because in biodynamic agriculture we seek to understand nature as it is, how it truly works, and develop a future yet unknown – a future where humans and nature will function better together and work on a deeper level than what is currently the case. Biodynamics can become a true and functioning sustainability, and we are all somewhere, in our own way, within this project. Only the future will show us what biodynamics can metamorphose into.

The theme in this special edition of Herba is: BINGN, the future and the question «How does one become a biodynamic farmer?». For the first time in my life I am working as an editor and of course then I had to go on a quest to highlight this theme from different perspectives. So, I reached out to the Nordic countries:

From Denmark I got a story from Marie Junker Boesen (page 44). She is a 24-year-old student at «Kalø Økologisk Landbrugsskole». She shares her personal encounter with the biodynamic practices. «This was different», she was thinking. Probably many of you will find yourselves in her story.

From Norway the former editor Dag Blakkisrud writes his final editorial (page 40). He writes why he thinks BINGN is an example of an education for the future. He also writes about how he got the idea for this issue, and some really nice words for the BINGN graduates - I am blushing. Thank you, Dag!

From Sweden I received old photographs from Kerstin Fredlund. They are all from a sunny day at Solmarka farm in Småland, exactly forty years ago. Working in good company on a beautiful day – isn’t that a dream for the future?

Two of the women in the group photo are close friends still to this day. Kerstin and Anna-Karin Ericsson.

Since then the two friends have gone deep into the topic...
of nutrition. Anna-Karin founded and worked at Solmarka bakery for many years, and Kerstin became a medical doctor and a scientist. Today Kerstin runs a project to fight hidden hunger (hiddeningrains.se).

When the BINGN students visited the two women in Kalmar, a city not too far from Solmarka, we were all impressed with their knowledge, enthusiasm and homemade kimchi. The photographs popped up on Kerstin’s presentation that day. One of them in particular, caught my attention and this image has been stuck in my head ever since. Maybe it is just me, but I want you to take a look too! (page 50).

From Finland I asked poet Maria Murto (she is also a biodynamic farmer whom the BINGN students met at her Rekola farm) to share one of her nature exercises (page 48). Being in the nature, doing such exercises, is essential if one wants to become a biodynamic farmer.

A BRIGHT (MICHELIN) STAR TO THE FUTURE.
Lastly I wanted the perspective of a teacher on the theme. In this case the «teacher» is the vegetable farmer, Elin Östlund. The BINGN students spent a whole week last August at her farm Skjølberg Søndre. We got an insight into the very special cooperation they have there with the Trondheim-based restaurant Credo and chef Heidi Bjerkan. Typically the farmers who sell to restaurants, say a carrot, gets paid by the kilo. Sadly the price doesn’t nearly reflect the work and care that lies behind the production of this carrot. Farmers too often lose out when it comes to the financial part, like many other lines of work that cares for our basic needs.

But at Credo they have come up with an alternative solution. The suppliers to the restaurant are seen as a part of the team – as if they were employees in the kitchen. The farmers, Elin and Carl Erik, are guaranteed a fair income since Credo, before every season begin, buy a big CSA*-share. The carrot is sold before it is made, and the risk of a poor harvest is shared between customer and producer. This is a complete twist in how a farm’s produce normally is being valued! In this way new freedom is gained and endless possibilities are opened, brotherhood and cooperation in business. Thinking alternatively also on economics might be exactly how the future for farming becomes very bright. The next generation of farmers should avoid doing «what everybody else is doing», step for a second, and choose carefully what path feels right for them (page 16).

While working on this magazine, something extraordinary happened. The restaurant Credo was awarded a star in the Michelin Nordic Guide. And for the first time Michelin also handed out a Sustainability Award - also given to Credo for «promoting better food and sustainable used practices». I contacted Elin Östlund for an interview (page 52) – both to say «CONGRATULATIONS!» and to ask her what this meant.

* CSA - Community Supported Agriculture (Andelslandbruk, Fælleskabsstøttet landbrug, Andelsjordbruk, Kumppanuusmaatalous).

GET TO KNOW THE BINGN STUDENTS
After visiting over 50 farms (page 41), lovely bakeries, breweries, shops, mills and dairies and then some, I got a particular feeling. I have come to believe that those who fall in love with the biodynamic ideas must be a special kind of curious people. The proof? Travelling through this movement, we met so many specialists who really dug deep into a topic that for some odd reason had caught their interest – fermentation, grains, stars, stones, machines, weather, soil, the true nature of animals etc. etc. Magic happens when you go where your curiosity leads you. On behalf of the students I want to thank the curious «biodynamic people» for the knowledge you have gathered and shared!

In return, in this Herba, the graduates of 2018 will share: Tiril - a poem (page 32), Johannes - his mind-blowing work on Goethes Ur-plant concept (page 34), Ludovica - discoveries after driving once and a half times around earth looking for her farm (page 16), Isabelle - rediscovering the «most eco-friendly» animal (page 28), Elisa - a physical model she made for how she will transform the empty land she just bought (page 10) and Maren - this magazine!

ENJOY!

NAME: Maren Løhre
AGE: 28
BACKGROUND: Bachelor in Journalism (OsloMet).
APPRENTICESHIPS DURING BINGN: Pickerud (Årjäng, Sweden).
BINGN PROJECT: Investigating, experimenting and experiencing plant health.
NOW: Editing Herba and working on my small holding, Pickerud.

PHOTO: INGRID AARVIK BERGE

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PHOTO: INGRID AARVIK BERGE
AIR

Open spaces: playing, overview, big picture, lawns
Closed spaces: concentration, privacy, details
Planted spaces:
- ash-house: big room for celebrating
- willowdomes: playing, sleeping
- hazelnut arcades: private entrance, magic
- entrance lighting: only place for cars

Forest: 1/3 of the whole property, mixed leafy and needle trees, mushrooms, habitat for many animals

Orchard: old varieties of fruit trees and bushes

Beach: Meeting point in the middle: dancing, singing, energy

Outdoor kitchen: more space for preserving, big woodfired baking oven, place to gather

EARTH

Building up humus:
- Manure
- Compost
- Charcoal
- Stonemeal
- Mulch
- Worms

Vegetable garden:
up to 2000m², including greenhouse and plant nursery
- only hand-tools
- no digging, only building beds by mulching
- companion planting, crop rotation

Hill with terraces for plants that especially love warmth

Animals: bees, sheep, working horse, duck/hens

FUTURE ECO SYSTEM AND HOME: Physical model made by Eliza Karnatz.

WATER

Handpumps: easily accessible water
Well: higher quality and bigger amount
Natural ponds: lead rainwater into them

FIRE

Sunny places: catching energy (solar-panels) and warmth
Shadowy places: different habitat, more moist
Wages: our small home. Being active and feeling alive vs. coziness in darker times

NAME: Elisa Karnatz
AGE: 23

APPRENTICESHIPS DURING BINGN:
Rosenhill (Ekerö, Sweden), Landolfswiese (Grabow, Germany), my own garden (near Berlin, Germany)

BINGN PROJECT:
Together with my partner Martin and our daughter Amalia we bought a 1,5 ha big piece of land near Berlin that is nearly empty. My project was to plan how we can transform this property into a thinking ecosystem and our homestead – inspired by the book series «Anastasia» from Russia.

NOW:
I am building up our vegetable garden. Planting trees and shrubs all over the area and getting to know our land! Apart from that I am diving deep into different handcrafts to provide high quality handmade clothes and items to the village.

PHOTO: NADJA LEWIN

NAME: Elisa Karnatz
AGE: 23

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PHOTO: NADJA LEWIN
Imagine you have a nice cucumber but then you leave for a short trip and forget all about it. But when you arrive back home two weeks later, you find it still perfectly tasting. Wouldn’t that be a pleasure?

What would you think of first if I were to ask you to eat a raw carrot and then to describe its quality by using all your senses? The taste, the look or the consistency?

What is quality?

There are some visible and measurable factors that can help us define the quality of vegetables. Chemical factors, like nutritional contents, are essential for the taste. Physical factors, like water content, define the consistency and finally the storability.

But there are some other more sublime aspects which lie beyond what we can measure – which we can only vaguely perceive.

The story of a plant

That is primarily the method of cultivation which creates and influences the final quality. One could say that each vegetable tells a “life story”. Not only weather conditions matter. Also, the type of soil (as we know very well from wine growing) plus the treatment during the cultivation period affects the quality.

As a matter of fact, we can always force a vegetable to grow, to ripen faster and get more yields and use pesticides against diseases.

But isn’t it the same with us that when we feel permanently stressed, then we’re out of balance and under this pressure we don’t really develop our real selves?

I believe it’s important to let and help a plant fully develop its whole self, to complete its whole nature. Only then the vegetable is healthier, lives longer and thanks us with full taste and long storability. A healthy plant withstands difficult weather conditions and diseases better and lives longer. This is all about the “hidden quality” – the so-called life force!

Harvest and storage belong together

This life force of a healthy plant will give us benefits. After harvest the vegetables are still living organisms and contain

CUCUMBER:

A cucumber is ripe when the tip of the fruit looks filled and its lines smooth out. The thin stem of the cucumber is cut off as close as possible to the plant to prevent the scar from mould and diseases. Due to pressure sensitivity cucumbers should be packed carefully and only in few layers.

In order to keep the good taste they shouldn’t be stored colder than 10°C. At temperatures below 10°C they would get watery and soft.

It’s best not to store cucumbers in the fridge, only if already cut and then eat it up soon.

Cucumbers release Ethylene like tomatoes and therefore should always be stored separately from other vegetables.

Another important difference to all the other greenhouse crops is that cucumbers like humidity even after harvest. For that reason they should be covered always with a wet cloth.

The durability of cucumbers is about 2 weeks but after about 10 days they start to get soft starting from the stem base.

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The durability of cucumbers is about 2 weeks but after about 10 days they start to get soft starting from the stem base.
Leafy vegetables: should be washed shortly after harvest to reduce the evaporation and prevent them from dehydration.

Fruit vegetables (like tomatoes, zucchini) are sensitive to pressure and shouldn’t be stacked in layers.

“Flower” vegetables (like cauliflower, broccoli) easily get pressure marks as well and should be stored with some extra leaves as a protection against dehydration.

Root vegetables: should never be washed after harvest and be stored without leaves to not dry out.

life processes. They continuously change their inner (chemical) and outer (physical) quality. The speed of degradation depends on the life force within them.

Furthermore, the quality and storability is dependent on the handling during harvest and the preparation for storage. In other words, the harvest technique is also a part of the “life story”.

During storage “the story” continues with external factors which affect the quality of vegetables. This calls for a need to create storage places with appropriate light, temperature and humidity conditions.

I have made a booklet for you
Now I have shared some basic principles for vegetable plants in general. But of course, there are differences and significant details to take into account. Each vegetable has its own constitution and therefore needs corresponding handling. Here we can categorise four types of vegetables: leafy, fruit, “flower” and root vegetables. Each of these types need special treatment according to its constitution.

In my booklet you’ll find more details on fascinating peculiarities and helpful hints for 25 vegetables predominantly cultivated in Northern Europe.

Here I share with you an abstract from my booklet (page 34) about the cucumber, which I hope, inspires your appreciation for hidden quality.

I am positive that the knowledge of harvest and storage can help our society with the well-known problem of food waste.

Imagine you eat a carrot that you harvested four months ago and you hardly notice any difference to the freshly harvested carrot back in summer. Wouldn’t that be a pleasure?

To get the booklet as PDF or on paper please contact me at harvestandstorage@web.de
The WAY THERE

During the last three years my family and I have been traveling through Scandinavia visiting biodynamic farms, following the BINGN education program. In addition to this, we started a journey around Norway in search of a farm we could buy, rent or work at. The journey has revealed itself to become both a literal and a metaphorical one:

Since our first BINGN-seminar, on February 2015, we have been driving 60 000 kilometers with two small children sitting in the back, changing two broken cars, moving four times, meeting many farmers, reconsidering our expectations and broadening our prospective and visions.

My BINGN graduation project is the result of this personal learning process, which I have tried to summarize as schematically as possible, in order to put order to an innumerable amount of questions, information, impressions and wishes. I will share a glimpse of my graduation project in the next pages.

The modality I used is not intending to confine definitions into closed boxes, but rather to take note of some tendencies I observed on our journey. The intention and hope with this work is to help myself, and whoever find himself in the same situation, to consider different scenarios, to guide a very difficult choice and to ask the right questions.

What are we looking for when we’re searching for a place to start a farming activity?


All these could be possible aspects, but each of us would probably prioritize them differently. I believe it is good to remember that the perfect farm is not to be found or discovered like a treasure hidden at the bottom of the sea, but rather to be created and developed by us.
**HOW TO CHOOSE THE KIND OF FARMING?**

**Economy**
- **Self-sufficiency**
  - No income, no expenses, possibility of goods exchange.
- **Small scale (external job)**
  - Part-time farming, possibility of more attention to details, travelling, mostly working outside, potentially high marketing issues.
- **Social farming (internal job)**
  - Low production dependence, freedom to experiment, limited by social work.
- **Big scale production**
  - Full-time farm work, focus on the farm and agromonic issues.
- **Alternative**
  - Possible little private/family-time, more interaction with the city surrounding.

**Activity**
- **Self-sufficiency**
  - Full-time work producing food and staple goods.
- **Small scale (external job)**
  - Depending on the kind of job.
- **Social farming (internal job)**
  - Limited privacy, increased responsibility, diverged focus.
- **Big scale production**
  - Depending on type of company, limited by production element, customer dependence.
- **Alternative**
  - Possible little private/family-time, more interaction with the city surrounding.

**Freedom**
- **Self-sufficiency**
  - Disregard from agriculture related institutions and farmers, risk of loneliness.
- **Small scale (external job)**
  - High, potential lack of comprehension or support from the family.
- **Social farming (internal job)**
  - Free will.
- **Big scale production**
  - High, potential lack of comprehension or support from the family.
- **Alternative**
  - Free will issue, potential obligations or pressures on the choice of running the family farm, family expectation influences.

**Social**
- **Self-sufficiency**
  - Disregard from agriculture related institutions and farmers, risk of loneliness.
- **Small scale (external job)**
  - More limited in case of buying, safer in case of renting/working (with possibility of buying in a longer term prospect).
- **Social farming (internal job)**
  - Limited to the farms visited and experienced.
- **Big scale production**
  - Deep level, related mostly to the family farm specific production.
- **Alternative**
  - Deep level, related mostly to the family farm specific production.

**Overview on farm life and its implications**
- **Self-sufficiency**
  - Not on a very deep level.
- **Small scale (external job)**
  - Limited to the farms visited and experienced.
- **Social farming (internal job)**
  - Deep level, related mostly to the family farm specific production.
- **Big scale production**
  - Deep level, related mostly to the family farm specific production.
- **Alternative**
  - Deep level, related mostly to the family farm specific production.

**Education and training**
- **Self-sufficiency**
  - No income, no expenses, possibility of goods exchange.
- **Small scale (external job)**
  - Need of an employment outside, possible sale of farm produce.
- **Social farming (internal job)**
  - Income from the social work inside the farm, self-consume and sale of farm produce.
- **Big scale production**
  - Subsidy dependence, high yield dependence.
- **Alternative**
  - No income, no expenses, possibility of goods exchange.

**Coming from the city**
- Starting at grown up age, through agronomic studies, agricultural schools, courses, internship, practical experience as volunteer or guest worker.
- Likely to be limited if training and education in farming have been prioritized.
- Likely to be good if education and employment have been focused on other sectors.
- Starting naturally (intentionally or not) before grown up age, through living context and environment, family knowledge, working experience, agricultural schools and studies.
- Advantaged situation: taking over the family business or inheriting the farm, depending on the family business, possible issue with depth, possible issue with siblings or relatives.
- More limited in case of buying, safer in case of renting/working (with possibility of buying in a longer term prospect).

**Coming from the family farm**
- Starting naturally (intentionally or not) before grown up age, through living context and environment, family knowledge, working experience, agricultural schools and studies.
- Starting naturally (intentionally or not) before grown up age, through agronomic studies, agricultural schools, courses, internship, practical experience as volunteer or guest worker.
- Disregard from agriculture related institutions and farmers.
- Risk of loneliness.
- Possible little private/family-time, more interaction with the city/ surrounding.
- Limited privacy, increased responsibility, diverged focus.

**Coming from a farm taking over another**
- Possible little private/family-time, more interaction with the city/ surrounding.
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- Possible little private/family-time, more interaction with the city/ surrounding.
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**YOUR BACKGROUND?**
- Coming from the city
- Coming from the family farm
- Coming from a farm taking over another
Economy

- Private ownership: Loan issues, depth of risk, little room for investments in the beginning, short buffer in case of problems.
- Shared ownership (cooperative/company): Reduced loan issues, more possibilities for investments.
- Foundation ownership (being employed): No loan, safe but constant income, space for investments.
- Renting: Good income possibilities, issue with investments, rent expenses and others.

Responsibility

- Very high: economic, legal, bureaucratic, building & roads maintenance, etc.
- Shared risks and responsibility on high level.
- The same as for renting, depending on agreement.
- Depending on agreement, economical responsibility, farm running.

Social

- Hierarchic structure, depending on balance between employer and employees/interns. Low risk.
- Delicate social balance, possible need of a mediator figure, need of detailed contracts and agreements.
- Depending on the relationship between owner-employer and between employers. Risk of conflicts.
- High risk of conflicts especially if the owner lives on the farm, opportunity to learn from the owner.

Freedom

- Decisional freedom, limited by economy and concession regulations.
- Depending on the owners, similarity of visions and plans, limited by economy.
- Depending on agreement, limited by fact of not owning, limited by social balance.
- Depending on agreement, limited by fact of not owning.

The masstua: The dormitory was closed during holidays and any pupil that wanted to stay put had to serve barn duty and live and cook in the masstua (smokehouse). They didn't mind simple conditions and tough work, writes Christian Høie. Photo: Fosen Folkehøgskole

A CHANGE OF SCREENERY

BY CHRISTIAN HØIE

PHOTO: MAREN LØHRE
We stood there hugging each other, the tears were pouring. This goodbye was not to be an easy one. For the past three years, we’ve been like siblings. Six times a year, almost like a calling, we joined forces and slept, travelled and ate together on a wonderful journey through the Nordic countries. I hold the memories dear, also from the three farms that generously housed me throughout my studies. So many brilliant people. So many fates crossing paths. Next to the parking lot, a car was waiting. I got in, and while passing by, I admired the unusually lush evergreens completely engulfing the driveway. I knew a new journey was waiting for me. A journey to something familiar, but at the same time leaping into the complete unknown where tasks and challenges were already piling up. I was on my way to Trondheim. To run and manage a farm.

The fact that I’d end up with a pitchfork and a shovel in my hands was not obvious one. Born and raised in a medium-sized Norwegian coastal town and having spent the better part of my life in front of a glaring computer screen, cows and hay couldn’t possibly be more distant for me. But it would soon become everyday life as my interests quickly outgrew the abstract and cynical logic the digital world sustained; it stopped giving reason, it lost meaning. I wanted something else, and two years at the organic agricultural school in Aurland gave me invaluable lessons, broadened my perspective and put me on a new path. However, farming is a skill to hone and no matter how many essays and papers you turn in, nothing beats the time you spend out in the fields. I needed more, and practice, a lot of it! Enter BINGN, the apprentice program which would give me in-depth training in the different disciplines each host farm had to offer. Becoming a part of a fine-tuned machinery, you quickly realize how many cogwheels that needs to turn, and in which direction. This overview would serve me well when I myself were to be put in front of the levers.

Duty was calling. Arriving there, autumn had already preceded me weeks ago, but the trees and grassland really didn’t seem to be distressed. Only the light drizzle in the

**FIRST SEASON:** During Christian’s first year as a BINGN apprentice he stayed at Bergsmyrene Gård, Norway. Here we see his season captured by farmer Finn. Photo: Finn Dale Iversen
I’ve been asked, how would a typical day look like at my new place? First, I learned there is no such thing as a typical day. But if a farm holds animals, there’s usually the barn shift in the morning. Right now, there’s no milk production, so the whole farm is handled by the students alone. Three times during the year, we all gather in the main hall in the morning with a song, word of the day and the pupils then divide into the different groups, depending on their subjects. The work is seasonal; the winter can be quite dormant but there’s plenty of processing foodstuffs and tanning skins to be done. Planning is also an important part right now. Seeds are being ordered, the ones that require the longest growing season has already been sown. The vegetable garden will be expanded this year to make the school kitchen even more self-sufficient. How big should it be, and how will it be cultivated? Permanent beds or rows? Should we get more cows, and when do we travel up to the mountain farm to milk them? The students have their say in this one, they are the ones that will be staying there. Afterwards, we eat together in the dining hall, where four meals a day is being served. After dinner, you can spot the barn shift packing their clothes and heading down to the farm, located roughly 30 minutes by foot from the school. The cows and horses are hungry again.

I have to say that the last eight or ten years have brought enormous of changes into my life, and it seems like a ride that won’t end anytime soon. I took a careful step into agriculture and ended with a quantum leap into bio-dynamic, holistic and regenerative practices. I’m also sensing a shift of paradigm. I think we’re entering a phase where a change to how we cultivate our soil will be more necessary than ever before. Too long have we paid particular attention to the surface and neglecting what dwells below. We think about feeding ourselves, our animals. Let’s not forget to feed the bacteria, protozoa, microbes and fungi who makes all this possible and that holds the whole, delicate interplay of nature together. And that is exactly where we at Fosen Folkehøgskole can make a difference. Because honestly, why am I here? I mentioned before that I didn’t really know what was waiting for me when I started this adventure from scratch, point zero. Overwhelmed at first, now I couldn’t possibly imagine anything else. This was an option I was never given when I started growing up. I was missing out and I barely had a clue. Overwhelmed at first, now I couldn’t possibly imagine anything else. This was an option I was never given when I started growing up. I was missing out and I barely had a clue. Now, I don’t hold any high expectations, but if I’m able to light just the tiniest of flames, sow a seeding of interest and curiosity, then that might in turn develop into a greater understanding or maybe even aspire new gardeners or dairy farmers. Meanwhile, I’ll continue to strive towards experimenting and cultivating the best soil possible. Once you have a living ground, a solid base, a steady fundament, there’s no end to what you can archive. Maybe except oranges in Trøndelag!

Too long have we paid particular attention to the surface and neglecting what dwells below.
Rent, enkelt og naturlig. Selvsagt!


Godt og trygt utvalg

Vårt varesortiment består av matvare, dagligvare, miljø, barnemat, supermat, kosttilskudd, urter, rengjøringsmidler, kroppspleie, vannrensing og annet relatert utvalg som er så nærme naturen som mulig, helst Norsk og økologisk.

Med sunne og bærekraftige valg baner du vei for fremtiden, bli med på denne deilige grønne bølgen. Vi har forhandlerpriser på utvalgte varer for de som har butikk.

Matglede med god samvittighet


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Få en gratis ebok på over 144 sider med over 80 sunne oppskrifter og tips for en renere hverdagen.
Since the first alpacas came to Norway in 1998 their population has been constantly growing. To-day there are over 3000 alpacas mostly spread around on small farms all over Norway. I visited a few alpaca farms in my neighbour-hood to learn more about those funny looking long necked balls of fluff.

Are alpacas some rare cross of sheep, giraffe and angora rabbit?
No. Alpaca - vicugna pacos - is a species of camelid coming from South America. Their closest cousins are lamas, vicunias and guanaco. Alpacas have been domesticated for 5000 years and most of their population lives in the Andes where they are grazing in herds. Breeding alpacas in other regions of the world was popularised in the 1980s.

Are they the new generation of lawn mowers?
Yes and no. Alpacas are excellent landscape care takers. They are light and unlike many other grazing animals they have no hooves. Their feet are padded and finished with two toenails so even the most delicate terrain will stay undamaged. While grazing they don’t pull the grass with its roots, but bite it off close to the ground which stimulates growth of most grass species. Trees are appreciated by alpacas mostly as a windshield not as a source of food – so you don’t have to be worried about your orchards.

Alpacas are also much more quiet and smell better than traditional loan mowers – can’t argue with that. But if you’re thinking about buying an alpaca to keep your lawn neat, please read the next point first.

How to kill an alpaca?
Those gracious animals adapt quite easily to harsh climate conditions, seldom getting ill. They’re also not afraid of predators while in groups, but what can easily kill them is loneliness. You cannot have one alpaca. Alpacas are herd animals and get extremely stressed when disconnected from the others. If you are considering buying alpacas, it’s advised to start with at least three of them.

Why would one breed animals coming from South America instead of local species?
They like it in Scandinavia. Alpacas like the climate and terrain conditions here so you don’t have to be worried about making them homesick. Alpacas are probably the most environmentally-friendly animals one can keep. As I mentioned before, they are gentle to the landscape, but what really makes them so earth-loving is their amazing efficiency in converting food into energy. One alpaca eats only 1 kilogram of hay a day in the winter and even less during the summer. And, as cousins of camels, they drink very little water. On top of all this they need very little grazing space. From little resources they produce 3-5 kilograms of fleece per year. Alpaca-fiber is very precious because of its high quality and natu-ral lack of lanolin which makes it hypoallergenic.

Last but not least, alpaca-dung makes a compact fertilizer for flowers and vegetables which is super-easy to collect since they’re using «public toilet» – alpacas tend to pick one or two spots on a pasture where all of them have their moment of relief. And if you don’t have your own gar-den, you can try to use it as fuel as the indigenous peoples of South America do.

Can one eat alpaca meat?
It depends whether you ask a dietitian or want to follow the Bible. The meat of alpacas has a very low fat and cholesterol content and is rich in proteins, but according to biblical teachings, clean meat is defined as the meat of animals that has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud. This puts alpaca among unclean animals together with for example pig or hare. The ultimate choice is yours.

What is most difficult about keeping alpacas?
When I asked farmers about their biggest challenge with alpacas they all mentioned how difficult it is to stop yourself from hugging them. The sad truth is, even though they look like huge cuddly toys, they don’t like physical contact with humans.
PHOTO: JOSEFINE POSER

NAME: Ewa Napieralska
AGE: 38

BACKGROUND:
Bored of being a psychologist in Poland I decided to be a milkmaid in Norway.

APPRENTICESHIPS DURING BINGN:
Alm gård Solborg Camphill (Jevnaker, Norway),
Skaftholt Sjálfseignarstofnun (Selfoss, Iceland),
my own nameless farm (Modum, Norway).

BINGN PROJECT:
Who is alpaca? I interviewed five alpaca-farmers on different farms in Buskerud. My goal was to describe the personality of alpacas and discover qualities that differentiate them from other livestock.

NOW:
I am looking for a satisfying way to combine these two professions.

7
Do they spit?
They can, but one has to really deserve it.

8
What else makes alpacas special?
I have learned about alpacas’ curious nature and individual character, how well they respond to children and how they can work as therapeutical animals. I have heard and seen what graceful and gentle creatures they are and what magical atmosphere they spread around them. This and their fluffiness is why I fell in love with them.

One of the farmers I spoke with, advised me to come back in spring or summer, to sit down on a pasture and just be together with them, if I really want to find the answer to who alpacas really are.

Photo: Alpaca, S. Eriksen, CC BY-SA 2.0
Alt kommer fra molden,
den dyrkbare jorden som vi kan så,
der frø spirer og har spirt i alle år,
der vekstene vokser og mager blir mette.
Den jorden har blitt tatt hånd om som den
viktigste delen av familien,
ettersom den kommer til å brødfø alle vi er glad i nå
og dem som kommer,
akkurat som den har gitt til dem som kom før oss.
Langs jordens givende kilde ble livet levd.
Frem til frøene ikke spirte lengre.
Frem til meitemarken flyktet og døde ut.
Frem til asfalt og betongkonstruksjoner tok over uten
til å gi noe tilbake.
ellet ble det slik?

NAME: Tiril Sofie Gilbert
AGE: 25

BACKGROUND: Organic agronomist (Sogn school of organic agriculture and
horticulture (SJH), Bachelor in Pedagogy University in Bergen)
and bachelor in Intercultural communication
(Norwegian Teacher Academy in Bergen).

APPRENTICESHIPS DURING BINGN:
Søre Skogen (Skjold, Norway), Skjølberg Sandre
(Svorkmo, Norway) and Helgeseter (Bergen, Norway).

BINGN PROJECT:
Different aspects of social farming.

NOW: Studying in Sogndal (HVL)
to have the teachers certificate (PPU).
For my final project of the BINGN education, I wanted to look into what initially caught my attention upon encountering the Agricultural course. This was a sentence in Ehrenfried Pfeiffers (1899-1961) preface to Rudolf Steiner’s (1861-1925) lectures where he refers to something Steiner told him:

**Nutrition as it is today does not supply the strength necessary for manifesting the spirit in physical life. A bridge can no longer be built from thinking to will and action. Food plants no longer contain the forces people need for this.**

During the BINGN education, we were fortunate enough to receive a lecture by Biodynamic researcher Dr. Jens Otto Andersen. He suggested the understanding that what actually nourishes man is the Ur-image of the plant. I thought that if Andersen’s assumption is true it might be the answer to what Steiner saw was missing in the food.

This project might seem up in the sky and discussing abstract terms, and partly it is, but as we shall see, it is absolutely also down in earth. I am aware that this project is based on many assumptions and although I am not able to present any new proof of anything, I believe it might participate in our understanding of the soil, the plant, manure and fertilization, and perhaps also the Agricultural course.

I believe it is important to question the assumptions this projects is based on, and the discussions that arises are most interesting, but there is no space to elaborate these questions here. Here we have to build upon four first assumptions:

1. That the plant has an Ur-image,
2. The ur-plant is more or less present in the plant depending on the agronomic practice,
3. The ur-plant in the plant as food can be assimilated during digestion, and
4. It is of vital importance for man’s capacity for «manifesting the spirit in physical life».

**UR-PLANT**

The Ur-plant is an idea developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). In short terms Goethe identifies a certain pattern in the growth and development of plants, and especially the metamorphosis of the plant organs, that he called the Ur-plant. The pattern Goethe identified was three stages of the plant development from germination to formation of seed. Each of the three stages consists of an expansion and a contraction phase.

The first stage is the leaf development: the first leaves are small and usually round, and quite unspecific for the different species, but as we follow the succession of leaves, they get bigger and more specific — until a certain point, when the succeeding leaves instead is smaller than the previous, but still more specific and usually sharp and pointy. This is the first phases of first expansion and then contraction, constituting the first stage of the plant development. This sounds perhaps like a very complicated way of saying something all too simple and obvious, but that’s exactly why we don’t pay sufficient attention to this mystery.

The second stage is the flower: the petals is the expansion phase and the reproductive organs is the contraction phase.

The third stage is the fruit as the expansion and seed formation as contraction phase. Goethe suggests, by referring to his notorious and very convincing studies and discoveries, that all these «organs» of the plant is the metamorphosis of the same organ. It is actually the leaf that transforms in form during the first stage, that goes through a metamorphosis and becomes a petal in the second stage, and fruit and seed in the third. (footnote 1)

What is not to be found in Goethe’s Ur-plant-theory is a consideration of the root. How Goethe could forget to consider the root is a mystery in itself, but therefore we have to complete the picture. This is perhaps my main contribution with this project, to incorporate the root in the Ur-plant concept. During my attempt to understand the
The Ur-plant concept I encountered the world of soil micro life-science. (footnote 2) It is a most fascinating field of science, and it led me to the assumption that the root is part of a fourth stage of the Ur-plant.

The fourth stage of the Ur-plant differs from the other stages, because it is not part of the same succession of stages (leaf, flower, fruit), but like the leaf it is continuously expressed. Let me explain better: When the plant germinates it starts its first stage above the soil, the development of leaves, first in a growth phase, before it enters the contraction phase. Under the soil the plant simultaneously starts developing the roots, which I suggest is a contraction phase. To understand why we have to look at what happens in the leaves.

In the leaves, the plant is performing photosynthetic activity where it binds water, which it brings up through the root, with carbon from the air and energy from the sunlight and creates sugar, with some oxygen and water vapour as by-products. The plant then transport this sugar down in the root from where it is further distributed as the plant uses this sugar to build all its substances. Because the sugar flows from all the leaves to the root, I believe it is reasonable to consider it as a contraction. But if the root is the contraction phase of the root stage of the Ur-plant, what is the expansion phase? To understand this we have to look at what happens in the root.

Most plants can develop symbiosis with certain fungi through their roots, so called mycorrhiza, and they can give away at least up to one fifth of the sugar produced, in symbiosis with different fungi. In return, the plant receives plant nutrients such as phosphor, nitrogen and sulphur, but also trace elements such as zinc and copper. The fungi is using this sugar for, among other things, producing the carbon-based substance called glomalin. Glomalin is a very stable substance that takes long time to degrade, gives good structure to the soil and enhances its capacity to hold water and nutrients. In this, and similar symbiosis, the sugar that leaves the plant through symbiosis accounts for a major part of humus formation.

I suggest that it is this sugar that leaves the plant through symbiosis that is to be considered as the growth phase of the root stage of the Ur-plant. Perhaps it is in this way justified to consider the humus itself as a part of the plant, as the growth phase of the root.

A RADICALLY DIFFERENT PLANT

Furthermore, it makes a great difference in the constitution of the plant whether it assimilates nutrients through osmosis by taking up mineralized water-soluble nutrients or receiving them through symbiosis with soil micro life. Not only does it affect what enzymes the plant produces, but also where and how the plant synthesizes its amino acids. This becomes very technical, but what it shows us is that a plant that contributes to humus formation is radically different in its whole constitution from a plant that only assimilates nutrients through osmosis and thus does not contribute with sugar to the soil micro life. As we see, the root with its symbiotic connections is quite essential to the plant, and I have tried to present a suggestion of how it can be included in the Ur-plant concept. To complete the picture, we see that if the plant completely develops all four stages in accordance with its Ur-plant image, it means that it has to have an effective symbiosis and thus contribute to humus formation.

A CRADLE FOR ITS SEEDS

The seeds of the plant, which is the contraction phase, falls eventually in the soil – the humus, and thus in an expansion phase of the plant, we could perhaps say that the humus is the cradle the plant creates for its seeds. We cannot ignore the possibility that in this way the seed might receive an enhanced expansion impulse for its growth, which could be part of the explanation why plants that grow in living soil are healthier.

What I also find fascinating with this assumption is that it depends on the agricultural practice. If there is an abundance of water-soluble minerals (such as those that come from artificial fertilizer or slurry) in the soil, the plants do not develop symbiosis, thus do not contribute to humus formation in the soil, and the plant cannot develop in accordance with its Ur-plant image.
IT WAS THE UR-PLANT STEINER SAW WAS MISSING. So far, it’s quite clear. Both the plant and the soil benefit from symbiosis, and I suggest that the living soil—the humus, is actually a part of the plant, but we have still not looked at the implications of this on the nutritional value of plants. To understand this, we first have to look closer at how plant-health is influenced by different agronomic practices, and what actually happens in the plant.

In the next issue of Herba we will look at the implications on agronomic practice and we will see if we can track the relevance of the Ur-plant all the way to our dining table and nutrition, and whether it is reasonable to assume that it is necessary for creating a pathway in us from the spirit to the physical.

In this article, I have argued that it is reasonable to assume that it was the Ur-plant Steiner saw was missing in the plants, and that the guidelines he gave for agriculture is supposed to condition the manure and soil in such a way that the plants are allowed to develop all four stages of the Ur-plant, and thus, as food give man the “strength necessary for manifesting the spirit in physical life”.

FOOTNOTES
1. For further reading I recommend «The Metamorphosis of Plants» by Goethe.
2. One of the most fascinating articles that greatly informed my project: «Role of Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fung in the Nitrogen Uptake of Plants: Current Knowledge and Research Gaps» by Heike Bücking and Arjun Kafle, to be found on internet under open access.
3. Finally, the book «Vitalitet - Fra muld til mave» by Jens-Otto Andersen is worth the read.
TO HEAR THE FUTURE TALK

A few weeks ago, I experienced something completely out of the ordinary. Something grand and wonderful. Something that gave me hope that the future contains solutions and opportunities that we perhaps are just beginning to understand. I was at Alm Gård at Solborg, Norway. The BINGN students had their graduation after 3 years of education. And that I can tell you: I have been to doctoral dissertations, Master’s presentations etc. etc. But I have never experienced such an immediate, practical, self-driven and strong ability to communicate. It were straight to the core from the first moment. No tunnel vision or presentations of the obvious. Knowledge was submitted that felt genuine. Because it is owned by the person speaking. This process is called «To become aware the ideas in reality». This precisely is an important moment in every human being’s biography, and in humanity itself. Rudolf Steiner says: «To experience The idea in the Reality Is the True Communion of mankind».

Being together with the BINGN students was a strong experience for two major reasons. The first applies to the BINGNs organization and the study itself. Typically a study consists of four elements:

1. To write down something that someone says.  
2. To read something that someone has written.  
3. To be able to repeat what someone has said or written when asked about it.  
4. To combine these three within an independently selected assignment under guidance.

BINGN is nothing of this. BINGN is independent development of selfunderstanding and practice. It is taking responsibility for your own learning. And then two skills are won simultaneously. The ability to systemize knowledge and the ability to personalize experience. Usually, these are the skills we need the most. And of course – what we normally learn the least of.

The art of dissemination
The second reason for my strong experience was the ability to convey. Often it can be so that a candidate can be good enough professionally, but may have difficulty presenting or laying forward. Also in this perspective the BINGN students made an unexpected impressive effort. A map of the whole of Scandinavia was hung up on the wall. There all the farms that had been visited by a BINGN student was marked. From Iceland to Finland and from Denmark up to the north of Norway and Sweden. Each individual student presented a concentrate of his work, in completely free form. You will be delighted to read more about the work of each student in Herba this time.

Not a place. But a condition
The benefit of BINGN as an education is that it is not a physical actual place. There is no school building. And the administration is so small that it is only three people. Elizabeth Wirsching help organize the teachers and attend to the small economy the education must have. PhD Sofi Gerber and farmer and BINGN-founder Laura Bertzbach are responsible for the two classes of BINGN and for the six seminars that each of these two classes attend every year. The essential is that the education does not have as a goal to acquire a documented and adopted theory. It consists in Realize The practical Reality. Therefore, knowledge and learning becomes not a static dimension.
but a vivid ever-growing development of understanding. In this way, BINGN could be an inspiration to all Steiner educations (and others, for that matter).

Are human beings part of reality? Or is man someone who watches reality?

There are – as it appears to me – two basic models of understanding. The most common and publicly-driven one is the so-called evidence-based. To support this model we have universities and colleges and a continual flow of research results.

On the basis of this “knowledge production” we train a huge amount of specialists within all fields of knowledge. Science is also more unified than before, and it is common for students to trade universities between different languages and parts of the world and build competence on many levels at the same time. But one thing has all subjects within the evidence-based world-view in common. They consider themselves to be the observer and not an actual participant. This is what makes it possible for climate experts to travel extensively to climate conferences all over the world and express concern about a possible climate crisis caused by air pollution. Then one put pressure on agriculture and farmers to industrialize more, but also wishes to have cleaner air and bigger production of oil and gas. All at the same time!

The whole human

The second model for understanding the world is the one that Rudolf Steiner pointed out. He thought, I think, that knowledge and research is important. But not so important in itself, as a detached item. Knowledge becomes important only when it becomes life. And it becomes life when man «experience the idea in reality». For that reason, our educations should work differently than regular universities and colleges. We should have a much longer perspective. We should work with Steiner’s basic thoughts as inspiration (and not as dogma!).

The most significant aspect of an education based on anthroposophy is that students get to establish their own thinking based on their own practical experienced knowledge. It has to be this way. Because the result of such a process is the true goal of anthroposophy itself: the whole human being. The whole human being is the arena for the growth of human culture. The whole person takes responsibility. For themselves and for others. For animals and for plants. For the earth itself.

New editor in Herba

As I sat and listened to the BINGN students and became more and more impressed, I thought to myself: Everyone must hear about this! And then I got the idea for a BINGN-Herba. Maybe the other Nordic Countries’ Biodynamic associations can be included? Maybe the students can create the magazine themselves?

I ended up asking Maren Løhre if she would be the editor: «You’re a journalist too», I said. «Let’s go!» Not long afterwards she said yes. I think Herbas readers might be excited. Read, and listen to new voices - for this is the sound of the future.
I NEVER WANTED TO BE A FARMER

BY MARIE JUNGER BOESEN

Marie Junker Boesen (24) is studying at «Kalø Økologisk Landbrugsskole» in Denmark to become an ecological farmer. She grew up in the south of Jylland at her parents farm Hellevad Vandmølle – where they in addition to farming also arrange farm holidays. Marie has mostly occupied herself with vegetable production and soil improvement. She dreams of starting her own versatile farm-business that cares for teaching, local produce and regenerative farming methods. In Herba she shares her story of how she came across biodynamics.

To start with, I never wanted to be a farmer. Growing up on a farm I knew exactly how much work it was, how many worries my parents had and how little money they got out of it. Nope, that wasn’t for me. I wanted to work with nature and from what I knew at that point, farming had very little to do with that.

In 2015 I went on a Folk High-school at the Danish west coast and I started taking classes in "Organic Innovation". I didn’t really know what that meant, but I found myself surrounded by young people, passionate discussing agriculture, how we should feed the world in the future, closed loop systems and how farming could be done in a better way. I was surprised to experience so much interest in something I had never paid big attention to. We dived into subjects as intercropping, compost and plant recognition, and visited a few farms and heard them talk about their production. I realized that I had grown up on a farm, but knew only very little about how my parents actually did it.

I went home full of questions and with an interest for my parents’ work, that I never had experienced before. Since then the interest has only grown and I have taken more and more part in the work and decisions made at their place. In 2016 I started at «Kalø Økologisk Landbrugsskole» in Denmark, and the more I learned about Organic farming the more disappointed I got. This could simply not be the best way of farming! I missed diversity at the farms both in terms of field crops and livestock, I missed focus on soil improvement, more animal welfare, more climate friendly practices, spaces for wildlife and natural areas and most of all I missed the feeling of a farm functioning as an eco-system. As many other young farmers, I started to look at organic farming as a step in the right direction, but far from the final solution.

Luckily it wasn’t difficult to find alternatives and ideas for improvement. I went to Sweden, to the US and back to Denmark working on different farms that all tried to improve the organic model. I saw how livestock could be grazed holistically and how that improved their health and had an impressive effect on the soil. I worked in vegetable productions where diverse green manures where incorporated in the crop rotation and minimal tillage gave space for micro life to do its job. I helped planting nut trees, fruit trees and bushes that would divide the open fields and create a small life zone for insects and birds.

I helped turning deep litter and wood-chips into living compost and saw the effect it had on our crops, and maybe most important I could taste and feel the difference, the health we were building in the soil had a direct impact on our animals, our food and on myself.
Back home in Denmark my father was starting to become interested in biodynamic farming, and it became the subject of discussion at many lunches. We bought preparations and a seeding calendar, borrowed spraying equipment and slowly started to incorporating it into our farm practices. I took courses and started reading about Steiner’s Philosophy. “This was different” I remember myself thinking while I was looking through Maria Thun’s seeding calendar for the first time. I found it deeply fascinating that the planets could have an impact on my carrots and that these preparations if made, mixed and sprayed out correctly could improve the health of my toma- to plants or our spring barley.

I still feel that I have just opened the door into the bio- dynamic world, but I am pleased to find so many tools to improve soil, animal, nature and human health. I haven’t chosen biodynamic farming because I see it as the only solution on the problems in agriculture, but simply because it offers me something that organic farming does not and brings me closer to the way I would like to farm.

So, what about the future? One thing is for sure, the massive research and interest in micro life will very likely keep revealing the benefits of creating a good environment for the beneficial ones, instead of killing of everything in fear for the bad ones. There is no doubt that we as farmers will get more and more ways to team up with these small creatures and that this will become one of our most important weapons against diseases, pests, weeds, low yields and general health problems. In my opinion Biodynamic farming has cared for all this long before anything was proven in a lab, and what some might call religion today, might end up being proven to be exactly as beneficial as many farms has seen it been for decades.

Before I became a farmer, I wanted to work with nature and somehow, I ended up doing exactly that. To farm will always mean compromises in regards to the natural nature, but we can get so much better if we work to imitate natural systems. For me it is not about being Organic, Biodynamic, Conventional or anything else, it is about getting a broad set of tools to help me create a functioning and healthy eco system at my farm.

MARKET-STAND: Autumn market at Krusmølle with a little selection of my biodynamic vegetables, pickles and more. 2018. Photo: Elsebeth Junker

Utdanning for framtida

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OBSERVING THE TRANSFORMATION FROM A BUD TO LEAVES

BY MARIA MURTO

1 You need: colored pencil and a pad of paper, or a sheet of paper with a portable surface.

2 Choosing an object: Find a place close to where you live, for example a park, garden or forest, where you can often visit. What kind of trees and bushes can you see there? Do you find any of them especially interesting? As you are going to observe buds and leaves, choose an object that has branches low enough to observe. If most or all of the plants in your area are evergreen, try to find a plant with an unopened bud.

3 How often and for how long? When you observe buds and leaves, you have a chance to follow a fascinating transformation in nature. The spring sun awakens the bud, marking the beginning of the bud’s growth that reaches full bloom in midsummer. That will not be the end of the journey. Late summer, autumn, and in some places winter, will add their own distinctive colors and forms. It is good to have an observation period that runs through the growing season. Depending on where you live, this period can run from spring to autumn, or the whole year around. If possible, continue observations weekly. When the bud starts opening, it might be interesting to walk by and have a look at it daily.

4 What and how to observe? Start by paying attention to colors and forms. What shades of color can you find, and how do they change during the course of a year? What is the journey from a bud to leaves like with this particular plant? How many different forms are there during the opening phase? After the bud has opened, you could also choose a new object amidst the abundance of new objects that came out of it. How is the journey of the leaf from summer to autumn and beyond? If the leaf falls to the ground, what happens right before the fall, and how is its wilting process? If you like, you could also observe color transformations of one or more leaves on the ground. Draw a picture of what you see with colored pencils, and add as many details as you like. Mark the date and time of day on the back of each drawing.

5 In the end: Gather your drawings in a folder, in the order of your observations. Look at the series by yourself, and if you did this exercise as a part of a group, with your group. You can hang the drawings on the wall in the right order. What thoughts and feelings do they evoke in you? What kind of transformation did the object go through? Did you expect all those changes? Did you learn something new? Discuss what you found were the most interesting aspects of the process, and what posed the biggest challenge. By looking at the drawings of others, you may also find new interesting objects to observe in the future.

This exercise is from the book: «Nature and Virtue Themed Exercises for Relaxation and Concentration» and is published with the permission of the authors.

Smell! Do you remember playing in the hay tunnel as a child? Surrounded by the strong, warm and pleasant smell of grass.

This photograph was taken at Solmarka farm in Småland. A moment in the past, captured forty years ago. Do you feel drawn to it — do you want to jump inside the picture and be back?

No smell! If you were born less than forty years ago, you perhaps never experienced hay play. And this image does not bring back memories from farm life — because you have none. But could it be that your whole body begins to tingle, nostrils fills with imaginary strong, warm, pleasant smell — a feeling tells you that this is exactly what you long for.

Working in good company on a beautiful day — isn’t that a dream for the future?
Q&A WITH ELIN ÖSTLUND

HELLO ELIN ÖSTLUND, FARMER AT SKJØLBERG SØNDRÉ IN TRØNDELAG, NORWAY!

CONGRATULATION WITH CREDO (THE RESTAURANT THAT YOU COOPERATE WITH AND THAT GET ALL YOUR FARM-PRODUCE) BEING AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS MICHELIN STAR IN 2019! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?

– Hopefully it will inspire more chefs and kitchen managers to strive for a more sustainable operation. That more small-scale farmers with a diverse and regenerative production get an opportunity to get forward. Here we get a chance to teach and above all inspire more diversity. We are OF COURSE extremely happy and proud to be a part of this and incredibly grateful that Heidi Bjerkan has had this huge faith in what we stand for, since the very beginning of our cooperation.

CAN YOU SHARE A STORY ABOUT HOW YOU BECAME A BIODYNAMIC FARMER?

– I was searching for connection and was alone with my son Isai who was then 3 years old. Out of pure coincidence, I found a brochure about Skillebyholm in Järna at the employment office. I didn't know then, that the book I had read a year earlier, that had completely captured me; The agricultural course (Steiner), had a connection with Skillebyholm… I wrote to the school because it felt as if everything fell into place when I read the study program. Along with my chronic disaster thinking, needing to know how to become self-sufficient, FIX FOOD vegetables for my son (!) and find balance in my life that was in utter chaos, it felt completely right. Today, looking back, it is indeed as if fate was on my side. For once I happened to be at the right place. It was also here at Skillebyholm where I met my Carl Erik in a conversation around a compost. He became and is my rock and the love of my life. Today I am incredible proud to be able to call myself a biodynamic farmer, but the road to this place has been anything but straight.

DEscribe your vegetable garden!

– If I'm going to describe the garden. Hmm. It really is like a palette where I get to be the artist, and soil, plants, insects and birds are shape and color. Diverse and chaotic.

I go out with the seed basket with a plan, but it never goes according to the plan.

I am also tremendously amazed by life that recurs and seeds that decided themselves where they want to sprout, so yes! It is chaos, yet a wonderful living chaos, a good chaos.

FARMING AT CREDO: Elin Östlund delivers vegetables all year round to the restaurant Credo in Trondheim from her farm, but as this photo shows, she also grows vegetables on site – a way to share knowledge to the Credo-guests. The dog, Zora, belongs to third year BINGN-student Dalma who works with Elin. Photo: Dalma Csiba
**In your dreams, what is the future of farming?**

– The future of agriculture is about getting a closer relationship with the soil and the part that is regarding production of food. That the ecocycle becomes local and regional with the inclusion of private individuals and institutions: the social into the cycle. A small, diverse farm can feed many people, with both food and inclusion. Here is an educational arena where all people have a place and an opportunity to find meaning. So the dream is many small units that cooperate across borders. That we become more a WE. Everyone must have a common goal in promoting diversity, building topsoil, inclusion, collaboration, and to safeguard small and large ecocycles.

How do you teach the next generation of farmers on your farm? What is your approach and philosophy on sharing what you know?

– To inspire, is important for me. This is something in my heart, and I don’t really know what kind of pedagogical, methodical ideas I have. However it is important to always be searching, curious, listening. Not let the brain get in the way of the heart. Actually, I think we need to exercise to feel empathy. Take a step beyond yourself and look at things from several different perspectives. Never stop wondering. It is incredible how much that comes your way when you meet your surroundings with love and curiosity. Closeness to the farm and what soil gives, it is hard work, running a farm. It demands a persevering will and a lot of patience, and that is why it is important to build a network. Many feel alone. We need to meet each other and help each other. Networks, not only between farmers, but between any fields where one can be innovative, creative and see new opportunities together. What is it really to be a farmer (jordbrukare)? A user of earth?

**ELIN’S FAVORITE VEGETABLES:**

Elin’s favourite vegetables

- Favourites are difficult. I get new ones all the time, but there are some sorts that I always have to have in my garden:

  **Kalibos** (red pointed cabbage).

  **»Pipeløk** (Allium fistulosum), bumblebees and bees love it.

  **Svedjerova** (Brassica rapa), it’s so delicious and gets so many beautiful colours.

  **Kardborrerot** (Arcticum lappa japonica), a perennial: it is good to eat both seeds, root and leaves and it is loved by bumblebees.

- If I start counting then it never stops as there are so many fantastic crops that are worth attention. And the soil, that makes it possible, is the most beautiful of all.
A POSSIBILITY FOR A YOUNG BIODYNAMIC FARMER!

Beautiful farm outside of Valencia in Spain is for sale to a young farmer who want to run biodynamic. The farm has got two houses and produce a variety of citrus, nuts and vegetables.

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The Norwegian Biodynamic Association aims to strengthen and develop biodynamic agriculture in Norway. This is done through courses and seminars, the BINGN education and the publication of Herba and more.

BINGN-Herba is dedicated to the «BINGN babies»: Isaia, Ismael, Brage, Ivy, Amalia, Trym, Leevi, the one on the way and those to come.

THE NEXT NEXT GENERATION
In biodynamic agriculture not only soil and nature is being cultivated, but soil and nature is cultivating man.

- Clemens Gabriel, BINGN-founder.