# Folk High Schools of the 21st Century

TRADITION - CONTEMPORANEITY - CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

edited by: Iwona Błaszczak, Tomasz Maliszewski, Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth





ecological folk high school

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### INTRODUCTION

We hand over to the Readers a book that is a sum-up of a few years of work under the project "Building Key Competences and Folk High School Pedagogy in the 21st Century Europe", cofinanced by the European Commission Program Erasmus+, and implemented by seven partners from five countries: Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Switzerland. Today, when our project is being finalized, we are much richer in experience and reflections on the role that folk high schools (and twin educational institutions) played for years, play today and can play in the future in developing various types of competences of the residents of rural areas and other communities – and in particular, activities for social, civic and vocational inclusion of individuals and entire social groups. And we would like – with the help of the authors of the project international team – to share with you what we jointly managed to achieve under the project.

\* \* >

We live in stormy times. Although for over 70 years Europe has not experienced a storm of a war, however, in a global village which we have become due to omnipresent electronic media, we can feel the echoes of military conflicts, tensions, open wounds on the map of the world, even in distant parts of the globe. Many myths that set the narrative of the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have become insignificant. For example, the conviction about historical progress or unlimited economic growth versus such challenges of the modern times as national conflicts revived with doubled strength or climate changes.

There appear dramatic questions about: how to preserve and nourish European identity? How to build bridges or develop a dialogue in the societies torn by divisions? How to develop, but not at a cost of other inhabitants of the Earth or future generations? We witness the paradigms changing. With all those difficult questions and changes that often evoke fear and anxiety about the future of Europe and the world, it is worth taking a closer look at our cultural heritage. All that has built the foundations of our civilization.

Europe has many treasures, though sometimes a bit forgotten, that can be helpful when we face the threats of the modern world. From among them, education is probably the most powerful one. And in the fairly big arsenal of educational resources we will find folk high schools, named *folkehøjskoler* in their homeland, in Denmark, where they were born from the brilliant thought of N.F.S. Grundtvig, who himself also lived in difficult times. For his homeland it was the time of numerous and continuous crises. The 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe was also the time of changing paradigms in various areas of life – in philosophy, art, natural sciences and economy.

In their homeland, folk high schools were an important element of a peaceful revolution, non-violence transformation, building the culture of dialogue, cooperation and democracy.

The structure of this publication is that of a tree, which is a sort of a symbol of philosophy of folk high schools. We are rooted in tradition and history. That is what builds our identity and helps us understand and discover the continuity of our heritage.

At the same time we are closely watching the reality: how folk high schools function today in the countries of a longer tradition, such as Denmark, Norway, Germany. We are observing the situation in such countries as Switzerland, whose adult education experience is worth noticing although the form of education called folk high school was not used there, or in Bulgaria, where other solutions were looked for. We are looking at Polish folk high schools, which in free Poland did not develop but have shrunk to just a few but thriving institutions.

And finally, from the trunk of the modern times there grow branches of challenges of the future. In our book we managed to mention just some of them, the ones that refer to the contemporary threats and challenges. But there are more of them and it is worthwhile coming back to them in the next publications.

As mentioned above, the book is a result of international cooperation under an ERASMUS+ project. Thanks to that we could consider the tradition, the present and the future of folk high schools from the perspective of five very different European countries. In the case of the entity coordinating the entire undertaking – Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne ZIARNO [Ecological and Cultural Association ZIARNO (GRAIN)] this publication is also gaining experience in implementing Grundtvigian pedagogics/pedagogy in Masovian rural areas, where in 2014–2017 that is during the project, there were (and still are) two-year courses on ecological agriculture delivered by the method of folk high schools.

We hope that this publication will help all those who, thinking about the crises today, look for solutions in education. We hope that it will be a handbook on the history of folk high schools, that it will provide examples of concrete activities, courses and, last but not least, questions which we would all like to face together. That it will encourage people to discover new ways of a dialogue in a divided world, to discover joy of cooperation and understanding, passion for lifelong learning. That it will show that "old good Grundtvig" had an ageless intuition that can be useful not only for his countrymen.

\* \* \*

As mentioned before, we start our monograph from the roots - from attempts to show in which philosophical, social and educational ideas we as modern theoreticians and practitioners of Grundtvigian pedagogics/pedagogy and the concept of school for life feel rooted. And we feel to be heirs and continuators of the tradition of folk high schools. As such we just had to make references to the legacy of the Danish thinker, whose visions gave rise to the world's movement of folk high schools. The sketches of Ingrid Ank – director of Grundtvig Academy [Grundtvig-Akademiet] from Copenhagen, an institution very important for nourishing the achievements of Grundtvig nowadays and those of Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth in an original way, hardly seen in the Polish literature of the last few decades, show the figure and the social program of the great Dane, highlighting from various perspectives also his points of view on education, democracy and building civic awareness. The next four studies of the first part of the book focus on the history and development of national educational concepts either directly connected with the boarding folk high schools – as is the case with the German – Martin Nobelmann or a Pole – Iwona Błaszczak, or present the history of the educational institutions in individual countries, which were based on similar to the folk high schools' ideological and program-methodological premises – as the Bulgarian centres of culture of читалище type discussed in the text of Atanaska Stoevea and Ivan Manolov, or the Swiss biodynamic schools in the form described by Reto Ingold. The historical part is completed by a sketch by Tomasz Maliszewski, in which the author tries to show that folk high schools have 'always' had the character of an educational institution which effectively counteracts various forms of exclusion, as by their nature they have always been entities of social inclusion.

It seems that all the eight studies or sketches of the first part of the book give a very good background for the considerations presented in the next two parts of the book – both in the second part – on the present and in the last, third part containing considerations on the future of *school for life*.

\* \* \*

Nowadays folk high schools exist in a few tens of countries. According to the data of the Danish *Grundtvig-Akademiet*, there are about seven hundred of them in the world. So for the societies of many countries they are an extremely interesting ideological and pedagogical/andragogical experience, an example of a valuable, open understanding of the rules governing adult education. In the second part of the publication we show various contemporary approaches to folk high schools, as a multi-dimensional phenomenon with various meaning areas. This part of the monograph also is an attempt to analyse the present transformations and the current situation of the movement of folk high schools in Poland and in Europe,

taking into consideration the most important characteristic features of the phenomenon in individual areas of its development. Individual authors try to show the fundamental features of folk high schools both in the traditional and modern approach.

It is the second part of the book that includes very interesting articles, presenting the activity of all the four boarding schools functioning in Poland: Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów (Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth, Jadwiga Perek and Agnieszka Makowska), Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca (Sulisława Borowska together with Marek Byczkowski and Tomasz Maliszewski), Folk High School in Radawnica (Mirosław Mincewicz) and Folk High School of Artistic Crafts in Wola Sękowa (Anna Sołtysik). Their authors prove that folk high schools in Poland still can constitute and do constitute a valuable source of inspiration for taking up and solving the problems of development of culture and building a civic society. Apart from Polish authors, there were also international project partners who expressed their views on current functioning of folk high schools and similar institutions in their countries: from Bulgaria (Ivan Manolov), Denmark (Peter Mogensen), Germany (Martin Nobelmann) and Switzerland (Reto Ingold). Interesting also are the remarks on civic education in Norway (Anika Konopka) and reflections on the Rural Folk High School in Niederalteich (Martin Nobelmann together with Joseph Holzbauer).

\* \* \*

It is obvious that the future of folk high schools and similar educational institutions should be discussed today. And such discussions are being held in various places and among various people connected with Grudtvigian and folk high schools environments. The third part of this monograph is also a sort of an attempt of a public debate on what the future will bring. "The challenges of the future", as this is the title of the third part, are commented on both by the representatives of individual folk high schools from Denmark (Folk High School in Brenderup – twice) and Poland (Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów and Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca – twice), and distinguished representatives of the academic world – rev. dr. Stanisław Jaromi, *OFMConv* on eco-tasks in the work of folk high schools and prof. Tadeusz Gadacz about folk high school in miserable times. The first ones mainly look for an answer to the questions about the possibility of functioning and development of their institutions in the years to come, as well as the directions of possible modification of the areas and contents of the tasks and their organizational-methodological formula. The other ones refer to cardinal issues – important not only for this or that folk high school but also for the society as a whole.

The editors cannot guarantee that the Reader will get an answer to the question about the future of the world's movement of folk high schools and their national varieties as a result of reading the book. However, we are sure that the Reader will find a lot of remarks, hints and clues to reflect on.

\* \* \*

Nowadays folk high schools are a subject of numerous theoretical analyses and empirical research by researchers from different academic environments, as, for example, the co-editors of this monograph – Tomasz Maliszewski or Iwona Błaszczak (and many others!). The subject is also discussed by adult education practitioners operating in the Grundtvigian paradigm of *school for life* "ordering" to deal with the educational matter in a very special, visionary-civic way – as Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth, the third editor of this volume.

Both the editorial team and the individual authors of this publication are convinced that modern folk high schools should take an important place among the cultural-educational institutions ready to face the challenges resulting from the most important phenomena and processes taking place in the modern world. The analysis of these processes and phenomena clearly shows that it is too early to publicly announce the end of the folk high school idea and a necessity to put it forever to the textbooks on history of education and the history of pedagogical thought. As folk high schools face new challenges – whose catalogue was formulated over a year ago under the project "Building Key Competences and Folk High School Pedagogy in the 21st Century Europe" on the occasion of the conference on the future of folk high schools in the European Solidary Centre [Europejskie Centrum Solidarności] in Gdańsk (14th of March 2016) and establishing, on the next day, the National Network of Folk High

Schools at Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca (15<sup>th</sup> of March 2016). Although it surely does not include all the potential tasks of folk high schools that can be taken up in the years to come, it is worth mentioning here, as it organizes our thinking about folk high schools and their future and tasks, which are the following:

- 1. promoting mature patriotism and respect for historical and cultural achievements of the Homeland with respect for the others and otherness;
- 2. promoting civic education and building civic society, development of local democracy and the idea of social partnership;
- 3. undertaking including activities for the socially excluded/defavourised groups/communities and individuals;
- 4. performing tasks of cultural character including protection of cultural heritage and regional education in its multiple aspects;
- 5. supporting development of self-education movement and amateur artistic-cultural activities in small local communities;
- 6. developing key competences enabling functioning in social, political, professional and personal life;
- 7. providing vocational education in selected areas with holistic approach to an individual and his needs;
- 8. promoting the idea and practical solutions in the area of sustainable socio-economic development of local communities, regions and the country;
- 9. running leisure time courses, developing individualized needs of the members of the community in which the institution functions;
- 10. preparing for understanding and acceptance of the civilisational changes taking place in the contemporary world.<sup>1</sup>

Coming back to the book – we invite you to read it and as editors we wish you many considerations and reflections on the history, the present and the future of folk high schools in Poland and in the world. And we believe that they will soon flourish again also in our country so that, following the example of Denmark or Germany, they are useful for the society, take care of its democracy and shape truly active and creative citizens.

Iwona Błaszczak Tomasz Maliszewski Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> T. Maliszewski, *Uniwersytet ludowy jako szkoła dla życia*. W poszukiwaniu przyszłości, [in:] T. Maliszewski (ed.), *Szkoła dla życia*. *Przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych*, Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, pp. 16–17; I. Błaszczak, T. Maliszewski, E. Smuk-Stratenwerth (eds), *Uniwersytety ludowe XX wieku*. *Tradycja – współczesność – wyzwania przyszłości*, Grzybów 2017, p. 8.

# Is light but for the learned few

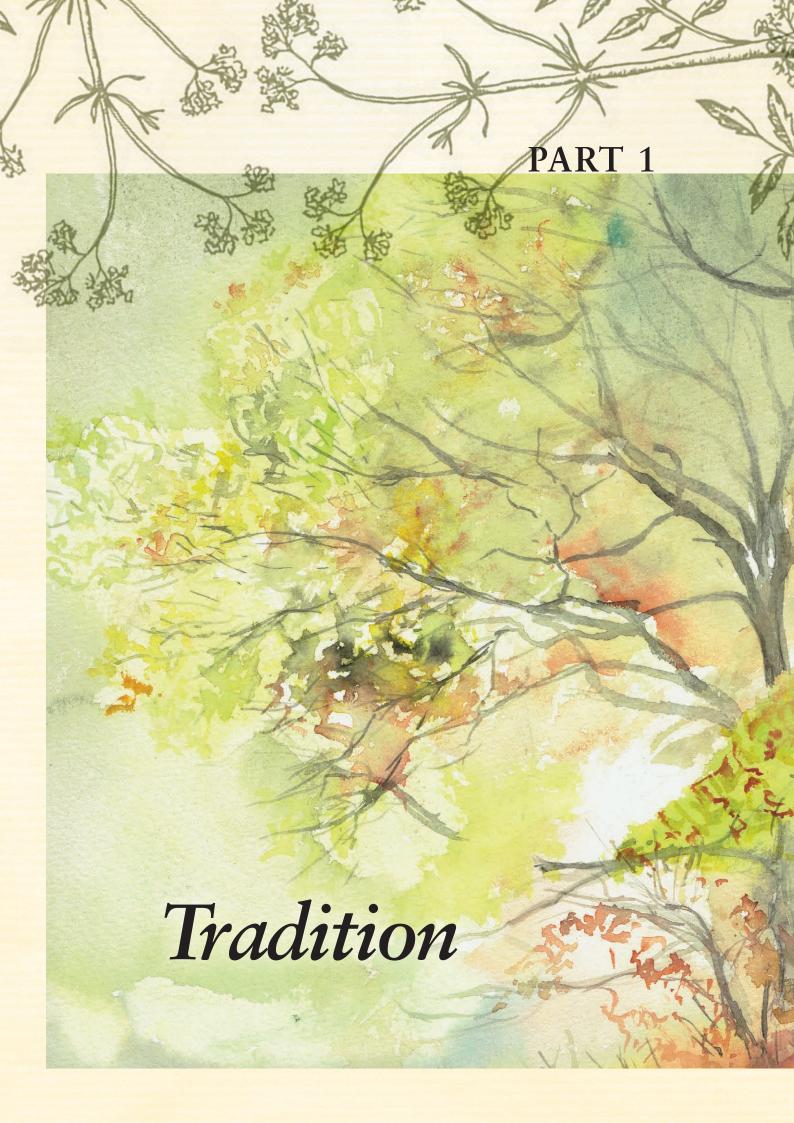
Is light but for the learned few to try and spell unstriven?
No, heav'n would bless all others too and light's a gift from heaven, the sun will with the farmer go the learned few eschewing, it best lights up from top to toe the one who's up and doing.

Is light the planets' sole domain no sight and speach possessing?
Is not the word our mouth can frame a light where souls find blessing!
Thereby all spirits we behold, as sun's rays bodies brighten, it strikes like lightning in the soul and does from clouds enlighten.

Does light on certain terms alone deserve our praise so poorly?
Is light not everywhere a boon!
For it is life's eye surely!
Shall we because of errant ways in spirit's vault of heaven on pitch-black darkness rather gaze than on sun's blazing beacon?

No, from the North was never heard the light we would be dimming! like northern lights in free-born word 'twas seen in heaven gleaming, and shall at northern pole be seen not only here 'mongst mortals; midsummer's valiant sun's bright sheen defies black midnight's portals!

Enlightenment shall be our joy, though reeds alone be brightened, but first and last with common voice may all life be enlightened; it has its source in common deed and grows as it is tended, may it our common council feed till evening star is ended!



## I walked abroad one summer's day

I walked abroad one summer's day to hear song of bird that through my heart might sear, in the deep, green dales, midst the nightingales and each bird that now my heart regales.

A little bird sat in the beach-tree grove, sweet it sang in summer's twilight mauve, in the leafy vales, midst the nightingales and each bird that now my heart regales.

It sang so sweet of meadows lush and low, where like grass forgetmenots do grow.

It sang of everything one fain would hear, most of all what through the heart can sear,

It sang as no bird else has ever sung, played so grandly with my mother tongue,

It sang as if my heart itself did speak, pain and joy were notes from its small beak,

And then I murmured in the twilight mauve: Fly, Gold Crest! fly round your beech-tree grove,

Oh, fly from north to south, from west to east, sing at Danish school, church, dance and feast,

In common Danish, in our mother tongue, sing aloud like no bird else has sung,

Then all who hold their mothers dear will know Denmark is a place where hearts can grow,

Then all will gleam that's lit up by the sun, like red gold upon our mother tongue, in the deep, green dales, midst the nightingales and each bird that now my heart regales.

# **Ingrid Ank**Grundtvig Academy, Denmark

# GRUNDTVIG AND THE IDEA OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOL



Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (N.F.S. Grundtvig) created the idea of the folk high school. He lived in Denmark in 1783–1872, which means he reached – considering the average life expectancy of his time – a very old age. He was active until the very end – the day before his death he celebrated the service and delivered a sermon from the pulpit of Vartov Church in Copenhagen. It should be mentioned that Grundtvig was also a pastor. And a poet,

mythologist, historian, politician, teacher of the folk. He was also a writer and in addition to poetry, psalms and songs, he wrote countless shorter and longer pieces and articles as well as commentaries to current debates. Most of his works were published during his lifetime<sup>1</sup>.

Grundtvig's many faces and professions, his unusually rich creativity and longevity make it very difficult to create his exact picture. For all his life, he referred directly, in writing and speaking, to the political and spiritual issues of his day, but these issues changed over the years. Grundtvig himself also repeatedly changed his point of view. This means that it is impossible to present one Grundtvig – rather many of his faces. Therefore, in today's Denmark, politicians who consider themselves "Grundtvigians" can be found among the right and the left.

This article discusses Grundtvig's pedagogical thought, with a special focus on the folk high school movement. However, although it is possible to talk about different faces of Grundtvig (including a school reformer), it is impossible to draw clear boundaries between them. Historically, for example, Grundtvig researchers believed that for a "late Grundtvig" being a man was more important than being a Christian. It is true that at some point in his life what is human and what is folk came to the fore. It is also true that Grundtvig's theology changed and may have evolved towards a more "human" direction. However, one cannot say that he ever abandoned his pastoral work, writing psalms or theology as such. After all – as has been said – the day before his death he celebrated the service.

It is also impossible to separate Grundtvig's pedagogical thoughts from his political or poetic thoughts. Grundtvig's

NIK. FRED. SEV. GRUNDTVIG

N.F.S. Grundtvig – a print by Erling C.W. Eckersberg of 1830

(Source: Christelige Prædikener eller Søndags-Bog, vol. 1–3, 1827–30)

views on what the Enlightenment is are closely linked to his notion of "folk spirit" (Danish: folkeånd) which in turn is closely related to the language – both native, i.e. Danish, national as well as the poetic and mythical language, i.e. the language in which the spirit of the folk

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Grundtvig's work is available online at www.grundtvigsværker.dk, new texts are added regularly.

finds its expression. The issue of the folk and of the nation played a very important role in Grundtvig's time, not only in Denmark but in Europe in general. Also during the life of Grundtvig – who as a politician himself participated in this process – the country ceased to be an absolute monarchy and a part of power passed into the hands of the folk. At the same time, Denmark was losing wars and lost much of its territory. Norway, once Danish, was taken over by Sweden, the German border moved north. All these events influenced the way Grundtvig formulated his ideas about folk high schools.

If we were to point to a single concept that was present throughout Grundtvig's lifetime, and only gained importance with time, it would be freedom (at least if we started after a short

Why is freedom such an important concept for Grundtvig? Because bondage produces lies. Bondage makes us hypocrites. When you cannot say what you want, you say what people with any power want to hear. The same applies to faith. You cannot and should not – according to Grundtvig – coerce anyone to believe. Faith and conscience must be completely free, otherwise everything will be a lie.

period in his youth when he was a strong supporter of the very orthodox Lutheran interpretation of Christianity). Freedom of faith, expression, thought, and also – what is worth noting – freedom for a man with whom we deeply disagree.

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applies to faith. You cannot and should not – according to Grundtvig – coerce anyone to believe. Faith and conscience must be completely free, otherwise everything will be a lie.

Let us try to go a bit slower and look at how Grundtvig's educational ideas developed.

Grundtvig, born in 1783, is, in a sense, a child of the Enlightenment. Despite this, he became an ardent critic of the Enlightenment thought. He was a child of the epoch in the sense that he shared its faith in the progress of history and was deeply involved in the matter of education, or rather enlightening (Danish: *oplysning*), since he preferred that term. He was, however, also critical, especially of the Enlightenment conviction that, as the rationalists argued, everything can and should be learned only by reason. Grundtvig perceived it as a manifestation of an excessive sense of self-worth, but also as a specific limiting of what it means to be human. As if feelings, imagination and senses – which sometimes open up to the world independently of the individual – were only the tools of reason.

Here Grundtvig was definitely closer to Romanticism that emerged as the opposition to rationalism. It all had an impact on his views on schools, which we will examine.

#### Children

Let us start with children. Grundtvig thought that children should not go to school. He was very attached to his nanny, Malene Jensdatter, who lived in their home. He remembered her as the one who sang for him, told him stories, legends, and fairy tales. The one who shaped his imagination and created pictures in his head. Malene taught Grundtvig a particular notion of language – a vivid language, the language of homeland and heart that goes from mouth to mouth and from heart to heart, whereas school and its method of learning by heart did not convince him at all. It was then that he became sure that parents were the best teachers of their children. It was important for children to ask questions and use their imagination. Grundtvig never understood the model in which the teacher asks questions, and the student replies: "What is the name of the Spanish capital?", "When did Hannibal cross the Alps with his elephants?" etc. Since the teacher knows the answer, it is a pupil who should ask, not the other way round.

Since then Grundtvig became a keen proponent of free education. Most of free schools in Denmark came to existence when parents began to teach their own children, and sometimes children of their friends or acquaintances. Such a school grows out of the parents' values. Free school was thus the opposite of state school, with a central, national view of what would be important in teaching. Such a school was based on love between parents and children. At least in its perfect form.

It is important to note how schools looked during Grundtvig's lifetime. The mainstream school, as it was then called, was compulsory from the second decade of the nineteenth century<sup>2</sup>. Although Grundtvig did not say or write too much about how a mainstream school should function (he generally said or wrote very few texts that could be considered as direct and specific instructions on how to run a school), since he did not attend one, it was his ideas that shaped the state school in Denmark. The one which soon got the name the folk school (Danish: folkeskole).

The Grundtvigian ideas of pupils' freedom to ask questions and oral teaching were introduced to the Danish folk school. But also understanding the school as a kind of extension of home. Today the involvement of parents in the school plays an important role as well – not only is it expressed by their presence among the school authorities, but also in the general expectation that parents engage in pedagogical activities and school social life.

It was as much important for Grundtvig that the desire to attend school was a result of the desire to learn, to become enlightened. Over time, the most important principle of Grundtvig's pedagogical thinking was the claim that no one should go to a school to which they do not want to go and no one should go to a school if they do not understand why they go there. You cannot learn anything if you do not put your heart and commitment into it. Grundtvig wondered why sending a child to school was considered very important, when teachers seemed

to be completely indifferent whether pupils learned anything. They should know the answer when the teacher asked a question, but it was insignificant whether they understood anything.

Grundtvig paid so much attention to willingness and voluntariness because he could see that going to school against one's own will (and hence, not learning anything) was Over time, the most important principle of Grundtvig's pedagogical thinking was the claim that no one should go to a school to which they do not want to go and no one should go to a school if they do not understand why they go there. You cannot learn anything if you do not put your heart and commitment into it.

not only a waste of time, but it could be destructive. The pupil could thus nip in the bud their will to be enlightened and in Grundtvig's opinion every child has one. In consequence, irreparable harm could be done to a child. In order to learn some things, it is necessary to be mature. It is not enough just to repeat something endlessly.

No such attention is paid to voluntariness today. Quite the contrary, critical voices are often heard that folk schools were too heavily influenced by the Grundtvigian "laid-back-approach" to achieve clear goals and concrete learning outcomes. Today's debate on education has been dominated by discussions on comparable measures and test results. That is why we talk a lot about motivation. This is not exactly the same as Grundtvig's concept of desire. Motivation is not necessarily something that just is there, but something that can be created and managed. Motivation, however, has so much to do with the desire that the today's teacher is aware that a student will learn hardly anything if he or she does not have the will and commitment to do so.

Grundtvig, both directly and indirectly, has left his mark in education: directly in the form of free schools, where he attached great importance to the parents' right to determine frames for their children's education, and indirectly – in the form of an idea that was introduced in folk schools: oral teaching (vivid word), voluntariness, and the desire to learn. The Grundtvigian school is, however, subjected to criticism, especially today, as now focus is put on testing and comparing students according to international standards. For this reason, free schools using the vivid word (oral teaching) are considered to be a teaching model too loose and uncompetitive.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In 1814, a "compulsory schooling law" was introduced in Denmark, which introduced compulsory schooling for all children. It was decided that all children, regardless of their parents' financial situation, should receive elementary education. It was the first publicly-announced state law on compulsory education (editorial footnote).

#### Adults

At this point we need to go back to Grundtvig's thoughts on the Enlightenment and the perception of a man as presented in the Enlightenment period. Grundtvig criticized the epoch and the focus of rationalism on reason as the only way to cognition. He was not critical of the word "enlightenment" (*oplysning*). On the contrary, he greatly appreciated the metaphor of "light" (Danish: *lys*) as a symbol of growing up and becoming a human. Enlightenment is like the sun that illuminates the earth and stimulates the plants to germinate and grow.

It means, however, that you need an external factor. A man alone has the potential for growth and development, but one needs light – enlightenment to begin to develop. So one cannot, sitting alone on a desert island, become a fully developed man. A man must encounter something that comes from outside, and when they interact with what they encounter, the enlightened develops. Grundtvig could thus say that speech becomes an element of enlightenment the moment it turns into conversation.

Another important issue in the light metaphor is the fact that the sunrays fall on us all: from higher and lower social layers, educated and uneducated – and therefore enlightenment is available to everyone. At the same time, however, illuminating a plant that does not have the life force necessary for growth does not bring anything. Growth occurs when the light encounters something that reacts to it. So a plant – or a man – must want it and turn to the light. Otherwise it will not work.

In the 1830s, Grundtvig came up with the idea of the folk high school. It started with a "university in Soer" in the town of Sorø in Zealand, where the Sorø Academy, originally

If the folk is to advise the king, they, thought Grundtvig, must be prepared for it by enlightenment. Therefore it was necessary to set up an institution that could teach people to look for "common good", that is, to teach them to accept collective responsibility, not merely to look after their own interests.

a knight school, provided partial university education to students who attended it. At that time, however, the school was in a serious crisis. There were almost twice as many teachers as students, so a new idea was needed. At the same time, the Advisory State Assembly was formed in 1835, which Grundtvig found the ideal form of social policy-making: free folk advising the free king – without pri-

vate interests of the nobility standing in the way (Grundtvig became an enthusiastic advocate of real democracy over time, but in the beginning, he was a loyal subject to the king). If the folk is to advise the king, they, thought Grundtvig, must be prepared for it by enlightenment. Therefore it was necessary to set up an institution that could teach people to look for "common good", that is, to teach them to accept collective responsibility, not merely to look after their own interests. Grundtvig tried to persuade the Danish successor to his idea, which the king was shortly about to accept.

In the years when Grundtvig's thoughts on the folk high school took shape, the need for an alternative to the classical school was discussed in Denmark, i.e. the need for a "continuation

Grundtvig dreamed of setting up a school with a free teaching formula and without a final exam. Examination in his opinion had nothing to do with the basic desire of a man for enlightenment. In addition, he considered examining an extremely unnatural form of conversation, destroying the relationship between the teacher and the student.

school", where particularly children of the townspeople could continue their education after Confirmation. Young people who did not need a classical school (and the vast majority did not need it) did not have any educational alternative – there was a private Realschule, but there was no public school. At that time, however, a need for a Realschule where math, science and modern languages were

taught (in contrast to traditional Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in classical school) came into existance. Grundtvig's idea of developing a university in Soer coincided with the demand for a Realschule, but unfortunately his pedagogical views did not match the expectations of his time. Grundtvig dreamed of setting up a school with a free teaching formula and without a final exam. Examination in his opinion had nothing to do with the basic desire of a man for enlightenment. In addition, he considered examining an extremely unnatural form of conversation, destroying the relationship between the teacher and the student. The latter should go to school

eagerly because of their own will. When it comes to the curriculum, he thought the focus should be put on folk, spiritual and national issues, not on mathematics or the natural sciences. It seems that Grundtvig's suggestion was that boys after Confirmation became idle and lazy as a result of sitting in school and counting. He also became annoyed that ideas for folk schools were created mainly for children of the townspeople, not all the citizens of Denmark.

Grundtvig believed that there was a need for three types of schools: the "church school" for pastors to provide pastoral care, the "classical school" for those who would hold the highest offices, i.e. judges and government officials; and the "school for citizens" (Danish: borgerskole) for all people. The latter was missing because there was no Realschule. However, as already mentioned, Grundtvig had a radically different vision of a Realschule than his contemporaries. What was taught at the then-classic school was, according to Grundtvig, necessary only for very few, and unnecessary for most of the society. In contrast, the school for citizens should be useful for all – the poor, the rural population, but also – what is worth noting – the elite.

The "school for citizens" should not be considered as representing the lowest level of education or "minimum requirement" (minimumskravet) in terms of knowledge, as was the case in the general school for children. The school for citizens was supposed to be a reflection of the folk that can be defined as such when individuals meet and talk to each other. It was crucial for those who were to become judges or officials to come to schools for citizens and get to know those for whom they were to carry out their future professional service. It was mainly the future judges and officials who were to have the need to go there and understand the language and life experiences of the folk. It was equally important for them to live in the boarding house, door to door to each other, and to interact with each other (vekselvirkning – which is one of the key concepts of Grundtvig's social thought).

The interaction happened between the various social strata, between peasants and townspeople, when they met at school. The interaction was also between the teacher and the student, as the real enlightenment took place when both the student and the teacher learned something from the conversation.

The idea of the Soer university was never realized. However, the Grundtvigian ideas of the folk high school had since been put into practice in other circumstances. In 1844, the first Danish folk high school was founded in Rødding, in Southern Jutland. Grundtvig was not the head, but the school was based on his idea, with a particular emphasis on the national aspect (Rødding was close to the Prussian border). In 1851, the folk high school of Ryslinge was opened with Christen Kold as the head. Christen Kold (1816–1870) founded a number of grundtvigian folk high schools in Denmark and could be considered as the one who put



First folk high school – Rødding, photograph of 2007

(Source: Hubertus45, https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%B8dding\_H%C3%B8jskole#/media/ File: R% C3% B8dding\_H% C3% B8jskole - S% C3% B8nderjylland.jpg; Access: 2-05-2017)

the Grundtvig ideas into practice. That is why the school is sometimes referred to as the Grundtvig-Kold school.

The Grundtvigian idea of the "school for citizens" became a model for successive folk high schools, many of them were opened after the first ones in Rødding and Ryslinge. But what are the exact assumptions of the folk high school? What should be taught there?

Grundtvig did not say it and he did it on purpose. The folk high school should primarily be a school for life (*skole for livet*) and life cannot be planned ahead. No school, Grundtvig said, would create a new life for us (he criticized the German idealism). That is why it is impossible to plan schools in advance because the school must "plan itself" according to what life demands. The school does not exist for itself, nor does it exist in order to push for particular projections of an ideal life. Schools exist to support life, they are – as Grundtvig called them – *schools for life* (*skolen for livet*). It should be a place for the spirit and "enlightenment of life" (*livsoplysning* – another key concept of Grundtvig). It should also address a real development in the society.

Grundtvig therefore did not formulate a concrete, clear model of what and how should be taught in the folk high school. On the other hand, he made some suggestions what kind of the folk high school's formula – in his time – was in demand. But it was not the pattern which the schools should follow forever.

In Grundtvig's times, the question of the spirit of the Danish people played an increasingly important role in political development in the direction of democracy<sup>3</sup> and the political situation in Schleswig-Holstein as well as the wars over the Danish borders of 1848–1851 and 1864.

#### The folk

In Grundtvig's eyes, language is the defining factor for the folk. No religion or ethnic characteristics, but a common language gives the ability to talk to each other. Language is what connects people. At the same time, the very definition of *the folk* (Danish: *folk*) meant for Grundtvig two completely different things. It was, on the one hand, a real society (folk), i.e. people living in at the particular moment, and on the other hand, a community (folk) in legends and myths, developing in the mythical and poetic language – also in the Nordic mythology, which for Grundtvig was an "Old Testament," a spiritual ancestor of Christianity.

In fact, the folk of the latter definition – poetic or spiritual people in legends and myths – is Grundtvig's right folk. The Grundtvig project was to make both of these folks become one by the restoration of the mythical communities with language.

Let us say a little more about the word folk: in Danish it can be used in the same sense as the word "service" (*tyende*) in the old days, so you can say "I have my folks to do this", which means "I have someone employed for dirty work so I do not have to deal with it myself".

The folk means something spiritual, uplifting — a sense of community, a common identity with respect to something. It was the meaning that developed in Grundtvig's time, also because of him.

However, the most popular expression of the word is somewhat different and we find it in such expressions as: folk school (*folkeskole*), folk high school (*folkehøjskole*), parliament (*folketing*), Danish national church (*folkekirke*). Here the folk means something

spiritual, uplifting – a sense of community, a common identity with respect to something. It was the meaning that developed in Grundtvig's time, also because of him. In Nazi Germany, the word folk gained meaning connected with ethnicity or race, which makes it difficult to translate the word from Danish into German. In Danish this word is primarily a Grundtvigian term, it is related to language – the speech and poetic-mythical language – and not to race or religion. In principle, anyone who had the desire could be a member of the Danish folk by learning the language. Danishness was not something that was acquired through birth.

As already mentioned, Grundtvig was faithful to the king and the currents that spread beyond France in connection with the revolution did not make a positive impression on him. They awakened fear in Grundtviga and others that the society would plunge into uncon-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Denmark gained some form of democracy in 1848, and the constitution was adopted in 1849 – but parliamentarianism was introduced only in 1901, while women and the service were given voting rights only in 1915.

trolled violence. Grundtvig looked with contempt at the people who had sparked off the revolution and seized power in Paris, calling them uneducated mobs and commoners. But he was also convinced that the movement, which began in Paris, would not stop. Over time, he also gained the confidence that democracy would reach Denmark. At the same time, he was sure that people cannot be entrusted with power and responsibility without proper preparation. Commoners (mobs) are people who think only about their own interests. The folk, on the other hand, is composed of people capable of taking collective responsibility and thinking about others, not just about themselves. The folk high school project was therefore aimed at making the folk responsible and pulling it out of the plebeian state (commoners).

The question of nation (nation) and folk (folk) plays an important role as a symbol of "Danishness" in contemporary discussions on Grundtvig. Some people think that Grundtvig is untranslatable and therefore his way of thinking will not be useful anywhere except for Denmark because his ideas are too closely related to Danishness. There is no doubt that national issues, mother tongue and the creation of the real Danish folk were extremely important to him. He dealt with language, not race or ethnicity. It is important for Danes to bring up these legends and myths that have existed in Danish culture for centuries and look at how they shaped us. For a German, a Swede, a Pole and others, it will probably be other myths and legends, but the point is always the same: to belong to the community, one must have a sense of its history and culture, and thus a better understanding of that spirit whose carrier is language. Therefore, one can assume that when one understands one's own culture, it is easier for him or her to understand other cultures, and by interacting with them, he or she gains a fuller understanding of the notion of the culture itself.

# Contemporary folk high school movement

Since the goal of the folk high school (or at least one of the goals) was to make the commoners – the folk, the same question arises: what is its purpose today?

Estimates show that there are more than 700 folk high schools or similar schools in the world today. Some of them relate to Grundtvig's legacy, others do not. Many folk high schools in Denmark have specialized profiles, such as physical education, drama or journalism. The question is: do their programs also include a broadly defined enlightenment of life for the good of the community?

For the past three decades, folk high schools have been under economic pressure and they had to narrow down their profiles to attract students by focusing on giving specific skills for further education or "finding a dream job" (folk high schools are also becoming places of higher education counseling and career counseling), or help with personal development. Danish folk high schools offer also weekly courses, mainly for adults or older people, but also for whole families.

Hence, critical voices claim that the folk high schools betray the ideals of general education. On the other hand, these institutions have never been separated from practical life, and from the outset, they have combined general education with teaching, for example, agricultural techniques. The relation between the "personal development" of the individual on the one hand, and the preparation for engaging in society and collective responsibility – on the other, has always been very well balanced. And it was so despite the fact that "personal development" is a contemporary concept which in today's very individualistic times has gained much more attention than in the days of Grundtvig. Whatever the circumstances, the discussion is important and contributes to sustaining the folk high schools as a living social movement that balances the notions of "individual" and "community" or "material aspects of life" and "spiritual formation."

Another area of criticism concerns the very idea of education. Some people (such as the Rector of the Metropol School in Copenhagen, Stefan Hermann) think that the Grundtvigian education ideal has gained such a dominant position – especially in the university environment, but also in the folk school and generally in the public debate, that other education concepts are completely forgotten or omitted. Why subjects such as history or literature are to be considered educational whereas chemistry, physics or biology are not? Is relationship to nature and technology (and to oneself as a part of nature) not as valuable as the relationship to society, culture and

common history (including oneself as part of the spirit)? This criticism is not directly formulated as a criticism of the Grundtvigian understanding of education, but rather as a question of developing the concept of education, since Grundtvigian is not the only one.

The third point worth mentioning is the role of folk high schools with relation to national issues. The folk high school movement in Denmark appeared at a time when national issues were discussed by all Europeans, including the debate on the power of the folk, and at a time when Denmark as a nation suffered from wars with neighboring Germany. The question is whether the folk high school movement is a national or international movement? Are the folk high schools of Denmark to adapt students to live in a specific "Danish" community, or in whatever part of the world one is – both nationally and internationally? A special variant of this question appears in the case of American and Canadian folk high schools which are closely related to the emigration of Danes and other Scandinavians to America. Some of them – though not all – have become a kind of Danish culture preservation centers. This, however, is in conflict with the original idea of folk high schools that were not supposed to be enclaves within the surrounding society, but the places of harmonious coexistence with the society.

The fourth issue is the predominance of spiritual matters over the political ones. The folk high school movement appeared as democracy was approaching, and the folk needed, according to Grundtvig, adequate preparation for political participation and political responsibility. The folk high school, however, as a place of education is by no means exclusively focused on politics. Becoming a part of the folk spirit is not only a political but also a spiritual issue, where poetic and mythical language plays an important role.

Some of the national folk high schools in the third world have focused primarily on political issues and the education of "citizens of democratic society". It is no surprise that the countries of "new democracies" have taken such course, but the question is whether the omission of the spiritual – poetic, mythical – aspect will not narrow the view too much. Faced with the current political situation in Europe and the United States, where many voters have chosen to cast their vote as an opposition to the political elite, one may wonder whether it is worth mentioning the "spiritual aspect" that is connected with the "folk aspect." In the Grundtvigian tradition, the folk aspect does not oppose the elite aspect, but the "mob" (commoners). The folk aspect is something that one grows to with the light of enlightenment, which is a carrier of strength and spirit. The folk high school movement is continuing and will continue the discussion that began decades ago, proving that the folk high school is still a *school for life*.

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# GRUNDTVIG – A POET AND VISIONARY IN TURBULENT TIMES



# Grundtvig – theologian, historian, poet

Nikolai Grundtvig is known mainly in his homeland – in Denmark. He has gained a bit of recognition in the world since for more than ten years the education program for adults, under the broader European Union action to support lifelong learning, was named after him. At the EU conference dedicated to the Grundtvig Program in Copenhagen in 2009, participants were invited to the "street" workshop. We had to walk on the main streets of the city and ask pedestrians "Who is Grundtvig?". It turned out that the overwhelming majority had no doubt: a poet, writer, pastor, theologian, philosopher, creator of folk high schools. Individuals who had a problem with the answer turned out to be foreigners.

Why is Grundtvig so important for Danes? The Danes emphasize that it is not only related to the thousands of songs and psalms he wrote and that have been sung to this day, but above all to the impact Grundtvig had on the Danish society at that time, primarily because of initiating folk high schools (*folkehøjskoler*) in the mid-nineteenth century. So why did not his fame spread so widely outside Denmark as the fame of his contemporaries: writer Hans Christian Andersen and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard? Why in Poland where, in view of the numerous translations of Andersen's fairy tales and Kierkegaard's works, only fragments of Grundtvig's writings were published more than 30 years ago in Agnieszka Bron-Wojciechowska's book (I refer to her work in this text)? 1. Grundtvig songs printed in this publication are probably his poetic debut in Poland! Thomas Freeman, author of the book "Danish Folk High Schools," writes about him:

"His style is specifically Danish, although complex syntax indicates profound knowledge of Latin. In addition, he gives the most common words a special meaning whereas the innumerable words that he himself creates are enormously demanding for the translator."<sup>2</sup>

In my article I will try to look at Grundtvig as a person who has fascinated me both by his thinking and the work of his life – folk high schools – for more than twenty years. I would like to illustrate my text with poems of the Danish genius in order to familiarize the readers with the things he considered most important: nature, man, homeland, faith<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning a digression: I have recently watched "Babette's Feast" with students of our Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów. The film was shot by Danish director Gabriel Axel and is based on the story by Karen Blixen. The movie very aptly shows the reality in which Nicholai Grundtvig came into the world. The second half of the eighteenth century in Europe was uneasy and turbulent, whereas in the Danish province, a quiet, somewhat boring life of simple parishioners, was led by their charismatic pastors to eternal life. Common

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A. Bron-Wojciechowska, Grundtvig, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1986.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> T. Rørdam, The Danish Folk High Schools, Det Danske Selskab, Copenhagen 1980, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The songs included in the article come from the collection "Easter Flower! What would you here? Anthology of songs and hymns by N.F.S.Grundtvig", translated into English by John Irons.

prayer and study of the Scriptures, participation in pious religious assemblies, rigorous morality and charity – it all constituted the basis of the then popular Lutheran religious movement called pietism which developed in the late seventeenth century in Germany, and moved from there to Scandinavia.

Grundtvig himself, like main characters in Gabriel Axel's film, was a pastor's child. Holding this position was typical for both his mother's and his father's family. Nicolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig was born in a small village of Udby on the island of Zealand on September 8, 1783 as the voungest son of Catherine Marie nee Bang and Johan Ottesen. Like Philipa and Martina from the film, he grew up in a strict, morally demanding atmosphere where the joys of everyday life were pushed to the margin as opposed to the concern about the eternal life. He first learned at home, then (1793–1797) at a parochial Latin school in Tyregod, Jutland, and he completed his secondary education (1798-1800) at the Cathedral School in Århus. In his writings, he considers the time of learning both in the Latin and the cathedral school as useless and fruitless. However, it was during this period that he encountered the rationalistic thinking of the Enlightenment in the school library, which awakened natural criticism (also in relation to simple religiousness learned at home), as well as philosophical and literary passions. During his studies at the University of Copenhagen, Grundtvig discovered a new, upcoming trend, Romanticism. He read the works of its most eminent representatives: J.W. Goethe, F. Schiller, F.W. Schelling, J.G. Herder and Grundtvig's later friend, the then well-known poet - Adam Oehlenshläger. At the same time he became interested in mythology, especially the Nordic one, which had a great influence on his pedagogical thought.

Probably Romanticism contributed to the birth of Grundtvig's next interest – poetry. It is poetry that makes him so present in modern Denmark – his psalms and hymns are sung not only in churches, but also in all folk high schools (in the contemporary folk high school songbook – *Højskolensangbogen*, 2014 – Grundtvig is the author of 72 texts, i.e. over 12 percent of all works among over a hundred authors of song lyrics).

This first period of his life, until 1815, Grundtvig called theological, because he devoted himself not only to theological studies, but also to writing and preaching. His sermons at that time – heated, critical of the church, fighting for the strict morals and purity of faith – did not make him friends. On the contrary – they made successive pastors close the door before him<sup>4</sup>.

The next period of his life, connected with his stay in Copenhagen, the father of folk high schools called "historical", because he began to consider himself primarily a historian and

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poet. He wrote a lot to magazines, trying to present a "living history". He thought that this could only be done through poetry, because without poetry our connection with the past is dead. During this period the purpose of his work was to search for "what is essentially human". It was then that his fun-

damental statement was expressed: "first man, then Christian"<sup>5</sup>. This statement, often quoted by my Danish colleagues from modern folk high schools as proof of Grundtvig's distant attitude to Christianity, does not contradict his path of faith, to which he remained faithful for the rest of his life. This is evidenced by many songs and hymns that he wrote, such as this one from 1851, which I quote below:

All birds that God gave wings to fly, all things that as the birds do cry and sing while breath they're drawing, now praise their God, for good He is, and in His mercy remedies life's pangs and painful gnawing. 6

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A. Bron-Wojciechowska, op.cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The full text of this and other quoted songs can be found elsewhere in this book.

Grundtvig also learned the zeal of faith from the early Church Fathers. In the mid-twenties of the nineteenth century he was greatly influenced by the book "Against Heresies" by St. Irenaeus of Lyons who in the second century after Christ opposed the spreading of Gnostic sects. In 1826, Grundtvig, inspired by Irenaeus' work, published a pamphlet against a well-known theologian Prof. H.N. Clausen and his concepts of rationalism in theology. Instead of the debate he had expected, he was faced with the lost case in the court and the censorship of his work, which was abolished 11 years later.

# Groundbreaking expeditions to England

Despite the hostility of other clergymen, Grundtvig was liked by the monarch, King Frederick VI. When the king asked him in 1828 what he had been doing, he replied that nothing special, but he would gladly go to England to study old manuscripts and learn the ancient history of Denmark<sup>7</sup>. The economic situation of the poet, due to the censorship of his work, was very hard. If it had not been for the support of the monarch, he would not have visited England three times between 1829 and 1831. As it turned out later, these journeys and the time spent in the English libraries had a decisive influence on the poet's further life and, above all, on "conceiving" the idea of folk high schools.

Grundtvig left gray, crisis-ridden Copenhagen and reached vibrant England. He was not yet aware of the negative aspects of the industrial revolution, injustice and social harm that were described by the then contemporary English artists such as Charles Dickens. He primarily noticed the spirit of entrepreneurship, activity, commitment – so different from apathetic Denmark. He was fascinated by both the heated discussions in the House of Commons and the enthusiastic orators in Hyde Park. However, probably a two-week stay at *Trinity College* in Cambridge impressed him the most. The atmosphere, teacher and student partnerships, endless discussions, shared life at the campus, the constant exchange of ideas and mutual learning – were all very different from the experiences of the schools in his homeland. The importance of conversations, meeting other people, sharing the living word became tangible particularly due to a breakthrough conversation with Clare Bolton.

And here I would like to return to the digression from the beginning of the article, to Babette, the heroine of the story by Karen Blixen and the character of Gabriel Axel's film. Clare Bolton, in some sense, was to Grundtvig who Babette, the French chef, became to a small, rural community in the Danish province. Babette gently stepped into the monotonous, somewhat apathetic life of Danish peasants and helped them discover the taste of life. Other than the taste of fish soup mixed with the wholemeal bread, eaten by them for years. Babette convinced the Puritan community that God had provided us with senses so that we could taste both tart berry and dry wine, exquisite tortoise soup or the sweetness of refined French desserts.<sup>8</sup>

The Danish reformer felt this taste of temporal life during his next, truly exploratory visit to England. He experienced "oplysning" – the enlightenment, the understanding that underlies all his later activity. Grundtvig's biographer, Kaj Tanning, wrote that "1832 is the time of his conversion to temporal, human life here on Earth." The poet himself compared it to a miracle that suddenly happened in his life. Previously, he believed that life on Earth

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> M.S. Borish, The Land of the Living, The Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's non-violent path to modernization, Blue Dolphin Press, California 1991, p. 166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> An interesting description of this groundbreaking moment is presented in the article "On God, Art and Food" in the forum dedicated to film art: Babette shows that the true sacrifice is linked to giving good to the other. She also renounces everything but simultaneously creates extraordinary goodness with gratitude, love and true humility. That is why there is no bitterness in her, but genuine joy and fulfillment. Because as she says, "All over the world, the artist's call: let me give my all." What she does to others, realizing her great talent, makes her an artist, and the mystery of the taste that she prepares for long-term sufferers – the true art. "Authentic artistry does not leave anyone deaf, everyone can understand it and it is it is just a measure of its size." At this point the film becomes a commendation of culture. It also reminds us that life cannot be full without joy and pleasure and without a pinch of madness; http://www.filmweb.com/film/Uczta+Ba-bette-1987-31658/discussion/O+Bogu%2C+sztuce+and+feature.,1266844 (access: 11-04-2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> S.M. Borish, op.cit., p. 167.

was a time of trial, a sinful period that was merely a prelude to true life after death. Now he understood that life on Earth makes sense. It is a "divine experiment of dust and spirit" and this divine life cannot be transformed according to rigid religious rules. Now he wanted to take life as it is:

"Christianity has ceased to be a law, but it has become good news, giving life a new shape." 10

He no longer wanted to engage in arguments defending the purity of faith. With his enthusiasm and temperament, he began the greatest and most important battle of his life – for *folkehøjskoler*, folk high schools, the "schools for temporal life". He wrote many pages of journalistic texts and manifestos on this subject, gave hundreds of sermons and wrote over a thousand songs<sup>11</sup>. The song entitled *Is light but for the learned few*, whose fragment I put below, is still sung in the Danish *folkehøjskoler*, and it poetically expresses what the author called "enlightenment of the folk" (*folkeoplysning*).

Is light but for the learned few to try and spell unstriven?
No, heav'n would bless all others too and light's a gift from heaven, the sun will with the farmer go the learned few eschewing, it best lights up from top to toe the one who's up and doing.

## Outside – failures, inside – flourishing

To understand the importance of Grundtvig for the history of Denmark, a short commentary on the historical and social background of the creation and development of Danish folk high schools is needed. The nineteenth century in Denmark's history was a period of political and economic failures. The country, which at the beginning of the eighteenth century was one of the largest and most important European states, became one of the smallest and least significant ones hundred years later. As a result of hostilities, it lost a considerable part of its territories, mainly to the mighty neighbor of Germany. These military failures were accompanied by economic failures. After the eighties and nineties of the eighteenth century, which was a period of good economic situation and development for the small Scandinavian country, a recession came. 1813 brought a collapse of the economy followed by seven years of inflation. At that time the value of the Danish crown fell tenfold. In addition, changes in the agricultural market, caused by the cereal inflows from overseas, had catastrophic consequences for the Danish agriculture. Epidemics and migration made the population of this small country equal in 1864 one-third of the population of the early nineteenth century.

American anthropologist Steven M. Borish, who spent 10 years of his life to understand the phenomenon of Danish folk high schools, writes about this difficult time:

"The description of these events in the Danish history provides a living example of how the people of one small country responded to a series of economic and political crises with a non-violent, democratic revolution, that enabled them, quite literally, to rise from the ashes." <sup>12</sup>

Nikolai Grundtvig was one of the most important leaders of this "bloodless" revolution. He built a sense of national identity, a pride in being Danish in his writings and poems in those difficult times.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> T. Rørdam, op.cit., p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> More about this period of Grundtvig's life and his influence on philosophical and pedagogical approaches in Denmark can be found in Ingrid Ark's article.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> S.M. Borish, op.cit., p. 10.

Far higher are mountains in other lands found than here where a hill is thought striking.
But Danes of the North find that grass-covered mounds, and lowlands are more to their liking.
The lofty and wind-swept may suit all the rest, to stay down to earth is what serves us Danes best.

In times when the gentlefolk used German and Latin, Grundtvig persistently demanded to use native language. In his essay "Danish four-leaf clover" of 1836, he emphasized that

"a nation without a language is like a king without a kingdom, and the power of one and the other exists only "on paper." Experience also teaches us that a language devoid of its spirit in the mouth of the folk is as much worth as the plans of the impotent monarch. Since the "spirit of the community" is the power of the state, and the language of all peoples serves to express their needs, then no state can flourish unless it uses the mother tongue in its fullest form." <sup>14</sup>

At the same time he criticized schools where Latin dominated, calling them "schools for death." Below is a fragment of the hymn devoted to the mother tongue.

I walked abroad one summer's day to hear song of bird that through my heart might sear, in the deep, green dales, midst the nightingales and each bird that now my heart regales.

A little bird sat in the beach-tree grove, sweet it sang in summer's twilight mauve, in the leafy vales, midst the nightingales and each bird that now my heart regales.(...)

And then I murmured in the twilight mauve: Fly, Gold Crest! fly round your beech-tree grove,

Oh, fly from north to south, from west to east, sing at Danish school, church, dance and feast,

In common Danish, in our mother tongue, sing aloud like no bird else has sung,

Then all who hold their mothers dear will know Denmark is a place where hearts can grow

# On his personal life

Finally, a little bit about Grundtvig's personal life, as rich as his work. The poet first got married in 1818 to Lise Blicher. Lise accompanied him in the most difficult period of his life (when censorship prevented him from publishing his own works, which negatively influenced the economic situation of the family), and serenely went through the troubles resulting from her husband's uncompromising nature and his foul mouth. After her death in 1851 he married Marie Carlsen Toft, a wealthy woman who had widowed a landowner. The marriagge improved Grundtvig's financial situation. Beloved Marie died after three years of marriage, several months after the birth of their son Frederik. For the last time the poet got married at the age of 75 – to 35-year-old Asta Reedtz, a widow of the Danish Foreign Minister. The last of Grundtvig's many children, Asta Marie Elisabeth, was born when her father was 77 years

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> The four leaves of the clover are: king, nation, country and language.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> A. Bron-Wojciechowska, op.cit., p. 151.

old. Due to the loving care of a much younger wife he peacefully went through the last years of his long life.

It's so delightful to be as one,
For two who dearly life would be sharing,
Each joy is felt to be doubly won,
Each sorrow's burden is half the bearing;
Yes, it's fair weather
To walk together,
Two birds, one feather,
In love, true love!

The colorful life of Grundtvig, his vivid language, expressive writings or songs sung to date in Danish churches and folk high schools, and above all, the passion for "education for life", has left a lasting mark on the Danish culture. No wonder all his countrymen in the streets of Copenhagen could answer the question, "Who was Grundtvig?" And in the folk high schools in Scandinavia, or in Poland and wherever the seeds of Grundtvigian philosophy have sprung up, there are still lively discussions:

- what does the flagship term for his educational ideas "oplysning" enlightenment mean today?,
- how to create a "school for life" today?,
- how to build a balance between the individual development of a man and his anchoring and service to the community?,

that is, the constant search for answers to the questions that first became so prominent in the nineteenth century because of N.F.S. Grundtvig.

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# HISTORY OF RURAL FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS IN GERMANY



Adult education and rural folk high schools from the 19th century until the end of World War I in 1918

#### Initial models and precursors

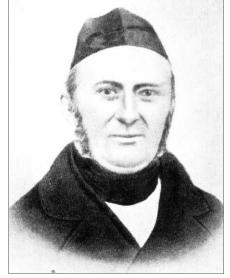
The rural folk high schools in Germany today emerged and were further developed over a long historical process in adult education. The first conceptual models can be found as early as the 18th century in the context of the enlightenment in which educational issues play an important role. Examples include the father of modern pedagogy, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827, from Switzerland), and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), one of the most influential writers and thinkers in the German language during the Age of Enlightenment.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the transition from a corporative, feudal society to a modern, bourgeois society was under way. At that time, one of the primary tasks of adult education was to organize knowledge-based, vocational-technical-agricultural education and further training for artisans, workers and the peasantry. This led to "an increasing shift in learning away from everyday, traditional, imitative learning (teaching trades) toward institutionally-centered and organized classes (school-like instruction)"<sup>1</sup>.

School education alone was thus not considered sufficient. Adult education became a branch of education. Initial considerations for establishing educational institutions for young farmers occurred in the first half of the 19th century throughout the entire German-speaking world.

In the years leading up to the suppressed German revolution of 1848 (known as *Vormärz*), many thoughts and demands were expressed to the extent that adult education should not only serve the purpose of continuing vocational education, but should also aim to provide life education in the broadest sense.

Particularly worthy of mention in this context is Carl Friedrich Hermann Klenze (1795–1878). He is credited with establishing a "higher school" for farmers for the state of Schleswig-Holstein in Rendsburg. Today this school is considered a precursor to German folk high schools. His goal was to create an institution for training and continuing education designed to help the rural population achieve greater enlightenment and better general and specialized education to enable them to participate in the events of the era (see Gaasch 1991, p. 14). The school targeted young sons of farmers between 20 and 30 years of age who enrolled at their own expense. Training was slated to take two years and focus in particular on



Carl Friedrich Hermann Klenze (1795–1878)

 $<sup>^{\</sup>scriptscriptstyle 1}\,$  W. Seitter, Geschichte der Erwachsenenbildung, Bielefeld 2007, p. 19.

content in two areas: agricultural science and skills and general education. A farm was also part of the school, enabling what had been learned to be tested in practice. Klenze assumed that "everyone needs in his vocation a spiritual connection to the general life of humankind"<sup>2</sup>.

Klenze's ideas were put into practice by establishing a secondary school for farmers for the state of Schleswig-Holstein in 1842 after the members present at a meeting of the "Landwirtschaftlicher Verein im Amte Rendsburg" (Agricultural Association in the Rendsburg Council), about 200 farmers, voted in favor<sup>3</sup>.

The school in Rendsburg had to take up its activities at a time of political unrest: Schleswig-Holstein was under Danish rule and was fighting for its independence. This was also one of the reasons that the school had to be closed again in 1848.

"It still paved the way for folk high schools. Even though it was not a folk high school in our sense, but more of a day school for adults who were able to stay overnight in the nearby town. From the very beginning, it was more than just a vocational training center for farmers. General education and character development were the focus. These were also supposed to benefit the political education of the farming community"<sup>4</sup>.

#### The development in the second half of the 19th century until 1918

The activities of the independent adult education facilities that began with the higher school for farmers in Rendsburg were not initially continued after the failure of the revolution of 1848 in Germany. This was quite different from the situation in neighboring Denmark where, after the founding of the first folk high school by Grundtvig in Rødding in 1844, other schools were quickly established "which became permanent together with a wave of new schools founded after 1864 – as it were, as an indirect result of defeat in the war against Prussia"<sup>5</sup>.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, German adult education was more influenced by the English model of the university extension with lecture cycles, courses and seminars without boarding. The term "folk high school" ("Volkshochschule") was established in this context and had different content in Scandinavia than in the German-speaking world<sup>6</sup>.

Grundtvig's name only appeared on the fringes in the discussion about education in Germany which focused more on the model of folk high schools than on their actual fundamental ideas. This changed with the book "Die Dänische Volkshochschule und ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung einer völkischen Kultur in Dänemark" (The Danish Folk High School and its Importance for the Development of a National Culture in Denmark) by Anton Heinrich Hollmann which was published in 1909, went through several editions and was the first book to reach a wider audience of readers. "With his book, Hollmann not only made a significant contribution to spreading knowledge about the Danish folk high school in Germany, but also to Grundtvig's idea of folk high schools, and can thus be counted as one of the key proponents of Grundtvig at the beginning of the 20th century. Hollmann's book laid an important foundation for the further development of Grundtvig's reception in German adult education over the next few years and beyond".

In addition to Hollmann's book, there was another factor that led to the establishment of folk high schools in the extreme north of Germany shortly after the turn of the century: One aspect of the success of Danish schools was the contemplation of national values which appeared necessary to the Danes after their defeat in 1864 and the loss of Schleswig-Holstein. There was a very large Danish population especially in northern Schleswig. Many young people from northern Schleswig attended Grundtvig folk high schools on the other side of the border, which helped strengthen Danish culture in northern Schleswig and "warmed the heart for the Danish character". As part of the German-Danish border dispute over this region, this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> K. Gaasch, Vorläufer und Anfänge, [in:] K. Gaasch, W. Kuhne, A. Emmerling, Geschichte des Verbandes Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands, Vol. II, Verband Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands e.V., Hermannsburg 1991, p. 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> N. Vogel, Grundtvigs Schulgedanken aus deutscher Sicht, "Grundtvig-Studier" 1989, Vol. 41, no 1, p. 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> K. Gaasch, op.cit., p. 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> N. Vogel, op.cit., p. 164.

development was perceived as a threat by the German population and again led to the formation of four German folk high schools based on the Danish model (in Tingleff, Albersdorf, Mohrkirch-Osterholz and Norburg) between 1905 and 1911 with the aim of "preserving and fostering the German culture in its standing".

Folk high schools had therefore more or less arrived in Germany. The experience gained in Schleswig-Holstein formed the basis for the much more extensive establishment of folk high schools throughout Germany after the end of World War I in 1918.

# Rural folk high schools during the Weimar Republic until 1933

With the defeat and end of World War I in 1918, Germany faced a transition from a monarchy to a republic where democratic thought and action first had to be developed. The Weimar Republic was torn by political and social conflicts during the entire period of its existence until 1933. This also affected the development of folk high schools during this period which initially experienced a "boom in the creation of new schools throughout the territory of the Reich". The foundation had been laid by Hollmann's book mentioned above, but also by the influence of the educator Robert von Erdberg (1866–1929). He decisively shaped the "New Direction" in adult education by placing the individual at the center of educational efforts and calling for the "ultimate goal" to be "education for people both as individuals and as members of society" 10.

The founders of the German folk high schools of this era drew their knowledge, however, less from reading Grundtvig's original texts (which were translated more widely for the first time in 1927) and more from direct contact with the Danish folk high schools. Many visitors from Germany went to Denmark to experience the "original". Most returned home again filled with enthusiasm and were inspired to apply what they had learned there in Germany<sup>11</sup>.

The many new schools that were created, however, did not mean that a uniform concept of the idea and practice of a German folk high school existed during this phase. There were no general criteria that everyone could agree on. Even the name "Heimvolkshochschule", or folk high school, was not accepted across-the-board as the standard term.

The schools were heavily influenced by various "schools of thought" and interest groups. In 1932, there were 52 schools classified as folk high schools, half of which had already emerged prior to 1925. Of these schools, 32 had a Protestant focus, 13 an ethnic-national focus, 3 a socialist and 2 a Catholic or other focus. In relation to their target group, most of these institutions were schools for farmers, even if only a small handful expressed this in the name of the school <sup>12</sup>.

The Dreißigacker folk high school in Thuringia was the most well-known independent school at the time. It was geared toward young urban workers and white-collar employees. It was headed up by Eduard Weitsch, one of the most famous educators of the time.

More than half the schools were backed by the church or church-related institutions. Most of the remaining schools upheld Christian values – usually Protestant – without placing these values at the forefront. The best-known evangelical folk high school was founded as early as 1919 in Hermannsburg in what is today the state of Lower Saxony. It was geared toward rural youth and started in the winter of that year with a five-month course with 29 participants <sup>13</sup>. "Content of the educational work was current political, economic and cultural issues; but a lot of time was dedicated to history – especially "German history" – with the aim of "arousing a new German consciousness" <sup>14</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> G. Steindorf, Von der den anfangen Volkshochschulen in Deutschland, Osnabrück 1968 (p. 32), [cited from:] K. Gaasch, op.cit., p. 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> W. Kuhne, Ländliche Heimvolkshochschulen in der Weimarer Zeit, [in:] K. Gaasch, W. Kuhne, A. Emmerling, Geschichte des Verbandes Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands, Vol. II, Verband Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands e.V., Hermannsburg 1991, p. 37.

<sup>10 &</sup>quot;Bildung des Menschen zum Menschen", Erdberg, [cited from:] W. Kuhne, op.cit., p. 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> W. Kuhne, op.cit., p. 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> W.B. Gierke, U. Loeber-Pautsch, *Die pluralen Strukturen der Erwachsenenbildung. Zur Geschichte der Erwachsenenbildung Niedersachsen 1947–1960*, Vol. I, Oldenburg 2000, p. 317f.



Participants of the 1925 summer course at FHS Hermannsburg shelling beans in the seminar room.

© Archiv Ev. Bildungszentrum Hermannsburg

By 1924 there was so much interest in the work that the winter course at this time already had as many as 60 participants<sup>15</sup> and more schools were constructed in various parts of the region<sup>16</sup>. The folk high school in Hermannsburg still exists today and continues to offer a course for young people which lasts several months.

Institutions that can be considered more vocational in nature are the educational facilities of "Bauernschulung e.V. zur Pflege und Förderung bäuerlicher Bildung und Kultur" <sup>17</sup>. This association was founded by the "Vereinigung der Deutschen Bauernvereine" (Association of German Farmers' Associations) after the agricultural crisis intensified between 1927 and 1932 and many farmers had to give up their farms. The schools of the "Vereinigung der Deutschen Bauernvereine" were aimed at young farmers and offered classes related to farming <sup>18</sup>. The first four farmer schools opened in 1931, more schools followed. But by the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933, these schools had only managed to complete the first steps.

Nationalist-racist institutions that also called themselves farmer schools or farmer high schools also wielded considerable influence in rural areas. Even though Grundtvig's folk high school movement served as the model<sup>19</sup>, these schools were based on a completely different interpretation which combined nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism.

The Nazi's rise to power in the spring of 1933 meant the temporary end of this development phase of folk high schools in Germany. Almost all schools were closed and it was only after 1945 that new folk high schools could be created or re-established in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The relatively short period from 1919 to 1933 was still very important for the further development of folk high schools in Germany. "Their accomplishments may not be overlooked. They included theory development and a scientifically based certificate of qualification, but also the recognition and financial assistance of the government. (...) That rural folk high schools flourished immediately after the end of World War II and "came together" to form a nationwide organization would probably not have happened as quickly and efficiently as it

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> W. Kuhne, op.cit., p. 53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> W.B. Gierke, U. Loeber-Pautsch, op.cit., p. 318.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 317.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> W. Kuhne, op.cit., p. 76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> W.B. Gierke, U. Loeber-Pautsch, op.cit., p. 316.

did without the "phase of retreat". The schools' diversity and the institutionalized cooperation are their legacy and furthermore helped shape the future of educational policy"<sup>20</sup>.

# Rural folk high schools in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945

In the years after 1945, some folk high schools were able to pick up where they left off before 1933 and start anew. For example, the Hermannsburg folk high school was reopened in October 1946 and offered a 5-month training course for young men. (see Gierke/Loeber-Pautsch 2000, p. 374). There were also a number of new schools founded in the western occupied zones so that as many as 23 rural folk high schools had emerged independently by 1949 (see Emmerling 1991, p. 194). It was common for the starting point to be local or regional initiatives, often driven by people who had already been active in rural adult education during the Weimar period or who supported the idea of rural folk high schools as "former pupils" 21.



Catholic Rural Folk High School Oesede: Common lunch at the first winter course for young farmers after World war II in 1949.

© KLVHS Oesde

There was also impetus from the outside, such as from the policy of "re-education" pursued by the Western Allies that primarily sought to strengthen the democratic spirit in German society. "Sending teachers to the countries of the occupying powers as part of 're-education' efforts was a targeted form of democratic reconstruction assistance after 1945. In addition to England and America, the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, participated in the exchange programs from the beginning. These programs were designed to give German adult educators the opportunity to learn about adult education facilities in the host countries. (...) In September 1947 the first group of 53 people was sent to a study course in Sweden to observe at a large number of Swedish folk high schools during the winter months" <sup>22</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> W. Kuhne, op.cit., p. 38 and 85.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> W.B. Gierke, U. Loeber-Pautsch, op.cit., p. 374.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> W. Seitter, op.cit., p. 113.



Folk High School Seddiner See close to Berlin in the State of Brandenburg.

Even after the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in 1949, many new rural folk high schools were created and they already numbered 36 by 1953<sup>23</sup>.

The facilities were generally legally, organizationally and financially independent and sponsored by an unincorporated association. Depending on their orientation, they either had a religious or farmer-vocational focus<sup>24</sup>.

"The goal of the rural folk high schools was character development based on Christian principles, whether denominational or not, to enable individuals to become "true farmers". The target group of young farmers up to the age of 30 was intended to restore threatened village communities. A significant effect that was expected or even aspired to deliberately to some extent was the development of a younger generation of leaders for the various areas of economic and political life in rural areas" 25. At the core of achieving these goals was what was known as the "long course" lasting several months based on the Danish model.

Even though the folk high schools had emerged individually and independently from one another, they still had maintained close contact from the very beginning and soon had the need to form an association to represent their common interests in the Federal Republic, which played, for example, an important role in the allocation of funding.

The "Verband Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen (ländliche Erwachsenenbildung) e.V." (Association of Rural Folk High Schools (Rural Adult Education) was founded in 1951. Over the next few years, the Catholic, Protestant and vocational rural folk high schools formed their own groups under the umbrella of this association. They had equal rights in the association and reflected the various sponsors of the folk high schools.

In the following decades, German society changed and with it the educational challenges that the folk high schools needed to respond to.

Reform at federal level in particular brought significant change in the years around 1970. Adult education was increasingly perceived as a public function and developed to become (vocational) continuing education. A "right to education" was recognized and adult and continuing education legislation enacted in the federal states, which also guaranteed financial support for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> W. Faber, Geschichte des Verbandes Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands, Vol. I, Verband Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands e.V., Hermannsburg 1991, p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> W.B. Gierke, U. Loeber-Pautsch, op.cit., p. 324.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 380.



Map showing locations of the 45 rural fhs belonging to the Association of Education Centers in Rural Areas

© Verband der Bildungszentren im ländlichen Raum e.V.

the folk high schools. In particular, the laws governing educational leave were of central importance for folk high schools and their idea of "living and learning under a single roof". Educational leave is paid leave for continuing vocational or political education which had a positive impact on rates of attendance and capacity utilization of the courses after it was introduced. The structure of folk high schools changed during this period: the number of courses, their duration and the number of participants in the "long courses" decreased. The target group now included adults of all ages in a wide range of professions and functions. This also changed the content of education as well as the duration of the courses. Individual courses were now also offered as day-long, week-long or weekend classes. The result was a more extensive range of educational opportunities although the folk high schools each set different priorities<sup>26</sup>.

German reunification in 1990 also brought about another significant change. The educational system of East Germany did not allow free and independent educational institutions. After 1945, it was therefore not possible for folk high schools to develop there. After the end of the Weimar Republic and the Nazis' seizure of power, there were no longer any folk high schools in East Germany for more than 50 years. The emergence of local initiatives to form new schools in all five of the former East German states showed, however, that Grundtvig's ideas were still appealing in the transition and reorientation phase at both societal and individual level. The association of folk high schools decided not to actively create new schools itself but to support and provide ad-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> F. Ameln, Lernort Heimvolkshochschule. Eine empirische studie, Bielefeld 2014, p. 44.

vice to local initiatives. Another focus of activity was embedding folk high schools in continuing education laws of the new states so as to provide the basis for the establishment of these educational institutions<sup>27</sup>. 20 years later, the association had gained seven member institutions which had become an integral part of the educational landscape in the new federal states<sup>28</sup>.

In the 1990s and 2000s, dwindling public budgets led to cuts in educational funding. At the same time, structural change in the agricultural sector led to a sharp decline in the number of participants in many rural folk high schools. A number of folk high schools felt compelled to eliminate or drastically shorten the "long course", which was their unique selling proposition and the core of their education work. Others tried to preserve the tradition of long courses with new content and target groups. One of them was the Hermannsburg Folk High School with its course "Moving Times". On the other hand, there are still long courses related to agriculture lasting several months with 50–70 young participants a year in some heavily agricultural locations.

More than ten facilities had to close during this time or left the association of rural folk high schools for other reasons. In this period of change, the name "Heimvolkshochschule" was discarded by many institutions and even by the federal association. This term was perceived to be "old-fashioned" and no longer current. Since 2005, the association has therefore officially been called the "Verband der Bildungszentren im ländlichen Raum e.V." (The Association of Education Centers in Rural Areas). On the other hand, this change and the accessibility to other target groups and forms of learning has also meant that other rural educational centers have moved closer to the association and become members. As a result, the association had 45 member institutions again in 2016 which is equivalent to 1988 levels<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> H. Neuner, F. Schmidt, Die Deutsche Wiedervereinigung – eine Herausforderung für den Verband Ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen Deutschlands, [in:] Eine Mauer ist kein Haus. Vom Aufbau ländlicher Heimvolkshochschulen in den neuen Bundesländern, Verband der Bildungszentren im ländlichen Raum e.V., Seddiner See 2009, p. 8 f.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> W. Faber, op.cit., p. 152.

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## THE TRADITIONS OF POLISH FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS



"Some people run towards their goal in a hurry, others walk in silence, persistently. Some play the lottery for their fate, Other forge it like blacksmiths." Zofia Solarz

#### Polish beginnings...

In Poland, the history of the Folk High School origins can be found in the political and philosophical traditions of Scandinavian nations. The idea of a Danish scholar, M.F.S. Grundtvig, turned out to be a universal value, favouring comprehensive development of individual human beings and the whole community, integrating individual goals and interests of the nation in a balanced unity.

Polish folk high schools, as institutions working outside the official adult education system promoted the belief in the significant role of the peasant culture for the further development of the general culture. A special achievement of these institutions was their active involvement in the process of cultivating and popularizing the peasant culture. Understanding this culture, interacting with it, and emphasizing its value were aimed at shaping the self-esteem, dignity and self-confidence of the young generation of farmers. Folk high schools were opposed to the tendency of degrading the value of peasant culture, by showing its unusual beauty, wisdom and deep humanistic sense.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the ideas of M.F.S. Grundtvig – the creator of Danish folk high schools – reached Poland and were met by specific problems and aspirations of the Polish countryside and the entire national culture. Along with the regaining of independence, the interest in the educational concept implemented in these institutions intensified in the educational circles. As early as in 1872 in Poznań, as a reaction to Germanization, Towarzystwo Oświaty Ludowej [Society of Folk Education] (TOL) was created, and right after its imminent liquidation by the Prussian authorities, Towarzystwo Czytelni Ludowych [Society of Folk Libraries] (TCL) emerged in 1880 and managed to survive to the time of the Second Polish Republic. In 1881 in Galicia, Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej [Folk School Society] (TSL) was created on the initiative of Adam Asnyk¹. In this context, one must recognize the circumstances and conditions of assimilation of Grundtvig's ideas on the Polish soil. The article by J.H. Siemieniecki from 1888 published in Warsaw's "Głos": "Cesarz niemiecki w Kopenhadze – uniwersytety chłopskie w Danii [German Emperor in Copenhagen – folk high schools in Denmark]" seems to be emblematic of this process². The author presents Denmark's lost war

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> F. Popławski, Polski Uniwersytet Ludowy [Polish Folk High School], Wydawnictwo Spółdzielcze, Warszawa 1985, p. 30

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> J.H. Siemieniecki, *Cesarz niemiecki w Kopenhadze a uniwersytety ludowe w Danii* [German Emperor in Copenhagen and the folk high schools in Denmark], Głos 1888, No. 11, p. 7.

with Germany (1864) and the loss of Schleswig-Holstein as the main cause of the revival of the patriotic and cultural movement in the Danish countryside, visible in the creation of folk high schools. He stresses the need to follow this form of struggle for national identity and awareness among Polish peasants.

In Poland, the first experiences based on the example of Scandinavian folk high schools developed in stages and in different directions. Many years passed between the first reports on this topic which appeared in Polish in such magazines as "Szkoła" published in Lviv or "Ateneum" published in Warsaw<sup>3</sup>, and the creation of the first Polish folk high school. However, one fact remains undisputed - the Polish folk high schools are among the oldest institutions of its kind in Europe. Among modern scholars who study the history of adult education there is no consensus as to which of the folk high schools should be regarded as the prototype. According to the opinion of some, e.g. T. Pilch and K. Wojciechowski, it is the agricultural schools appointed successively between 1900 and 1914 in the Kingdom of Poland thanks to Jadwiga Dziubińska and the peasant movement ["ruch zaraniarski"]4 that should be considered the first among the domestic Polish folk high schools. In order to understand the genesis of the PFHS on the Polish territory, it seems necessary to remind the so-called Congress Kingdom institutions operating on the territory annexed by the Russian partition that were built successively in 1900 in Pszczelina, in 1903 in Kruszynek and in 1909 in Sokołówek. These educational institutions for adult rural youth remained in the range of influence of the peasant movement, which could not create a political organization in the reality of partitions, but after 1918 it crystallized as the Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe "Wyzwolenie" [Polish People's Party "Wyzwolenie"]5.

Among historians, we may also encounter opinions that perceive only certain elements inspired by Scandinavian standards in the activity of agricultural schools – they are quite careful in formulating views similar to the abovementioned, denying them the title of the first Polish folk high schools.

#### In the Independent Poland

The interwar period created a favourable climate in Poland for the development of democratic and local government institutions and educational movements. It is characteristic that the changes that were taking place in the theory and practice of extracurricular education in the interwar Poland consisted in replacing education programs that were putting emphasis on the tasks of compensation and extension of foundations of education with programs emphasizing creative features of educational work. And such an interesting initiative linking the creation of the institution called a folk high school should be identified with the Society of Folk Libraries in Poznań, under the supervision of which the Folk High School in Dalki near Gniezno was brought to life in 1921, founded by Father Antoni Ludwiczak<sup>6</sup>. As its primary task, this high school took upon itself – like other high schools established later by the Society (in Zagórze and Odolanów) – the education of a Pole-Catholic<sup>7</sup>. This was undoubtedly a high school with a Catholic profile but in the formulation of the goals, its program outlined by the priest A. Ludwiczak was of civic and social nature.

Father A. Ludwiczak founded Towarzystwo Byłych Słuchaczy Uniwersytetu Ludowego [The Association of Former Students of the Folk High School] under the name "Promień

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> J. Finkelhaus, *Trzy rozdziały z współczesnego życia Norwegii* [Three chapters of modern life in Norway]. *Studium z podróży odbytej w roku 1979* [Study of the trip held in 1979] (Part 1), "Ateneum" 1880, vol. 3 (19) 7, pp. 122–136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Progressive peasant movement around the weekly "Zaranie" in the Russian partition (1907–1915).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Cf.: Z. Kmiecik, *Działalność oświatowo-społeczna w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1900–1914* [Educational and social activities in the Polish Kingdom in the years 1900–1914] [in:] Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego [Annals of the Acts of the People's Movement] 1961, No. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See: A. Ludwiczak, *Pierwsze Uniwersytety Ludowe w Polsce* [First Folk High Schools in Poland]Materials from the collections of Bałtycki Uniwersytet Ludowy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See: Wiejskie uniwersytety ludowe w Polsce [Rural folk high schools in Poland]. Newsletter educational conference devoted to the folk high schools (ca Lowicz 7–9 March 1937), Warszawa 1938.

[Ray]", which published a quarterly by the same title and contributed to the dissemination of the idea of youth education at folk high schools. The folk high school in Dalki operated until the outbreak of the war, while the high school of Odolanów was closed for financial reasons in 1932, to be reborn in Bolszewo n. Wejherowo in 1938.



Folk High School in Dalki (Source: I. Błaszczak's private collection)

Another important step in the creation of FHSs in Poland is linked to the mainstream peasant ideology which was definitely dominant at the folk high schools of the interwar period. During that time, 26 boarding schools were created on the Polish territory under the name "folk high schools". Few educational institutions in the interwar Poland aroused such interest as folk high schools, particularly Wiejski Uniwersytet Orkanowy [Folk High School n.a. Władysław Orkan] in Szyce and Gać Przeworska. Undoubtedly, the peak achievement in the development of PFHSs were the two centers run by Ignacy and Zofia Solarz: the first one was built between 1924–1931 in Szyce near Kraków, founded by Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego Szkół Powszechnych [the Union of Polish Teachers of Common Schools], and the second one in Gać near Przeworsk in the years 1932–1939, founded as Spółdzielnia Uniwersytetów Wiejskich [the Cooperative of Folk High Schools] by "Wici," Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej RP [the Union of Rural Youth of the Republic of Poland].



Gacka Górka, 1929. (Source: I. Błaszczak's private collection)



Zofia and Ignacy Solarz with their daughter, Agnieszka, and son, Andrzej. Szyce, 1929.

(Source: Halina Popławska's private collection)

Talking about the history of the Polish folk high schools we cannot forget about the pioneering role played by Ignacy and Zofia Solarz in the co-creation of Polish folk high schools. Opened in Gać Przeworska, Wiejski Uniwersytet Orkanowy, belonged to one of the most famous centers of rural extracurricular education, it was the place of birth of radical concepts of the peasant movement and of many social reforms. In the current year 2017, eighty-five years have passed since the creation of Wiejski Uniwersytet Orkanowy which was located in the Rural Youth Club in Gać and the hospitable homes of folk and youth activists. In the folk high schools led by the Solarz couple we must distinguish two periods: the first one - "ordeal" between 1932-1936, and the second one in their "Luminous House" between 1936-1939. As mentioned by the school's alumni: the first period was very difficult, with classes held in extremely primitive conditions in many places scattered throughout the village. The size of the "classrooms", the autumn rains, the spring thaw became great problems. These difficult conditions were accompanied by harassment from the administration and the police provoked by the government wanting to prevent the organisation of courses; the debts caused by the fines for the hosts who offered accommodation to students; and police controls at the lectures8. In these primitive conditions 281 people managed to complete the courses. The construction of their own luminous house financed by the social deed of the members of "Wici" and other peasant movements with the participation of the entire peasant movement in Poland became the confirmation of the spiritual strength of the rural population. This great social act resulted from the consciousness that "the peasants build with their own hands the tabernacle of the rebirth of the rural spirit, the studio of the peasant thought, the hearth of the social feeling." Wiejski Uniwersytet Orkanowy conducted 15 courses attended by more than 500 participants. The ceremony of laying the foundation act of the construction took place in June 1935, gathering thousands of rural youth from all over the area. In October 1936, the pupils of the FHS moved into the building on Gacka Górka. In this way, on the hill behind the village a house was built in which Solarz's Folk High School was located. Since then this institution has received the name "Gacka Górka" in the everyday vocabulary of the village

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See: S. Dyksiński, F. Popławski (eds.), *Ignacy Solarz i jego uniwersytet ludowy* [Ignacy Solarz and his folk high school], Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1965.

and the surrounding area, symbolizing the place where rural youth grew up. Each FHS student received from Solarz the sign of consent and co-operation:

"... Solarz began to look for a sign, a symbol which would encompass the most important educational values – he found one «Krzywula – the sign of consent and co-operation». He found it in the social mores of very distant times – the ancient customs of the Slavs. So what was "Krzywula"? Well, in times when there were no newspapers, radio, television, Internet, where all messages were disseminated orally a sign/call was invented. A young oak that

grew up from a healthy grain, on a good soil served as a sign/call. Its apex was tied in a knot and so it grew, took on strength and hardness. When there was a need to mobilize fellows, the oak was cut at the roots. Moved from hut to hut, from settlement to settlement, it carried the message: "a neighbor is preparing an attack" and called on everyone to unite forces. "Krzywula" was a call for co-operation, it was an order to leave everything, even the most urgent work undertaken for one's own use when the good of the community required it".

In 2017 we celebrated the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Zofia Solarzowa's birth and on January 22 we will be celebrating the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death. The godmother passed away on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the "Wici" movement. She was said to be "irreplaceable", multi-talented, brought up in the patriotic and democratic traditions, from an early age participated



*Krzywula – a sign of consent and co-operation.*(Source: Archive and Museum of the History of the Polish Peasant

(Source: Archive and Museum of the History of the Polish Peasant Movement in Warsaw. The archival materials of TUL RP from 1948 to 1993)

in the cultural and educational life of the Polish countryside. The main passion of her rich, creative and very busy life was to connect people through the living word and common artistic experience related primarily to the song "[The sky cleared up with the sun over our heads cleared up with the sun over our heads And where is the heart that with love used to beat Hey, loving every beat." (words: Zofia Solarz).

Extremely complex and tortuous was the fate of Polish folk high schools in the interwar period: some emerged spontaneously, others were suddenly closed. It must be remembered that this period (1921–1939) witnessed a real explosion of the FHS movement in Poland – as emphasized by F. Popławski, up to 80 such centers functioned at that time <sup>10</sup>.

#### Post-war period

After World War II with the development of the Stalinist mechanisms of monitoring and control of the social life, there is a gradual reduction of folk high schools; as early as in 1952 these institutions are basically nonexistent. There are only three folk high schools, located in the Western Territories, and their task, as T. Pilch emphasizes on TUL website, was the re-Polonization of the indigenous youth. Among these institutions we should mention the ones located in Błotnica Strzelecka, in Większyce Opolskie, in Radawnica Złotowska. A liberalization of political relations, which occurred as a result of the October changes, led to the reactivation of a few high schools in Wierzchosławice, Rożnica, Gardzienice Lubelskie in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Z. Mierzwińska-Szybka, *Krzywula znak zgody i współdziałania* [Krzywula – the sign the consent and co-operation]Kwartalnik Towarzystwa Uniwersytetów Ludowych. Polski Uniwersytet Ludowy, Warszawa, 2002, p. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See: F. Popławski, Polski Uniwersytet Ludowy [Polish Folk High School], op., cit.

the years 1956–1957. These schools were led by outstanding educators, often acting on the border of acceptance of the then authorities, cherishing the ideas of folk high schools and their methods of teaching and educational work. In addition to these high schools, there were other establishments in Howa Żagańska in zielonogórskie Voivodeship, Mosty in szczecińskie Voivodeship, Rudziniec in katowickie Voivodeship and Rudziska in olsztyńskie Voivodeship, which, however, closed in in the early 60's. All folk high schools were given organizational and programme care by the Union of Rural Youth reactivated in 1956. The arrival of the political breakthrough and political transformation in Poland, basically ended up the annihilation of the institutional form of folk high school. The authorities completely ceased to be interested in the essence, function and condition of folk high schools. These establishments, almost all of them, thrown into the free market reality, the mechanisms of commercialization and the universal principle of self-financing, perished after a short struggle for existence becoming merely a category of the history of education 11.

#### After transformation...

In 1981, the independent Bałtycki Uniwersytet Ludowy [Baltic Folk High School] in Opalenie was created, and a year later in 1982, Kaszubski Uniwersytet Ludowy [Kashubian Folk High School] in Wieżyca, which knew how to adapt to contemporary conditions. This institution from the very beginning until today has been directed by a great social activist, Marek Byczkowski, who has been developing with great dedication and commitment lively educational and cultural activities in the Kashubian region. In practice it turned out that the transformation of the political system was not favourable to educational institutions. From among the folk high schools operating beofre under the auspices of the Union of Rural Youth, then under the care of the Association, two high schools have survived, one in Radawnica and the other one, Uniwersytet Ludowy Rzemiosł Artystycznych [Folk High School of Applied Arts] in Wola Sękowska. In 2002, Jan Józef Lipski Common High School in Teremiski near Bialowieża was established, in the educational and ideological aspect resembling the Scandinavian model. In 2014, the Ecological and Cultural Assotiation "ZIARNO", under the direction of Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth and Peter Stratenwerth, started the project "Ekologiczny Uniwersytet Ludowy [Ecological Folk High School]" bringing to life Poland's first ecologial folk high school in Grzybowo. Thanks to the tremendous commitment of its leaders, this school is developing more and more dynamically. Currently Catholic circles also take initiatives related to the reactivation of folk high school.

### Father Jan Zieja – a page in the history of the first Folk High School on the Recovered Territories

"Father Jan Zieja made a deep impression on everyone who met him. As for me, I only got to spend time with him in the last period of his very long life. Despite the huge age difference and such short contact, a kind of friendship emerged, one that should connect the author of a biography with its protagonist, of course, if the writer is able to get to know his protagonist personally" 12.

Father Jan Zieja was a priest, the memory of whom is needed not only in the Polish Church but also in the whole society. He was a man who, by truly living the Gospel, was able to reconcile angry parties, completely different views and ideas. Fr. Zieja's relentless pursuit of peace and dialogue seems, especially today, to be a very important inspiration, not only for believers. Therefore, recalling the origins of FHSs, we cannot omit in this text the figure of

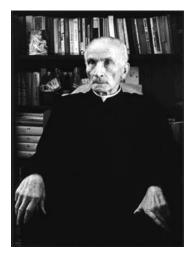
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See: T. Pilch, *Historia Polskich Uniwersytetów Ludowych* [History of Polish Folk High Schools], TUL, date of access: https://www.google.pl/ul, 20.01.2017.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> J. Moskwa, *Ksiądz Jan Zieja*, *Życie Ewangelią*, *Życie Proroka* [Father Jan Zieja, Living the Gospel, the Life of a Prophet], Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2011, p. 11.

Jan Zieja, an outstanding educator, social worker, devoted friend of disadvantaged people. Father Jan Zieja was born in 1897 in a small village in the Opoczno region by the name unknown to most people – Ossa. He came to the world on 1 March 1897 and died on 19 October 1991 in Warsaw. He came from a modest peasant family, a fact which undoubtedly had an influence on his fate and life choices. His vocation for priesthood showed already in the early years of his life when as a young boy he passionately read religious books, especially the Gospel. Fr. Zieja was not only a clergyman but also a social activist, translator, journalist and religious writer, a soldier in the Polish-Soviet War of 1920, and in the defense of September 1939, the chaplain of Gray Ranks and Home Army (pseudonym Wojciech Rybak), a partici-

pant in the Warsaw Uprising, a co-founder of "KOR" – the Workers Defense Committee and the Committee of Social Self-Defense 13, a man involved in the activity of folk high schools. An important chapter in Fr. Zieja's educational activities was the creation of a Folk High School in Słupskin May 1946, based on the pre-war models of folk high schools created with the involvement of the Union of Rural Youth "Wici", which was later transferred to Orzechowo near Ustka. In the memoirs of Fr. Zieja's colleagues, we find a lot of interesting memories of the folk high schools from the 1946–1949 period. Anna Minkowska recalls 14:

(...) I finally found myslef in Słupsk. Back then it was a very long journey from Cracow. In Słupsk, Aniela Urbanowicz came to pick me up (...). I learned a lot from her about the creation of "Dom Matki i Dziecka [The House of the Mother and Child]". Shortly after the Germans left, Fr. Jan Zieja came to Słupsk to start a broad religious and social activity. The city was al-



Fr. Jan Zieja (b. 1 March 1897 in Ossa, d. 19 October 1991 in Warsaw).(Source: I. Błaszczak's private archives)

most empty then, there were almost no Poles, some Germans fled, and some were hiding. Fr. Zieja was the first Polish priest who arrived in Słupsk. His work was always marked by momentum and impetus. Fr. Jan's work should be divided into: pastoral, educational and social. He established three institutions: "Dom Matki i Dziecka", "Biblioteka Filarecka [Filarecka Library]" and the Folk High School. All three institutions were initially active in Słupsk. The Folk High School in Słupsk had already finished a course with 25 students and was then supported by the youth organization "Wici". In the spring of 1946, Fr. Jan took over the Wytowno parish. In addition, as a priest he received a resort situated by the sea: Orzechowo Morskie from the authorities for the use of the Folk High School. Fr. John was to commute to Słupsk and "Dom Matki i Dziecka" and other places every week but the Folk High School was moved, following Fr. Jan".

The time Fr. Zieja spent in Wytowno constituted a very fruitful stage of the High School's existence. M. Minkowska recalls<sup>15</sup>

"it was a small village, the clergy house was located in a large, brick, grey and brown house where on the left side of the lobby there was Fr. Zieja's room with a bed, a desk in front of it upon which stood a crucifix and a photograph of his late Mother in peasant costume. In front of the Father's room there was the Folk High School common room, a very large room with chairs set by the walls, a piano and two long tables. The walls were decorated with pictures

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See: Kryptonim "Gracze". Służba Bezpieczeństwa wobec Komitetu Obrony robotników i Komitetu Samoobrony społecznej "KOR" 1976–1981 [Codename "Gracze". Security Service in the face of "KOR" the Workers Defense Committee and the Committee of Social Self-Defense 1976–1981], selection, introduction and compilation by Łukasz Kamiński and Grzegorz Waligóra, Warszawa 2010, p. 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> A. Minkowska, Wspomnienia z mojej współpracy z ks. Janem Zieją, Bunt młodych duchem, Oddział Warszawski Towarzystwa Wolnej Wszechnicy Polskiej [Memories of my collaboration with Fr. Jan Zieja, The revolt of the young spirits, Warsaw Branch of Free Polish University], Warszawa 2014, pp. 1–2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 2.

of the village and a few views of the sea. It was clear, neat, and the huge white stove brought the heat of hope. Next to Fr. Jan's room, there was a large two-window room with an exit to the terrace, one whole wall was full of bookshelves – this room was the Folk High School library. What seems interesting is the fact that neither the folk high school course in Słupsk, which Fr. Zieja ran in 1946 (from 1 February to 15 April), nor the one he intended to lead in Wytowno, carried the name of a Catholic school. It was supposed to accommodate rural youth of diverse political and philosophical beliefs, and the discussions were supposed to be completely free and relaxed. Courses could be either mixed or separate for boys and girls".

Stefan Kullas also made an interesting statement about the *Folk High Schools in Wytowno* and *Orzechów* regarding Fr. Zieja's activities at the folk high school, the long fragment of which is quoted below. As the author says <sup>165</sup>:

In early November 1946, I read in "Tygodnik Katolicki" an announcement about training courses for young men at the Folk University in Orzechów Morski. Father Jan Zieja, the parish priest of one of Słupsk parishes, invited volunteers to participate in the training. After my negative experiences in the officers' school in Łódź, where I was bullied for belonging to the "wrong" underground organization, "Gryf Pomorski", and which I left after several days, I was glad to have found something non-political. Moreover, I knew Fr. Zieja from his wise and interesting texts published in Catholic journals, so without any worries I decided to enroll for the next course. I wrote a letter and a week later I received a reply confirming my enrollment and information that the course was starting on 8 December, and the participants were supposed to arrive from 5 December. In the village of Wytowno, the premises of the Evangelical parsonage housed the Folk High School, which had existed since December 1945. The Folk High School was run by Fr. Zieja and Krystyna Zelechowska, the headmaster of the High School, and four lecturers: Dr. Anna Mieńkowska, Paweł Kolasiński and his wife, and Mr Stefanowski. (...) The next morning, our course began. Every day we had eight hours of lessons, two hours with each of the teachers, Father Zieja taught philosophy and theology and a course which he called: the science of life. In addition, once a week Ms Zelechowska, who before the war graduated from the Warsaw economic studies, gave lectures on socio-economic subjects. We had a very well-stocked library at our disposal which apart from the mostly German books belonging to the former pastor, included Mrs. Ruszczyc's collection brought by her from Vilnius, where she had run a large library before the war (...). In the evenings, after the shared dinner we had long discussions on various topics with our lecturers. We were all craving knowledge and asked them many questions. In addition to the general philosophical and religious issues, we were mainly interested in the current socio-political problems (...). At the end of the stay, each of us had to write a long essay on a selected topic. It was a kind of summary of what we had learned during the five months of spiritual and intellectual training. At the end of April 1947, the course for men was over and everyone went home. Father Zieja had a special kind of rusticity in him, it was not a coincidence that he became involved in the activities of ZMW [The Union of Rural Youth] "Wici". Fr. Zieja started cooperating with this movement in the early 30s.

He found his place there and established closer relations with Ignacy Solarz. At that time in Poland a network of folk high schools based on Solarz's school in Gać near Przeworsk was already operating. One of those schools was founded by Fr. Zieja in Polesie. Moreover, he played an important role there because under his influence the members of "Wici" in 1932 included an entry on Christian values in their statute. This point would remain intact until the absorption of the movement by the communists in 1948. During the occupation, Fr. Zieja was a chaplain of Bataliony Chłopskie [Peasant Battalions]. He lead a secretive course for the future employees of folk high schools; one of the participants was J. Zawieyski. Shortly after the war, he founded a "Wici" association and a Folk High School without the adjective "Catholic" in its name, open to young people from all political trends.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See: S. Kullas, *Daleka droga...Wspomnienia 1930–1980*, cz. III, *Lata 1946–1948* [A long way... Memoirs 1930–1980, vol. III, 1946–1948], Wytowno, Orzechowo Morskie, Słupsk, Bochum 2001. Typescript.

## Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych [Society of Folk High Schools] (TUL)

Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych is a social organization, initially established as an association, founded in the 30's to lead and sponsor folk high schools. TUL brought together many activists from the field of education, teachers, intelligentsia. During the Nazi occupation, as T. Maliszewski and J. Pruś indicate independently, the initiative to begin preparations for the development of folk high schools in the postwar period appeared in a team of socio-educational activists gathered around Wydział Oświaty Dorosłych [The Department of Adult Education] led by F. Popławski – the underground Polish education authorities <sup>17</sup>.

Feliks Poplawski – the co-founder of Polish Folk High Schools, assuming that the basic condition for the development of folk high schools and their effective educational work is a carefully selected teaching team, decided to use the period of occupation to recruit candidates and train them for the educational work with adult learners. It was agreed that the

continuation of the FHS tradition form the interwar period and the management of the development and activities of pedagogical folk high schools should be entrusted to the social factor. Therefore, a decision was made to transfer the case of boarding schools in the postwar Poland to the Komisji Oświatowej Centralnego Kierownictwa "ROCH" ["ROCH" Educational Commission of the Central Management], an underground peasant movement. It was agreed that the totality of FHSs in Poland after the war will be taken care of by a social organization under the name - Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych RP [The Association of Folk High Schools of the Republic of Poland]. To continue the recruitment of the future FHS employees and to develop organizational and statutory policies Komisje Uniwersytetów Ludowych [The Commission of Folk High Schools] was established, which included: chairman – Feliks Popławski, members – Dyzma Gałaj, Hanna Chorażyna, Jerzy Zawieyski<sup>18</sup>.

On 10 September 1945 Komitet Organizacyjny Towarzystwa Uniwersytetów Ludowych [The Organising



Feliks Poplawski (25.08.1899–27.07.1989) (Source: H. Poplawska's private collection)

Committee of the Association of Folk High Schools] officially registered the Articles of the Association <sup>19</sup>. On its basis, on 26 September a Temporary Board composed of Stefan Ignar, Hanna Laskowska, Feliks Popławski was appointed. On 11–13 October 1945, the first general meeting of TUL RP was held. Papers were delivered at the congress by: Bohdan Suchodolski, Stefan Ignar, Władysław Radwan and Feliks Popławski. 54 people took part in a lively discussion, among them: Helena Radlińska, Zofia Solarz, Józef Ciota, Bolesław Dejworek i Władysław Fołta. The congress gave discharge to the Temporary Board, passed the final wording of the Articles of the Association, chose a 35-person Educational Board under the chairmanship of Joseph Niećka in a secret ballot and appointed a nine-person Board. The first TUL President in the post-war Poland was F. Popławski. TUL RP identified their educational

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> J. Pruś, Feliks Popławski – współtwórca Polskich Uniwersytetów Ludowych, "Młodzież – Kultura – Wieś. Polski Uniwersytet Ludowy [Feliks Popławski – co-founder of Polish Folk High Schools, "Youth – Culture – Village. Polish Folk High School"] 1996, No. 2(29), pp. 76–77; Cf.: T. Maliszewski, Wojenne uniwersytety ludowe [War folk high schools,] [in:] T. Pilch (ed.), Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku [Pedagogical encyclopaedia of the 21st century], vol. 7, Warszawa 2008, p. 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The program guidelines of cultural policy developed by the members of Centralnego Kierownictwa ROCH [ROCH Central Management] and the underground peasant movement for the post-war folk high schools (excerpts published in the "Przebudowa" magazine), Warszawa 1943, No. 6/13, p. 14 (from Halina Popławska's private collection).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Articles of the Association of Folk High Schools of the Republic of Poland – The original with the approving clause dated 10 September 1945, pp. 1–7 (from I. Błaszczak's private collection).

tasks with the creative continuation of the idea and practice of Polish folk high schools. TUL members saw themselves as the heirs of the achievements of Polish folk high schools, their thoughts and ideological teachings. And so on 13 October 1945 TUL RP would operate as a full-fledged social organization.

In the post-war reality TUL experienced many vicissitudes and difficulties. Only in 1980, in the circle of peasant activists and scientists a thought is born to return to the idea of Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. As a result of national consultations, a nationwide conference of delegates of Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej is convened in Bałtycki Uniwersytet Ludowy in Opalenie which opened just two months earlier. Tadeusz Pilch is named president. It was only after the lifting of martial law, that the authorities allowed the registration of a formal Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej in December 1984. In 26 years of continuous activity, the Society initiated and organized dozens of national and regional educational and cultural events. Since 1984, TUL organized five statutory Nationwide Conventions. Congresses in Pabianice and Opalenie constitute an ideological and should constitute a numerical unity with the current form of TUL's activity. The last congress was held in 2003 in Grzybno in Wielkopolska. With Zofia Kaczor-Jędrzycka as the Chairman of the Board, the function currently held by Elizabeth Gniazdowska.

## The present – the establishment of the National Network of Folk High Schools. Based on the Assumptions of Program for the Development of Folk High Schools in Poland

Andrzej Juros, quoted below in the document entitled "Guidelines for the Program for the Development of Folk High Schools in Poland"20, points to the role and the importance of folk high schools in the shaping of civil society. The author outlined the main activities for the benefit of folk high schools to be implemented in 2016 and included in the budget plan for 2017, which were discussed at a national conference on "Key Competences - Folk High Schools - Civil Society. In the Search of the Contemporary 'School for Life'", which took place in Gdańsk (14 March 2016). During the conference, the First Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Gliński received a letter of intent from the representatives of folk high schools and other social communities living the ideas and values of this educational tradition, expressing satisfaction with the adoption at the government level of activities aimed at the preparation and implementation of the program for the development of folk high schools. The letter declared their willingness to cooperate in the development of the program and system solutions. One result of these declarations was the creation of the National Network of Folk High Schools. This happened immediately after the conference organized during the seminar: "The Vision of the Modern Folk High School as a School for Life" - in Wieżyca in the headquarters of the Kashubian Folk High School (15 March 2016). Both events brought together the representatives of the main currents of the folk high school movement in Poland, which since then have made intensive efforts aimed at the creation of the Program for the Development of Folk High Schools. During the next meeting of the Network on 27 May 2016 in Grzybowo, the headquarters of the Ecological Folk High School, the Network Council was constituted and the Thematic Partnership under the "The Maps of the Civil Sector in Poland" was initiated. Simultaneously, on 25 February 2016 there was a meeting of people involved in the activities of folk high schools with the Minister Wojciech Kaczmarczyk, the government plenipotentiary for civil society and equal treatment, Secretary of State at the Prime Minister's Office. The aim of the meeting was to include folk high school activists in the preparations of the national program for the development of the civil society. The participation of the environment of folk high schools in the creation and monitoring of the implementation of this program was then declared. The state policy regarding civil society, including the relation to folk high

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> The material prepared by A. Juros, Assumptions of Program for the Development of Folk High Schools in Poland, Lublin 2016, pp. 3-4. Typescript.



The OSUL meeting in Grzybów (Phot. Anna Sarzalska)

schools, is scattered throughout various departments. Its implementation requires intensive cooperation between the state, the NGO sector and other civic institutions. The representatives of folk high schools, recognizing the complexity of these conditions both during the meeting and in direct contact with the Prime Minister, as well as with the organizations of the local government, declared a partnership cooperation aiming to develop system solutions, which on the one hand would ensure the development of folk high schools, and on the other would make it possible for these schools to implement the basic tasks promoting the development of the country. The creation of the National Network for the Development of Folk High Schools by the representatives of major Polish communities interested in developing folk high schools guarantees the possibility of using the idea of "School for Life" in the context of social and educational challenges that particularly affect rural areas in Poland. What is needed is a common reflection on the possibilities of revival of the Polish folk high school movement. The network analyzed the aims and objectives, methods and forms of work, and pointed to the need to animate the cooperation of folk high schools in the public sphere. This is presented in the section of this paper: "Efforts to Regularize the Status of Polish Folk High Schools in Polish Folk Culture and Education Systems - 1989-2016". Further work of the National Network of Folk High Schools, as an open structure, declaring a partnership with the government in the development of the folk high school movement revival, guarantees the effectiveness of the future program.

#### Conclusion

Folk high schools were and are schools for life, teaching rational adaptation to socio-economic and cultural changes and the preservation of core values of peasant culture, such as:

- Attachment to the land,
- Respect for nature,
- Diligence,
- The cult of family life,

- Dignity and Social Justice,
- Love of the Fatherland,
- Thirst for knowledge and the pursuit of truth,
- The sense of solidarity in the fight against the elements,
- Compassion for the poor,
- Religiosity,

Education and formation of a sense of subjectivity in the rural youth, in folk high schools constituted a constant process of construction of the spiritual life of a man. The process consisted in transforming an individual from being passive to being active, from being unconscious of human culture and their own role in it – to being conscious of their mission in life, from being afraid of the transformation of the world to having courage and creativity, from being limited to the size of private life to being a social entity. The main task the school for life was facing was education – seen as life-long improving of the process of a person's contact with the values of culture and with other people, the spiritual unification of people with similar ideals, aspirations and life plans<sup>21</sup>.

It is characteristic that the system of reference of the so understood aims of education for folk high schools are the values existent in the national and the universal folk culture. On the one hand, it is a liberation from the one-sided cult of folk culture, on the other hand, it means showing the values of national culture, without the knowledge and understanding of which the human personality would be incomplete. The most important task at folk high schools, however, is the socio-moral education, perceived as the process of preparing the rural youth for the role of a host in their village, environment, region and country.

From the overview outlined here regarding the role of folk high schools in building the sense of subjectivity and identity of rural youth, we can see that these institutions should undertake activities that consist in combining social welfare with the welfare of a human being.

Today, there is a chance for these ideas to start a new life, so they do not remain merely "a dead history card," but so they constitute and stimulate reflection on the achievements of folk culture and the need to unify these achievements with the national culture.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Cf.: F. Popławski F. *Skąd i dokąd idziemy* [How and where are we going], Siewba, No. 1–2, p. 13, Warszawa 1945.

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## HISTORY OF CULTURAL COMMUNITY CENTERS AS FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS IN BULGARIA

A "chitalishte" (Bulgarian: читалище, pronounced [t Jitaliste]) (a cultural community center; abbreviation "CCC") is a typical Bulgarian public institution and building which fulfills several functions at once, such as a community centre, library and a theatre. It is also used as an educational institution, where people of all ages can enroll in foreign language, dance, music and other courses. In this function they could be compared to the Folk High Schools of Northern Europe. The word "chitalishte" in translation means "reading room," a place where books are kept for public use.

Bulgarian community centers are a unique cultural phenomenon. They were created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Ottoman rule. They started as typical Bulgarian public institutions for the dissemination of knowledge and culture, and they had a crucual role in preserving and developing national culture during the Bulgarian Enlightenment (18–19<sup>th</sup> century). They are the guardians of the Bulgarian national consciousness in a very difficult period for our nation. In their development can be distinguished several important historical stages.

- Stage One Bulgarian Enlightement (18–19<sup>th</sup> century) a period before the Liberation from Ottoman rule;
- Stage Two a new history of Bulgaria (1878–1944);
- Stage Three the modern history of Bulgaria with two sub-stages:
  - 1. 1944–1989 socialist regime;
  - 2. 1989 to today democratic regime.

The first institutions of this type were founded in the towns of Svishtov, Lom and Shumen in 1856.

The appearance of the first community centers in the 50s of the 19th century is a sign of modernism of Bulgarian communities which seek a form of voluntary civil association, before the Liberation from the Ottoman rule in 1878. Over the years, their main duties are related to the obligation to preserve and develop the spiritual, educational, cultural and charitable activities. It is one of the first civil organizations on a voluntary basis and their main role is to defend the interests of local communities.

Until the Liberation more than 100 Cultural Community Centers had been created all over the country, but all of them in developed urban regions and none in the villages. The Community Centers play a key role in the society for the dissemination of cultural innovations from the big cities towards the small ones. They have a great historical mission in the process of national consolidation and the formation of the communities.





Cultural Community Centers in Svishtov (on the left) and in Lom (on the right)

(Source: Swisztow: http://bnr.bg/chitaliste/post/100652148/chitalishte-elenka-i-kiril-d-avramovi-svishtov Lom: http://oalom.acstre.com/currentNews-249-narodno chitalische %E2%80%9Epo.html; accessed 21-03-2017)

During this first stage (the Bulgarian Enlightenment) the main goal of Community Centers is to modernize communities and people. Main activities are: dissemination of local and foreign publications, publishing of textbooks, books, journals, promoting schools in the villages; establishment of boarding schools for students from villages in the towns; organizing different activities for the teachers; charitable activities primarily related to the education of children; dissemination of information that affects everyone. Some community centers have been set up near the schools to assist the process of education.

The main problem of the CCCs from the beginning of their establishment is funding. First Community Centers established as educational facilities were sponsored and funded by the local elite. Later the main sources of funding are membership fees (some community centers determine a kind of "library tax" to be paid by the members according to the property status) and voluntary contributions from wealthier citizens. Community Centers appreciate the importance of donation and do everything possible to promote it.

After the Liberation (second stage, 1878–1944) the main objective of community centers is to preserve and protect the traditional Bulgarian virtues. Their main task is cultural and traditional education. They became an important multi-purpose institutions even in the villages and smaller towns.

In 1911 it was founded the Union of Cultural Community Centers in Bulgaria. The first Law on Community Centers was published in 1927. According to it, the purpose of these institutions is "to excite public interest in reading and to promote scientific, moral and aesthetic development of the readers". At that time the community centers were under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

At the second stage the Community Centers to carry out more or less the same activities, but develop also several new ones as the following: providing mobile libraries in settlements where there is not a community center, enlargement of the library fund in rural libraries with publications useful for the agricultural community, written in popular language; organizing library courses in relation to the functioning of libraries and best service to readers, etc. Experienced lectors organize lectures at various community centers. The lectures are in different fields – history, astronomy, literature, agriculture, medicine, finance, religion, art. Another activity is the creation and maintenance of various amateur groups – music and dance groups, orchestras, theater groups, etc.

The new Law on Community Centers published in 1941 makes them legal entities, i.e. non-profit organizations for civil education through cultural and educational activities.

Adoption from 1941 of that Law requires greater centralization and bureaucratization of the community center case. State authorities interfere both in the choice of purchased books for the libraries of Community Centers and in their management.

During the third period (1944–1989), the Community Centers are used mainly for ideological purposes. This period is characterized by obvious efforts to restrain and take away

the role of Community Centers as civil organizations. Their activity is placed at the service of the new ideology to educate the people in the spirit of socialism. In 1945 it has been published "Decree-Law" for Community Centers and they are placed under the supervision of the newly established Ministry of Propaganda.

The socialist regime is making purposeful efforts to territorial extension and material ensuring of the Community Centers, taking into account their close proximity to people and their ability to be used for ideological purposes. In the 60s of the 20th century every village has a Community Center.

Financial problems accompany the Community Centers throughout the period of socialism. The membership fee that remains minimal, not being able to cover the most urgent finantial needs. The reason for this is the increasing state subsidy for Community Centers, which in 80s has reached 80% of their maintenance. The purpose of the financial dependence

Modern revolution is called an active civil society. The most important role of Community Centers today is to organize and activate this society for a better democratic climate. They have a unique potential to promote social change and strengthen civil society.

of Community Centers is to provide political dependence of these institutions and this is a symbol of their seeming autonomy.

After 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the beginning of the transition period from socialism to democracy, Community Centers have the opportunity to regain its role of civil or-

ganizations and cultural and educational associations. Neglecting the traditions of the civil initiatives and voluntary civil participation turns out one of the most serious problem in the transition period for both the Community Centers and the development of local communities.

Today the Community Centers are supervised by the Ministry of Culture.

The current Law for Community Centers was published in 1996 and last amendments are from September 2016. According to this Law "Bulgarian Folk Community Centers are traditional self-governing cultural and educational associations in the settlements that perform cultural and educational tasks". They are registered under the Law for FOLK COMMUNITY CENTERS, as legal non-profit entities to meet the demands of citizens related to:

- development and enrichment of cultural life, as well as social and educational activities in settlement;
- preserving the customs and Bulgarian traditions;
- expanding the knowledge of people and their integration into the science, art and culture;
- strengthening of the national identity;
- providing access to the information.

Modern Community Centers are funded by membership fees, cultural, informational and educational activities, subsidy from the state and municipal budgets, rents from property (movable or immovable), donations, project funding and other incomes. The CCCs can develop any additional initiatives related to the subject of their main activity and to use the revenues to achieve some specific objectives. These institutions do not give profit.

What is the new position of CCCs in the modern life? What are the current challenges facing this respected institution?

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century we are in a period of transformation of the functions and activities of Community Centers. As traditional and typical Bulgarian cultural institution they went through all the changes in the society. This institution has been preserved and continues to develop and adapt to the different timeframes and communities.

The modern Community Center is facing challenges to meet the needs of people in the period of intensive changes. More or less the same was the challenge during the time of their establishment 160 years ago. As then, so now people need education and training, they need to be organized in small communities to address the new challenges and making social changes.

Modern revolution is called an active civil society. The most important role of Community Centers today is to organize and activate this society for a better democratic climate. They have a unique potential to promote social change and strengthen civil society. They are closely connected to the specific parameters of the local community.

Modern Bulgarian community centers are established on the principles of religious and ethnic tolerance. They are public associations that are not connected to any political platform and are not directly subordinate to state and municipal administrations. CCCs combine dreams and aspirations of all Bulgarian citizens for creativity and studiousness. Along this line of thinking the Community Center is a place (a public institution), which has always been open to all members of the community and is characterized by free access to its activities.

In the context of the topic of development of the communities in rural areas, Community Centers have characteristics that make them unique and irreplaceable. These are the only historical and strongly associated to the community local organizations with national coverage in almost every village.

This organizations have institutional sustainability based on the existence of a special law regulating their legal status and guarantees state support and funding.

Community Centers have well-equipped buildings, and many of them are owners of agricultural land.

One of the strongest characteristics supporting the importance of Community Centers for rural development is that it is a place that brings people from the community together in one place. Especially in small villages, it is the only one cultural, educational and informational organization. Deep into the thinking and the memories of people from the community the community center is the "place of the community" – a neutral territory accessible to everyone. It is a place for meetings, discussions, debates, public discussions and consultations. The Community Center is the organization, standing close to the problems and demands of the people from the community. The connection between the local community and the community center can be explained in several types of interaction with huge potential for development (great potential). The community center can play a crucial role in terms of representation, intermediation, awareness, education, association, approximation of the differences, support, etc.

Along with these institutional advantages, the life of the Community Centers is accompanied by many problems and crises. During the transitional period the community centers are facing many challenges. On one side is the crisis of their survival, and on the other – the contradictory prospect for their future. At the beginning of transition period they have financial difficulties, changes in their legal framework, etc.

The community centers have to take a difficult decision – to accept new trends for their development as community organizations or to adhere to the conservative tradition of familiar functions. In both cases, the working teams of Community Centers feel the deficiencies in their management approaches, lack of marketing skills, the need of competencies to work with the community.

The community center set up as self-governing organization of the community goes through the direct state control during socialist times, but in the period of transition becomes a self-governing institution that is neither of the community nor to the state. This "duality" of the community center today is determined in its legal framework. On one side – a civil association, a legal non-profit entity, and on the other – an organization subsidized by state budget with public cultural and educational tasks and activities. The legal framework does not encourage the autonomy of the Community Centers.

The law does not focus on the activities related to the community, but rather on the fulfillment of specific cultural and educational tasks to the state. This duality is reinforced by state subsidies. On one side the law does not take away from community centers independent initiative and self-government, but on the other – limited access to alternative financial resources puts severe limitations to this "freedom". Many of the community centers stay away from the introduction of innovations and the formation of new target groups. However there are Community Centers that are looking for innovative approaches in activities such as providing new services to the population on a project basis.

Some of these activities today are:

- arranging and maintaining libraries, reading rooms, etc.;
- organizing schools, workshops, courses, clubs, cinema and video exhibitions, celebrations, festivals, concerts, etc.;

- collection and dissemination of knowledge about the region of the municipality;
- creation and preservation of museum collections under the Cultural Heritage Act;
- providing computers and Internet services;
- and many other activities supporting the implementation of their basic functions, with the exception of activities contrary to national identity and traditions.

Some of new activities of community centers are related to the organization of different courses, foreign language courses, classes in music, dances, sports, theatre, fine and applied arts etc. One of the traditional socio-economic function of Community Centers is to provide scholarships and support of capable and talented young people for their further training and education. Today this function continues with different activities on integration of minority groups, working with people with disabilities, organizing vocational courses etc. This once again demonstrates the willingness of the Community Centers to be close to people and to actively participate in solving problems of the modern society.

Despite the lack of sufficient funds for various activities, salaries and renovating of buildings, people working in Community Centers manage to preserve the cultural heritage of Bulgarian folklore, making us unique as a nation.

At the beginning of the 1990s the Community Centers occupy an important place in various activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are primarily for the development of these institutions as a segment of civil society. As an organization with the status of the non-governmental organization (NGO) Community Centers receive the right to participate in various programs and projects.

Over the last years there has been an increase in the activity of Community Centers and NGOs in the direction of protecting cultural heritage and sustainable development. Through the implementation of projects under various programs has been achieved a distinct change in the attitudes of local communities. They accumulate experience in planning and implementing local development initiatives (as has been mentioned above).

The following actions are needed to secure the future activities of these Community Centers which are open to new trends and looking for opportunities to develop innovative ideas and approaches, including much more target groups of the community:

- The new Rural Development Programme has to offer opportunities to support the associations of community centers and public-private partnerships with businesses. To encourage the implementation of the development strategy through LEADER approach;
- Adopt festivity (organizing traditional festivals) as a factor in community development and survival of the territory;
- Work towards building a social environment for communication and integration of the elderly population.
- Develop and implement curriculum in universities for training and capacity building of the employees of the Community Centers.

The priorities for community development that define the long-term central role of the Community Centers for the development of the rural areas are:

- Building social capital and strengthening the relationships of the local community;
- Preservation, development and promotion of cultural integrity of the community;
- Provision of services, products and community initiatives that contribute to sustainable local development;
- Innovation, knowledge, training and capacity building of human resources.

Community centers are a specific type of legal non-profit entities. As with other types of NGOs, there are more registered than actually operational. Since 1997, there has been a decline among the Community Centers in rural areas – some are closing down – while they remain active in urban areas.

The total number of Community Centers in Bulgaria today is more than 3000, and over 60% of them are in rural areas. Of the total 264 municipalities in Bulgaria, 231 are designated as rural municipalities. All settlements in a rural municipality are included in the list of rural areas.

Community Centers are one of the possible beneficiaries of the measures of the Programme for Rural Development. For the purposes of policy of rural development from 2000 until today (now is the third programming period) Bulgaria determines rural areas, based on the territorial-administrative division of the country. They are among the group of organizations to which the policy for rural development gives the role to care and contribute to improving the quality of life in rural areas. Community centers are the focus of Measure 7 "Basic services and renovation of villages in rural areas" of the "Programme for Rural Development" (RDP 2014–2020). This measure is intended to finance projects for improving basic services for the population and the economy in rural areas, to ensure access to culture, entertainment and sports services for children and adults, etc.

A relatively new initiative related to the work of Bulgarian Community Centers and in response to new challenges facing these traditional institutions is the establishment of one association in 2004 – Innovative Community Centres Association.

This organization is voluntary association of Community Centers carrying out activities connected with sustainable development and in particular educational, informational and technological development of local communities.

One of the Innovative Community Centers Association priority objective is ensuring the access to vocational training and education of the citizens, according to their personal interests and abilities and meeting the needs for qualified workers, competitive on the labor market. For the purpose in 2006 ICCA Vocational Training Center was certified, realizing the necessity of assuring and maintaining quality in the vocational education and training of people from settlements remote from the significant administrative centers. To overcome this obstacle the vocational training network was established as result of the teamwork of the community centers in partnership with local government, employers and non-governmental organizations.

Innovative Community Centers Association (ICCA) actively works for the promotion of the positive image of the Community Centers and for strengthening their position as organizations closest to the problems of the local communities. The achievement of information and communication equality and diminishing the social isolation of adults are part of the tasks and responsibilities of the Association.

In 2016, the year of the celebration of its 160 years of history, Bulgarian Community Centers continue to be a unique phenomenon of cultural and spiritual life in every Bulgarian village. This phenomenon is a place for exchange of information but also a repository of intangible cultural heritage, which it has assumed some of the functions of the family for transmitting of traditional knowledge and skills between the generations.

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#### Reto Ingold Biodynamic Agricultural School, Switzerland

## THE TRADITION OF DUAL EDUCATION IN SWITZERLAND

Look back to the development of the Swiss biodynamic school



"If our youth is and continues to be educated correctly, all our affairs will take a happy course, if not....the rest is better left unsaid"

Platon

A look back in the history of vocational training brings up the interesting fact, that vocational education and training were very similar in most European countries during the Middle Ages. In nearly all European countries and for many centuries after the establishment of the guilds, the work of artisans and their vocational education and training were organised nearly the same way. Guilds were associations in which, from the 12th century on, people who worked in the same trade or craft joined together in a town or city. Guilds wrote their own bylaws, rules that were binding upon all members of the guild including ways of training. These rules and regulations defined how things were to be made and set 'consumer-friendly' prices.¹ A strict hierarchy held sway throughout Europe under the guild system: apprentice, journeyman, master.

The period of apprenticeship ended with a specialised examination when the apprentice was 'discharged'. Each trade or craft had its own customs for this 'discharge' and for the former apprentice's acceptance into the community of journeymen. Journeymen's vocational qualifications were recognised in other countries. Generally without family ties, they travelled from place to place, to augment and broaden their skills by learning from masters in other countries: an early form of occupational mobility in Europe. After journeymen had acquired sufficient experience, they would apply to a guild for admission as masters. Skills for profession during the middle age were mainly developed at work and not at school. Training was in this time not "dual", it was part of the work in the enterprise.

Agriculture during this period was not included into the guild system. During the middle age farmers were still part of feudal serfdom. Farmer kids learnt mainly from their parents or relatives and neither school nor guilt rules for agriculture were established. Agriculture in the middle age was not seen as a "profession". Farmer skills were learnt at one place and normally not supported by journeymanship. Farmers were not free to travel.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, the guild system in Europe lost much of its importance. Liberal economic doctrine, which encouraged the 'free play of forces', regarded the traditional guild system as an obstacle to competition and a hindrance to free trade. A development of industrial industries was only possible after the guilt system had been abolished. Farmers profited by these new driving forces in society by abolition of serfdom. In Germany

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> N. Wollschläger, É.F. Guggenheim, A history of vocational education and training in Europe. From divergence to convergence, "Vocational Training European Journal" 2004, Nr 32, Vol. II (May-August).

the farmers became only free after 1848.<sup>2</sup> In Switzerland farmers were juridic free persons already much earlier. Perhaps this is the reason why farmer schools have developed earlier than in middle Europe.

Farmers became free and could rent or buy farmland and were free to travel, but still were mostly not involved into vocational training systems. Many politicians of European countries report therefore from the 18th to the 19th century about heavy deficits in agriculture and farmer knowledge and skills. Many civil society groups like "Bernische ökonomische und gemeinnützige Gesellschaft" in starts to be aware about significance of farming knowledge for national welfare and establish farm schools<sup>4</sup>. Often starts this school to train orphans, take up young people who do not have the chance to learn at their own family farms. Farticipants learn agriculture at the school farm and in school. This system can be called "apprentership workshop" and was genuinely "dual" including practice and theory. Only step by step also private family farms and their kids became part of the training system.

Already in 1763 "politicians of Canton Bern reclaimed the creation of farming schools for farmer sons: 6 "We have to make the farmers understand that, that a profession done by rules and procedures is more sure and offers more advantages than to learn only by doing without all understanding." The students should understand the theory, "along which we can support nature, when we grow arables or hold animals with best success".

The first agricultural vocational training courses of national significance in Switzerland have been created 1804 on the model farm Hofwil of Emanuel von Fellenberg<sup>8</sup>. The goal was to "to train humanism and profession". Free vocational courses were offered to farmers and farm workers "to train land people to brave tenants or farm foremen". The "dual" training type with farm practise on the own farm and additional school courses started this way to develop in Swiss agriculture. The farm schools developed very slowly as the farm families were hard to convince from the necessity of the visit of a 2-year course. In 1880 not

The first agricultural vocational training courses of national significance in Switzerland have been created  $1804\ [\ldots]$ . The goal was "to train humanism and profession".

more that 100 agricultural apprentices were registered in Switzerland (see table cited by Wahlen).

Only after the schools started to introduce winter courses, which were better accepted by the farmers, vocational training started

to develop. Very soon politicians and scientists recognized the potential of a dual training system. "There is no better training system for Swiss farmers than the winter school. Young farmers who were trained on their own farms in practise can get the most useful theoretical background in botany, zoology, chemistry, manuring, etc." Today we can see the success of this training system by the fact that nearly all Swiss farmers have followed a dual vocational farm school <sup>10</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> G. von Below, Geschichte der deutschen Landwirtschaft des Mittelalters w ihren Grundzügen. Aus dem hinterlassenen Manuskript herausgegeben von Friedrich Lütge, 2. unveränderte Auflage, "Quellen und Forschungen zur Agrargeschichte 18", Fischer, Stuttgart 1966.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> M. Stuber e.a. (Hrsg.), Kartoffeln, Klee und kluge Köpfe. Die Ökonomische und Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft des Kantons Bern OGG (1759–2009), Berno 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Eg. Landwirtschaftliche Schule Rüti, Zollikofen 1817

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> K. Guggisberg, H. Wahlen, Kundige Aussaat, köstliche Frucht. Zweihundert Jahre Oekonomische und Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft des Kantons Bern 1759–1959, Berno 1958.

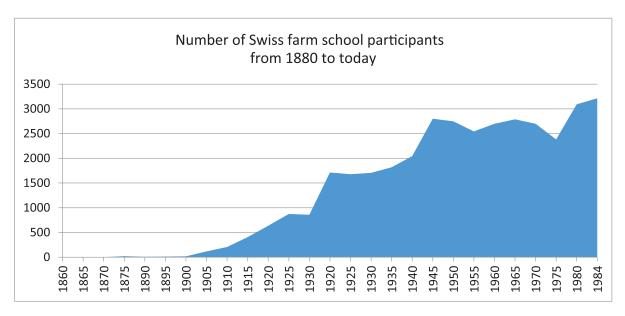
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "Wettschrift von der besten Erziehung des Landvolkes in Absicht auf den Feldbau" die 1763 der Oekonomischen Gesellschaft von Bern.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> H. Wahlen, Der landwirtschaftliche Bildungsgedanke in der Schweiz. Ein Beitrag zur geschichtlichen Entwicklung des beruflichen landwirtschaftlichen Bildungswesens, Berno (Francke) 1947, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> E. Bähler, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Darstellung des schweizerischen land- wirtschaftlichen Unterrichts, Zurych 1911.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> E. Wettstein, Die Entwicklung der Berufsbildung in der Schweiz, Sauerländer 1987.



Number of Swiss farm school participants from 1880 to today, according to H. Wahlen

Today the dual agricultural training lasts three years ending with a level three diploma. The practical skills are learnt on a farm, the theoretical ones in a cantonal farm school. A worldwide unique aspect is that farm trainees will change farms during these three years. This procedure supports to broaden the practical knowledge and allows the farmers to collect more personal experience in work and life. <sup>11</sup>

In the seventies cantonal farm schools dominated the vocational training sector in Swiss agricultural agriculture. There was no space for any other offers of private schooling as the school costs were by 100 % covered by the Swiss government.

In the late seventies also the demand for information on organic and biodynamic agriculture rose at farm trainees. But the existing school system was not all open nor interested to take up this new knowledge. Early pioneers of biodynamic farming, long before organic farmers started to think about the training of their followers, tried to convince cantonal farm schools to support them, as they got more and more demand from young people, mainly from cities, about how to do biodynamic agriculture. All these attempts to cooperate with the established farm school system failed badly!

As a reaction of this failure five Swiss farm families and biodynamic pioneers created their own vocational farm training school taking up all the known advantages of Swiss vocational training system to develop their own curricula for biodynamic agriculture training in Switzerland. Only this way the farmers were able to answer on the extraordinary demand of young people to learn more about Biodynamics. Kathi and Peter Blaser from Emmental BE, Lisette and Werner Spänhauer from Convers JU, Anna and Fritz Baumgartner from Savigny VD, Alice and Emil Meyer from Hombrechtikon ZH and Annelis and Hans Oswald from Klarsreuti TG decided to start in1980 as a reaction on the harsh denial of the official schooling system in agriculture to open their own biodynamic farm school..

The concept called wandering school was quite a success and lasted in this form 35 years. It included 4 years of practical work on biodynamic farms added with winter block courses for the theory. School took place on farms, as there was no access to schools. Also the farmers took over a lot of the teaching themselves as no finances for teaching personnel could be found. The farm families were therefore involved in many roles into this school concept: as farmer and practitioners teaching the practise part of vocational school. But also as biodynamic experts and teachers in school blocks were mainly biodynamic theory was thought throughout the winters. Farmers become responsible for content and methods but also for hosting and accommodating of students. Along their needs and possibilities they invited experts and scientists to broaden the offer for the students. During each of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Die Landwirtschaft von morgen: die jungen Bauern, "Schweizer Bauernverband, Situationsbericht 2015", Brugg 2015.

the four years one subject dominates the curricula like the realms of nature: 1st year soil, 2nd year plants, 3rd year animals und 4th year humanity 12. The basic understanding of the farmers about teaching was, that if the farm can develop also the student can develop. Training was not meant as a contradiction to farming, training should be completely integrated to the farming procedures. Farm, Farmer family and students should support each other mutually!

On the farm, nearly as a member of the family, as an apprentice, a student and co-worker, the participant learns about the seasonal practices in agriculture and followed during the winter half year the teaching blocks of the "wandering school", which organised its courses each time on a different biodynamic farm. The lessons were mostly held in the farm living rooms as schoolrooms were not available. The practical curricula based on one hand on the official curricula of cantonal farm schools but in addition also on specific, newly developed contents evolving from the lectures of Dr. Rudolf Steiner, a German philosopher who inspired first biodynamic agriculture. In 2004 the association of biodynamic farmers in Switzerland got a full recognition of its curricula from the Swiss government. Since 2004 the participants get a vocational certificate "expert for biodynamic agriculture" on top of the official farmer diploma. It took in fact 24 years to reintegrate the initiative of biodynamic farmers of Switzerland into the teaching system of Swiss agriculture.

Farmers from more than 80 biodynamic farms in Switzerland (with Demeter certification on top of organic label) in whole Switzerland offered and partly still offering training places to participants of the Swiss biodynamic farm school and teach as practical and theoretical teachers in the school. From 1980 to today more than 400 biodynamic farmers have been trained from which a lot of run today their own biodynamic farms in Switzerland. <sup>13</sup>

Biodynamic farmers of Switzerland have found a new successful access to the dual vocational training concept. It was in the historical background not possible to start with a biodynamic school. But later they became convinced that a dual approach, with practise and theory closely connected to what happens seasonally and culturally on the farm, represent a strong teaching concept where practical work and school have to be balanced for the successful development of farming skills. Today, out of reasons of specialisation of farms but also out of the motivation to standardise training activities, vocational training becomes more and more reduced to school. This is contrary to what participants see as a most efficient approach of personal learning. They prefer a dual vocational farm school.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Verein für biologisch-dynamische Landwirtschaft. Wegleitung zum Prüfungsreglement der Fachasubildung, Arlesheim 2004.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> R. Ingold, *Die Entwicklung der Fachasubildung*, *Beiträge*, "Verein für biologisch-dynamische Landwirtschaft" No 2/16, Arlesheim 2016.

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RETO INGOLD – agronomist, teacher and biodynamic farming expert. Grown up in a city, he was always interested in agriculture. He had the chance to participate in a 4-year apprentice course for biodynamic farmers, that started to be established in the early eighties in Switzerland. His passion for teaching brought him back to finish his agronomy studies and agog teaching courses. After some years in research and advisory he was a teacher and director for many years of the Swiss biodynamic farmer school. Today he is working as a biodynamic farming expert in international projects.

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# FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS AND THE PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION – IN THE PAST AND TODAY



#### Introduction

Let us start our considerations from referring to the statement of Agnieszka Stopińska-Pająk from "Introduction" to one of the books that I co-edited years ago. The monography was on the role of adult education in counteracting social marginalization and compensation of social exclusion. As the editor-in-chief of the publishing series "The Library of Adult Education" (Polish: "Biblioteka Edukacji Doroslych") of Academic Andragogic Society (Polish: Akademickie Towarzystwo Andragogiczne), in which the book was published, the author mentioned above already in the first sentences of her introductory notes, remarked:

Social exclusion [...] deprives people of the opportunities to participate in collective life. Hence, it makes it impossible for them to use democracy, participation in which is treated as its defining feature."<sup>1</sup>.

Let us emphasize that adult education is connected with the problems of social inclusion in a special way. Adult education was born – in its mainstreams – as an attempt to face the problems of exclusion of demotic classes (educationally de-favourised): peasants, workers, and later, also other groups: women, soldiers, members of various religious groups, etc. that did not fit into the educational mainstream of the society. The answer to the economic, social and political transformations that started to appear in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century had to be new educational concepts – "ordering" education of adults to reduce the danger of exclusion from after and non-school education.<sup>2</sup> The new educational forms and institutions, such as courses for adults (e.g. literacy courses), various educational-cultural associations, popular universities, workers' universities, or, last but not least, folk high schools, as well as – more and more strongly voiced in subsequent decades postulates on popularization of knowledge, or, gradually acquiring the status of an important trend in adult education, self-education, were each time also real proposals connecting with counteracting marginalization.

An analysis of the most important genetic features of adult education seems to fully confirm the remark mentioned above. Let us look, for example, at the content of "Pedagogic Encyclopedia of the 21 Century". As Tadeusz Aleksander points out there:

- "Openness of adult education is expressed in [...] liquidation of any borders closing the willing ones access to further education";
- "The generally noted feature of adult education is its close relation with the interest of defined social groups and individuals belonging to those groups";

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A. Stopińska-Pająk, Wprowadzenie od redaktorki serii, [in:] T. Maliszewski, J. Żerko (eds), Edukacja dorosłych wobec wykluczenia społecznego: przeszłość i teraźniejszość, Warszawa-Gdańsk 2012, p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Comp. e.g.: R. Wroczyński, *Geneza i rozwój oświaty pozaszkolnej*, [in:] idem, *Praca oświatowa. Rozwój – systemy – problematyka*, Warszawa 1965, pp. 5–40.

- "[adult education] helps people achieve qualifications at the level of the requirements specified by formal requirements for the people performing a certain profession";
- "[adult education] also serves the purpose of professional and social promotion of entire social groups and individuals".

So it can be clearly seen that adult education can (and should be) perceived as an important social tool in counteracting exclusion. Well, even today, as Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec notes:

"[it] became a leading strategy of social inclusion. It is thus justified to explore these phenomena also from the andragogic point of view and to provide theoretical models of explanatory, interpreting and projecting power. Even mores so, because these issues have rarely been dealt with in andragogy, giving way in this respect to the representatives of sociology, social work and social pedagogy".<sup>4</sup>

Folk high schools turned out to be one of the most effective adult education institutions in counteracting social marginalization that appeared in various parts of the world in modern

times. As educational establishments grown from the Scandinavian tradition of social movements – they gained popularity and recognition not only among the societies of the Scandinavian north of Europe and today, in various ways and with various intensity, they

FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN COUNTERACTING SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION THAT APPEARED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD IN MODERN TIMES.

support the process of social inclusion and development of civic society in a few tens of countries all over the world. As one of Polish experts, Lucjan Turos, points out:

"these institutions neutralized the process of social exclusion of rural youth mainly because they shaped social ideals. The ideals included such values as human life, work, family, Homeland, folk culture, folk and cooperative movement. With such ideals the students of folk high schools entered social life trusting that their skills, work and involvement are needed [...] by the people living in the rural area and by the whole nation".

Tadeusz Pilch is of the same opinion and strongly emphasizes that folk high schools have for decades been and still are instruments of building a community and community feeling:

"the ability to create and nourish a community in folk high schools had an almost sacred character [...] of preparing for collective and self-governing activities in the environment; for nobly perceived service to man and community".

#### Scandinavian beginnings

When we look at the research trustworthy deepened studies on the beginnings of folk high schools in Scandinavian countries of such authors as, for example, a French historian of adult education Erica Simon<sup>7</sup> or an American anthropologist Steven M. Borish<sup>8</sup>, we will have a strong, irresistible impression that counteracting social exclusion lies at the origin of folk high schools. It was this willingness to include peasants into the social, cultural and political

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> T. Aleksander, Edukacja dorosłych, [in:] T. Pilch (ed.), Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku, vol. I, Warszawa 2003, pp. 908–909.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> H. Solarczyk-Szwec, Editor's review of a collective work: "Edukacja dorosłych wobec wykluczenia społecznego: przeszłość i teraźniejszość" edited by Tomasz Maliszewski and Józef Żerko, Toruń, 7-09-2011, p. 1 (Written opinion of the reviewer in the documentation of the Publishing House of "Ateneum"- School of Higher Education in Gdańsk).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> L. Turos, Edukacja dorosłych wobec problemów wykluczenia społecznego, [in:] T. Maliszewski, J. Żerko (eds), op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> T. Pilch, *Uniwersytet ludowy*, [in:] T. Pilch (ed.), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, vol. VI, Warszawa 2007, p. 1019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> E. Simon, Réveil national et culture populaire en Scandinavie. La genèse de la højskole nordique 1844–1878, Copenhagen 1960.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> S.M. Borish, The Land of the Living. The Danish folk high schools and Denmark's non-violent path to modernization, Blue Dolphin Press (Grass Valley, California) 1991.

processes that made the intellectual leaders of those societies look for new educational instruments for the rural youth in post-school age. *Inter alia*, Grażyna Szelągowska<sup>9</sup> and Tadeusz Aleksander<sup>10</sup>, give interesting descriptions of those issues in Poland. Both of them – although starting from different premises – indicate that it was the emancipation processes taking place among the residents of rural areas – first in Denmark, and soon afterwards in other Scandinavian countries – that led to the necessity of establishing a not known before institution that could effectively and in the socially desired direction lead civic and patriotic education among the peasants there. The first author says that:

"the original concept of Grundtvig was fairly far from our image of folk high schools, [as] according to the intention of the philosopher, it was to be a school for civil servants and all the people interested, also farmers, merchants, who were taught [...] native language, history and literature and social sciences" 11,

but she also emphasizes that Grundtvig, at least in a few of his texts, published at different times and places:

"[...] presented a new curriculum for the lowest social groups, which was to contribute to improving civic and national awareness [and] to teach the skills of expression and formulating thoughts" 12.

The other of the authors mentioned above emphasizes the connections of folk high schools with the doctrine of social agrarianism and the social movement that stemmed out of it, and pointed out to the fact that the new institutions were to flexibly prepare the residents of rural areas to a full, creative participation in the social-economic transformation aiming at bringing the country to a higher level of civilizational development, emphasizing not so much vocational education but civic education and cultural-educational work.<sup>13</sup>

So folk high schools were born because of some concrete needs. After the freehold had been granted, the peasants of the Scandinavian countries were gradually getting more and more civic and political rights. Also their economic position was gradually improving. The educational systems existing in the individual Nordic countries – despite the reforms popularizing elementary education introduced in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – did not take into consideration the new educational needs of the peasantry and did not prepare peasants to using the gained social or economic freedom. The crafts school and high school becoming popular in the cities, the peasants – with the very few exceptions of agricultural schools and housekeeping courses – were not offered any further education after folk (elementary) school in their place of residence. And that constituted a real danger to the possibilities of effective development of rural communities as a whole and their individual members and could exclude peasants from participation in the civilizational achievements and conscious taking responsibility, together with other classes, for the country. Not known before folk high schools were to become an antidote for that kind of dangers<sup>14</sup>.

At the beginning, the Danish concept of *folkehøjskole* quickly gained recognition in other Scandinavian countries. As generally known, the first such a school in the Kingdom of Denmark was established in 1844. Twenty years later, in 1864 the first such an institution was established in Norway, and in 1868 – the first three Swedish folk high schools were opened, and in 1889 – the first two in Finland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> G. Szelągowska, Poddany i obywatel. Stowarzyszenia społeczne w Danii w dobie transformacji ustrojowej XIX wieku, Warszawa 2002, pp. 110–122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> T. Aleksander, *Uniwersytety ludowe następstwem ruchu przebudowy społeczno-gospodarczej wsi*, [in:] T. Maliszewski, M. Rosalska (eds), *Uniwersytety ludowe – pomiędzy starymi a nowymi wyzwaniami*, Toruń 2016, pp. 15–28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> G. Szelągowska, op.cit., p. 118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> T. Aleksander, Folk high schools..., op. cit., pp. 15-17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In Danish: *folk high schools* (*folkehøjskole*); the name was to indicate that they are to unable the residents of rural areas to continue education after *folk school* (*folkeskole*).

#### Metamorphoses

At the beginning, in all Scandinavian countries folk high schools operated in rural environments, turning out to be extremely efficient tools of civic and patriotic education and of social

inclusion. The appreciation for their effectiveness and potential connected with the curricula openness and the flexible organizational form led to experiments with the possibility of using folk high schools to work for other social classes and groups of interests. It led to a situation in which at their birthplace that is in the Nordic countries, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the institutions

At the beginning, in all Scandinavian countries folk high schools operated in rural environments, turning out to be extremely efficient tools of civic and patriotic education and of social inclusion. The appreciation for their effectiveness and potential connected with the curricula openness and the flexible organizational form led to experiments with the possibility of using folk high schools to work for other social classes and groups of interests.

started to take up also educational tasks in e.g. workers' environments, in religious groups in abstainers' movement or among national and ethnic minorities. There is a multitude of such examples. Despite different activities taken up in different environments, the folk high school assumption and rules of educational activities remained unchanged. Let us list them here:

- 1. the primacy of spiritual development over instrumental education,
- 2. the primacy kindness of man over vocational perfectionism,
- 3. the primacy of tolerance over the arguments of political fight and tactics,
- 4. the primacy of community and human ties over formal organization 15.

This set of the most essential features of folk high schools turned out to be valuable not only for shaping the community character of the rural environments but also for the subjectivity of peasants.

Already in the 1880s the formula of folk high schools started to be used by religious environments – first in Denmark (1887, Nørre Nissum, *Kirkelig Forening for den Indre Mission i Danmark*), and soon also in Norway (where one of the two mainstreams of folk high schools located in *Noregs Kristelege Folkehøgskolelag* since its beginning till today has remained in a strong link with religion <sup>16</sup>), Finland (1907) <sup>17</sup> and Sweden (where, with time, there appeared folk high schools of so called Free Churches, but also institutions connected with the Lutheran Church – as e.g. *Sigtuna folkhögskola*, 1817, or – much later – with the Catholic Church – as e.g. *St. Birgitta folkhögskola*) <sup>18</sup>.

Almost at the same time an attempt was made to use, for the first time, a folk high school to work for national minorities. A folk high school for the Swedish minority in Finland was opened in the place called Porvoo (Swedish: Borgå) in 1889 A no longer in existence *Samernas folkhögskola* in Jokkmokk in northern Sweden, operating in the communities of the local Sami people also wrote a beautiful card in the history of Scandinavian folk high schools.

Workers were a separate social class that was supported by Scandinavian folk high schools. The first of such institutions was opened in Sweden in 1906. It was *Brunnsvik* folk high school in the place called Ludvika established by Swedish Social-Democratic Workers' Party to educate workers' leaders. A few years later the Danish opened their first folk high school for workers in a port town of Esbjerg (1910). *Købmandshvile folkehøjskole* (1905) in the northern part of Zealand, educatiing with folk high school methods young merchants and the folk high school for fishermen in Kerteminde (1908).<sup>19</sup>

In the light of the above it can be seen that very early, that is from the turn of the 1880s and the 1890s, the environments not directly connected with rural communities started to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> T. Pilch, op.cit., p. 1019.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> J. Lövgren, Norwegian folk high schools redefine their role as value-based institutions, "Nordisk Kulturpolitisk tidsskrift" 2015, Vol. 18, No 2, pp. 199–217.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> P. Partanen, I. Ruokonen, H. Ruismäki, *The Finnish Design of Folk High School Education*, "The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences" 2013, DOI: 10.15405/ejsbs.97, p. 1182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> T. Maliszewski, Den svenska folkhögskolan. En betraktelse från andra sidan Östersjön, Linköping 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> J. Carlsen, O. Borgå, *The Danish Folkehøjskole*, The Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen 2010, pp. 26–27.

become more and more interested in folk high schools. At the turn of the centuries, some of the functioning folk high schools were started to be used for active educating of leaders and members of rapidly developing social organizations, of the workers' movement in particular, anti-alcohol societies and religious groups (e.g. existing since 1875 the Folk High School in Grebbestad for the needs of abstainers' movement). The folk high schools were seen not only as institutions for elder rural youth but also as a perfect educational tool to prepare people for political and social activities, which was clearly confirmed by numbers of Danish, Swedish, Norwegian or Finnish politicians educated in folk high schools and operating at local, regional and national level and coming from peasant background – with time, also from workers' environment, leaders of social organizations or various entities of religious character.

#### Conclusion

Analysing folk high schools' reaching outside their original impact areas one cannot omit the fact that due to the legislation adopted for those institutions, the use of folk high school formula by the non-rural environment let them receive annual subsidies from national budgets to carry out their educational activities. So it was a proven way to get public financing for own program activities by social organizations, political parties and religious groups. And it must be emphasized that at the beginning of the 20th century in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland there were held vivid and long-lasting discussions on whether it is permitted to link the idea of folk high school with the programs of strongly ideologically or religiously profiled social groups. The opinions of the society and of politicians on that varied. The possibility of using the offer of folk high schools by industrial workers and urban youth was another issued discussed. Making those groups potential students of those institutions caused a noticeable resistance of some parts of the environments of the "traditional" folk high schools in Denmark and Sweden. The discussions on that continued also in the 1930s, when, due to the economic crisis, unemployment was the experience of a large group of workers' youth in the countries of the North and led some of them to courses located in rural folk high schools.

The evolution of the concept of the role and tasks of folk high schools caused a situation in which subsequent institutions did not have such a strong connection with the Swedish rural areas and more and more often started to perform the tasks connected with educating leaders and activists specified by various groups of interest. In that sense they undoubtedly acted for the subjectivity of their own environment and had the character of inclusive education – thus confirming the opinion of a great flexibility of the concept of the folk high school itself and the ability of relatively quick reaction to new situations – including the educational needs appearing in various environments.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Fortbildningsnämnden/Inset Committee (eds), Folk High School in the Nordic Countries. Brief Surveys of FHS Work in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Linköping University, Linköping 1990, p. 16.

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#### Mother's name is a heav'nly sound

Mother's name is a heav'nly sound, as far as blue waves are playing, mother's voice makes the young heart bound and cheers all whose hairs are greying.

Sweet in joy and in distress, sweet in life and sweet in death, sweet in thought hereafter!

Mother tongue is a living force, the people's own word completely, and it's loved both in south and north in groves it is sung most sweetly.

Sweet in joy and in distress, sweet in life and sweet in death, sweet in thought hereafter!

Mother tongue is the twining rose, that great and small binds together, ancien spirits but there repose, and there has the heart its tether.

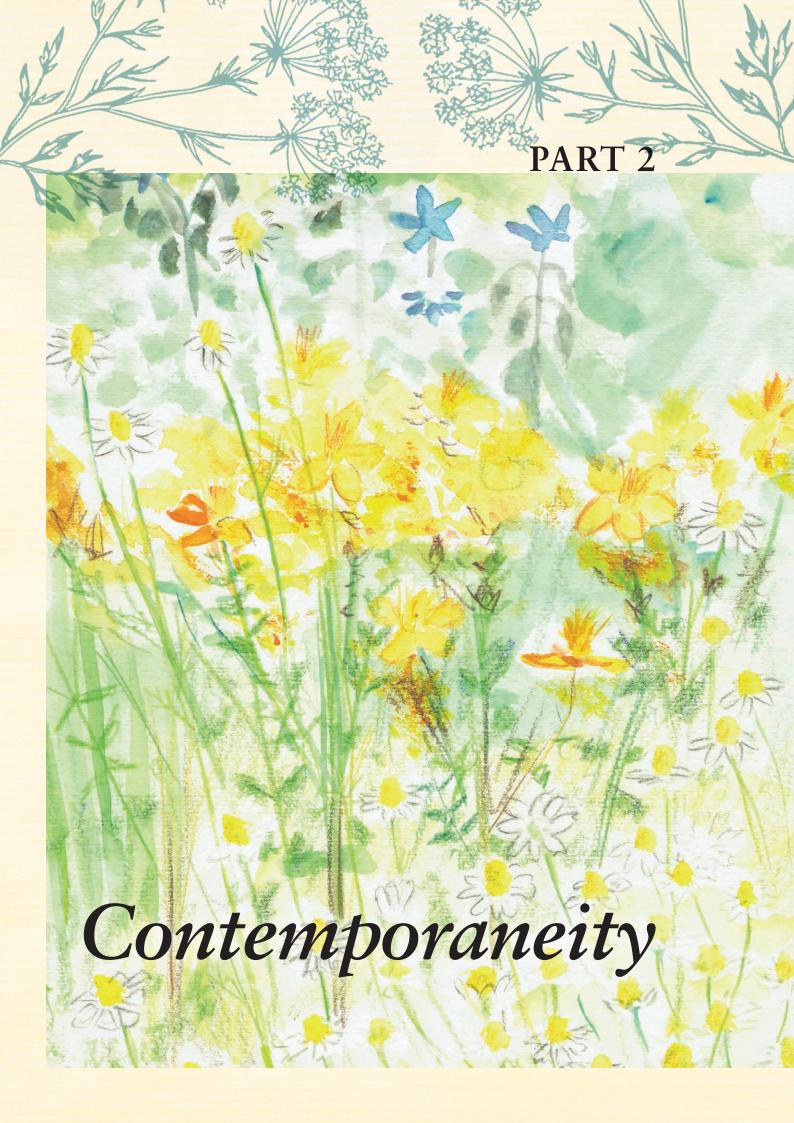
Sweet in joy and in distress, sweet in life and sweet in death, sweet in thought hereafter!

Mother tongue is our heart's true tone, but chaff those else without number, it in speech and in book alone can wake people from slumber.

Sweet in joy and in distress, sweet in life and sweet in death, sweet in thought hereafter!

Mother tongue by the Sound's far shore, in green groves so fully laden, sounds delightful as none before, but most so on lips of maidens.

Sweet in joy and in distress, sweet in life and sweet in death, sweet in thought hereafter!



#### All birds that God gave wings to fly

All birds that God gave wings to fly, all things that as the birds do cry and sing while breath they're drawing, now praise their God, for good He is, and in His mercy remedies life's pangs and painful gnawing.

My soul, of all that is on earth, of what in thought and tongue has birth, most strongly you are winging, and freest is the breath you take when out of it a hymn you make that sends the heavens ringing.

What is there on this earth so true that can be likened unto you that would God's grace be craving? And it was you for which it sought when with our Lord 'twas hither brought all earthly ways outbraving.

Then wake, my soul, your voice now raise, with joyful songs your Master praise, that did redeem creation, that when in mercy you He saw, He over us His love did pour, His comfort and salvation.

And tell each bird on earth anew, and tell all choirs of angels too, whose song full sweet is ringing, that you with them will gladly vie, will ever praise the Lord most high for breath, for wings and singing!

#### Peter Mogensen Brenderup Folk High School, Denmark

## BOARDING SCHOOL – YES OR NO?



Following the inspiration of Grundtvig a folk high school (FHS) is a place where it is emphasized to teach the whole human being. For Grundtvig it meant to include not only reasoning (the brain) but to give equal value to imagination and feelings. Likewise he wanted schools to put weight on the active inclusion of spirit and body.

The pedagogy of a FHS is opposed to most other approaches in schools where marks and exams are predominant. In the eyes of Grundtvig this type of school created human copies instead of individuals and his strong denunciation towards university education met a lot of resistance because it was unheard of to go against professors.

When FHS's are inviting their students for a semester with the aim to let life enlightenment, folk enlightenment and democratic formation be the overall leading words for activities going on it makes sense to have a boarding school. During a day at the school students will meet not only intellectual input in classes but all sorts of impressions that intentionally are created to make the experience encompass a full range a life aspects. Teachers and staff are often living at the school and their presence is creating an atmosphere of "home away from home" for the students.

The authority of the teachers at FHSs are not only connected to intellectual competences but equally linked with being a authority for living life. The enlightenment works both ways as students and teachers alike all are learning by sharing their time together and by being open towards other opinions, other cultures, other ways of prioritizing your life. Being at a FHS 24/7 is opposite of being in the anonymous community of social media with a search engine as you counsellor. Instead you're hooked up with real human beings with whom you share classes, food, room, toilets, parties and life's challenges. A community where one's own actions has a visible impact on the persons you are with. Consequences are easily located and blaming others does not make sense. There is a big advantage of being together in a community but it also comes with a price and the life at a FHS gives each participant a possibility to experience these mechanisms.

The dialogue is crucial and by emphazising conversations with respect it's possible to learn that your own truths not necessarily are taken for granted by everybody. Prejudices are chal-

lenged and maybe reconsidered because when sitting next to each other at the meal you find that this act of sharing food can be extended to much more than just asking for glass of water. The boarding school concept will in many ways engulf the students and speed up

THE DIALOGUE IS CRUCIAL AND BY EMPHAZISING CONVERSATIONS WITH RESPECT IT'S POSSIBLE TO LEARN THAT YOUR OWN TRUTHS NOT NECESSARILY ARE TAKEN FOR GRANTED BY EVERYBODY.

the processes of finding one's ways of living close together in a community. In that sense a FHS stay can bring a lot of perceptions and this insight will be a solid ground for taking action in other parts of a person's life.

No doubt that I value the boarding school as the best option to harvest the learning potentials of living with a group of people in a manner that is similar to the closeness experienced

in a family setting. Comparison with a family is probably not adequate because the starting point at a FHS is quite different – here I just refer to the fact that a FHS always want to make the stay a memorable, developing experience in a safe environment where you're allowed to fail without being rejected.

PETER MOGENSEN – Born in 1960. Freelance folk high school teacher, self-employed course and workshop mediator (www.naturenihjertet.dk), organiser of trekking trips in Nepal. He has a variety of life experiences with organic agriculture, leadership in sports activities, work with civic societies in developing country and passionate awareness to the natural world surrounding us.

#### Mirosław Mincewicz Polish Folk High Schools Association, Poland

# FOLK HIGH SCHOOL IN RADAWNICA – 70 YEARS. A TRACT "ON GOOD JOB"



The folk high school in Radawnica is located in the area of Krajna Złotowska. The land of Złotów – also known as Krajna, was the region where traditions of the Polish nation were strong, they were manifested especially in the period between 1772 and 1945 when the land was included to Prussia and later to Germany by virtue of the First Partition of Poland. Many years of Germanisation caused a limitation of access to reliable knowledge concerning cultural and economic achievements of Poland and its history.

Numerous group of culture and education activists were working on intensifying and consolidating the conviction that the land of Złotów belonged to Poland, they were taking care of Polish traditions, folk customs and purity of the Polish language as well. Their activities were based on conspiracy books, press, singing and creating singers' bands, also fondness of native language and patriotism. Many inhabitants of Krajna were displaced, detained, or sent to concentration camps, where they were very often killed, in consequence of their activity in the Union of Poles in Germany.

1945 brings Radawica long-awaited freedom, and at the time the land of Złotów, which was previously detached from the country in the First Partition of Poland, is coming back. Thanks to valued teachers and education activists Maria and Edmund Splitt, in Zakrzewo near Złotów, which is a village known from the activity of priest Dr Bolesław Domański (in the interwar period the village was a center of the Polish community) a folk high school comes into being in 1945.

The activity of that institution was inaugurated by 8-month courses of re-polonization. High school provides teaching of correct reading, writing and speaking in the Polish language, it also pursues lectures on literature, history, geography of Poland, singing, and staging folk-songs. That activity was aimed to consolidate the bond with the homeland of the freed Krajna's inhabitants, especially young people living in the countryside.

Young people were to convey the knowledge they acquired to other people, within broadly understood Polonization process.

At the time Association of Folk High Schools and Ministry of Education exercised the custody over folk high schools. In 1946, the seat of the folk high school was moved to a beautiful palace in Radawnica, where it operates until today.

Between 1950 and 1968, the director of the institution was Julian Materek, a long-time employee of the folk high school, a man with great experience in education and exceptional sense of organization. At the time, an orphanage operated for several years in the Radawnica Palace, and the folk high school was moved to Jasień near Bytów, which unfortunately results in a total loss of written and photographic documentation of this period. After returning to Radawnica, activists of culture and education were educated in the folk high school. There were also conducted two experimental courses preparing girls from rural environment to run the kindergartens, and keep accounts.

In 1968, Wanda Kowalczyk takes over the responsibilities of the institution's director. Between 1970 and 1984, second level qualification courses for organizers of social and cul-

tural activities were conducted. During this period, the following specialists were cooperating with the folk high school in Radawnica: dr Stefan Starczewski – sociologist, dr Dzierżymir Jankowski – specialist in the field of cultural and educational pedagogy, dr Kazimiera Wołos – ethnographer, Stanisław Pręgowski – artist photographer, Edward Niemiro – author of excellent books in the field of photography and film, and many other outstanding personalities of culture and science. In the 1970s, high school teaching program was enhanced with new specialization courses such as: photography and film. About some of the high school's graduates we can hear in the mass media, we can mention here: Grażyna Auguścik – a jazz singer, Jolanta Dylewska and Andrzej Miłoszewicz – artists photographers, winners of the prestigious award at the Polish Film Festival in Gdańsk in 1995. ("Złote Lwy Gdańskie" ["Golden Lions of Gdańsk"] for film pictures), Marian Rynkiewicz – artist photographer awarded lately for "Kalwaria życia" ("Calvary of Life") album.

In 1985, there were two courses conducted simultaneously: qualification course for photography instructors, and a new one: economics and organization of a rural household.

The change of education direction was dictated by local environment needs.

In 1984, Ewa Huńka becomes a director and develops the economics and organization of a rural household courses. Year 1989 brings another change – the last one – of the director's position in Radawnica. Barbara Mincewicz was promoted to this position –a former teacher of the folk high school in Radawnica, and she works to this day. In 1989, as a result of incomprehensible and extremely unfavorable decisions of Regional Education Board in Piła, the financial problems in Radawnica institution occur. At the time the folk high school's principle of giving priority to upbringing before purely educational functions is fully pursued in the institution. In this way, pupils' personality development and correct interpersonal relations are emphasized, and upbringing is realized by an example and activity in a group. Until 1995, the education programme for rural household instructors was conducted, between 1985 and 1995 the course was completed by 297 students passing the exam with a positive grade.

The analysis of its own capabilities and the labor market's needs, also an assurance of financing resulted in the entire change in the activity directions of the folk high school in Radawnica in 1995. After nearly one year of preparation, two fields of study were introduced: Medical Professional Study of Occupational Therapy and Post-Secondary School for Specialists in Tourist Services. Both schools are registered as non-public institutions but have a granted status of public schools, which gave the possibility to gain grants within education subsidy. The teaching level in these new institutions was very high, which was proved by the fact that there were cases when some graduates were enrolled in universities in the second year with a similar specialty. What is important is the fact that while the folk high school was changing its fields of education, it did not change the methods of work, and results achieved by our students confirmed effectiveness of such methods. Considering a stable financial situation of the folk high school, since the late 1990s a great emphasis has been put on further training of teaching staff, and on searching for new fields of activity of the folk high school. Till today, each member of the Teachers' Board has graduated from at least three faculties in the fields needed at work in the institution.

At the time, several projects came into being, the results of which varied due to labor market needs, the projects were: Post-Secondary School for Social Services Employees, and courses: Community Resource Worker, Assisted Carer. Finally Youth Center of Sociotherapy for 48 young people is established in 2009.

Beside educational activity, in which the high school achieves great results (in the last five years 100 percent of the graduates passed public post-secondary schools exams), the institution carries out a series of projects for local community. There are conducted numerous courses and thematic meetings for the elderly and the disabled, and also for those interested in the handicraft and folk traditions in the region. Most of the activities are realized using modern methods and tools. Here it is worthy to mention that already since 2013 the high school has provided on-line teaching for its post-secondary schools, as well as electronic registers. At the same time traditional classes, originating from Scandinavian folk high schools, are not forgotten. The need to enrich skills and tools of the Radawnica folk high school's employees and activists resulted in a great involvement in projects which allowed to learn conditions and methods of work in similar institutions in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Spain,

Italy, France and England. Many of these experiences were transferred and implemented in Radawnica. In the opinion of the Radawnica's director as well as the body running the institution –"Polish Folk High Schools" Association which has worked continuously in the same team for ten years (Barbara Mincewicz, Małgorzata Kułaczkowska, Mirosław Mincewicz, Anna Małolepsza and Irena Iskra) the successful activity of such institution is guaranteed by is preparation and involvement of the employees and activists to the highest degree.

The same value provides also the stability of the personnel and the courage to make strategic decisions. Another very important element leading to the success of the folk high school activity is a proper selection, and methods of work with young employees. In Radawnica that work is pursued very smartly, which brings excellent results. Considering the fact that few folk high schools based on N.F.S. Grundtvig's education legacy operate in Poland at the moment – the folk high school in Radawnica is willing to share its experience with other schools, and also to draw from the others' experience. That is why the school made a decision to cooperate with the Nationwide Folk High Schools Network (Polish: OSUL). The work in network provides experience exchange, drawing on models and realizing joint projects.

Bearing in mind the fact that it is not the first attempt of bringing all folk high schools organizations in Poland together, there is a great belief that finally their legal and financial stabilization in Poland will be successful.

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MIROSŁAW MINCEWICZ – leader of the Polish Folk High Schools Association since 2008, cooperating with Folk High School in Radawnica since 1986. He worked as a tutor and a teacher on courses of "Economics and management of the country household". Later Director of the Department of Education, Culture and Health Protection of Commune Office in Złotów, now Director of the Department of Education, Culture and Health Protection of District Starosty in Złotów. He graduated from Faculty of Pedagogy on University of Zielona Góra nad andragogy at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

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## ART IN THE LANDSCAPE – INTERNATIONAL ARTISTIC ACTIONS IN WOLA SĘKOWA

#### FOLK UNIVERSITY OF ARTISTIC HANDICRAFT<sup>1</sup>



#### Introduction

The history of Folk High School of Artistic Handicraft (ULRA) goes back to 1959, when it began its work in Wzdów in former Ostaszewskis' palace dating back to 19th century and surrounded with the park. In 2006, the Folk High School was transferred to Wola Sękowa, to an old school building from the 1920s converted into modern place. The specialization "artistic handicraft" had been held in Wzdów since 1984. In Wola Sękowa it has been continued as a '2-year course of handicraft' having the form of extramural studies.

The idea of folk high school was initiated in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century by Nicolai F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), Danish philosopher, educator and pastor. The aim of the folk high school was to educate young adults from rural areas. In such institution they could not only master practical skills, but also learn about culture, raise public awareness, or learn how to exchange views on some issues. It was the concept of 'school for life', the philisophy of which was developed in phases.





Fig. 1. Exodus – monument composed of wooden sculptures, raised 2006–2007, located in ULRA, in the background of the school building

(Photo by the author, 2015)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Anna Sołtysik's article has been published in the "TOPIARIUS. Studia Krajobrazowe\*" magazine no 1(2)/2016, University of Rzeszów Publishing, pp. 135–145. \*(topiarius.ur.edu.pl). We are thankful to the author and the editors for giving us the consent to publish this article.

The landscape plays a vital role in the education process and in the creation of collective identity of young people<sup>2</sup>. Most of folk high schools were established in rural areas where the landscape is an important part of life. The interaction of the *landscape* and the peoples' *inscape* is an interesting issue raised by Miloslav Lapka in his article. He points out the intensity of such interaction and the threat to the contemporary landscape, which is now in dynamic, often irreversible, transitions.

Maliszewski wrote about folk high schools which differ from other schools because of its democracy, empowerment of pupils and learning through experience. These characteristics are still present in contemporary folk high schools, which is also the proof for effectiveness of education in such institutions<sup>3</sup>. The idea of folk high schools played a significant role in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany and also in Poland, where first institutions of this kind were established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What is interesting, folk high schools still perform their function in many countries. They educate adults from rural and urban areas and are still 'school for life', an important turning point for many pupils.

#### International Artistic Actions in Wola Sękowa

The artistic course in Wzdów and later in Wola Sękowa is connected with later artists - the participants of Artistic Actions initiated in 2006 upon relocation of the folk high school. The originator and the director of the first action 'Exodus' was Piotr Woroniec4. This artistic challenge, which was supposed to be a one-time event, gathered 31 sculptors from Poland and Ukraine which in turn resulted in symbolic sculpture-monument (Fig. 1). The positive attitude of local community, favourable reviews and good experience of participants resulted in continuation of artistic events. Since 2006 artistic action have been organised annually (Tab.1). Piotr Woroniec is still the director, and the participants are sculptors and other artists who appear regularly or from time to time. Altogether, 10 editions of the International Artistic Actions in Wola Sekowa got together several dozens of artists from Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Germany, Austria and France<sup>5</sup>. Invited artists vary in terms of their experience. They are masters of art, professors, but also students and amateurs. Among our guests we have had among others such unique people like: Bogdan Biernat (1953-2013), sculptor and educator or Grzegorz Sienkiewicz (1962-2008), art brut artist. The events are held in the second half of July or in the first half of August. So far artists have been presenting: sculptures (wood, stone, clay), paintings, graphics, ceramics objects, willow objects, metalworks (copper), glass objects, photography, poetry, land art

Works were determined by the subject matter of the events, bearing symbolic, emotional, religious or humorous meaning. Artists created works which forced people to think about important issue. Sometimes they commemorated someone ("The bench for Tadziu" – Fig.2, "The bench for Boguś"). Among works were: free-standing sculptures, groups of sculptures, installations, decorative forms, appropriable art, instruments, pieces of art which create new identity (murals by Arkadiusz Andrejkow in Bukowsko community).

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> action in 2008, the Open Air Gallery of Artistic Forms was naturally established within ULRA. It should not only make the school surrounding more attractive, but also educate students, inhabitants of Wola Sękowa and tourists. Works made during artistic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> M. Lapka, *Plynny Krajobraz*, "Autoportret. Pismo o dobrej przestrzeni" 2012, no 4[39], pp. 70–73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> T. Maliszewski, *Pomiędzy tradycjami a przyszłością edukacji dorostych*, "Edukacja Dorosłych" 2012, nr 2, p. 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> An artist, sculptor, born on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1955 in Giżycko. 1977 accomplished the Folk High School in Wzdów. Since 1995, member of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (pol. ZPAP). In the years 1992–1999, a scenography assistant in the Theatre of Creatures in Berlin. Participant of several dozens of individual and collective exhibitions in Poland and in the world. He works and lives in Wola Sękowa. Online available at http://www.woroniec rzezba.republika.pl/ja.htm (accessed 17.01.2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> List of participants of the first action available online at http://www.uniwlud.pl/wp-content/up-loads/2012/05/exodus-katalog.pdf; participants of following actions in quarterly of Bukowsko commune: http://www.bukowsko.pl/asp/pl\_start.asp?typ=14&sub=11&menu=48&strona=1; and also on ULRA website: http://www.uniwlud.pl/ (accessed 17.01.2016)





Fig. 2. "The bench for Tadziu" (2012) sculpture by Bogusław Biernat which commemorates Tadeusz, the inhabitant of Wola Sękowa, who was sympathizer of folk high school and often "frequenter".

(Photo by the author, 2012, 2015).

actions were located not only near high school, but also in different places in Wola Sękowa – near houses, in forest, on the fields, crossroads and in other villages in Bukowsko commune (Fig. 3, 4).

#### Art in the Landscape - Land Art

Some of the works made during artistic events in Wola Sękowa were connected with land art. It appeared in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the answer to the needs of contemporary artists and as a kind of avant-garde language. Land art is often the sum of processual, environment and conceptual art<sup>6</sup>. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the place, where the work was created gained importance. It somehow became the participant of the artistic process. Also the documentation of this process had been becoming more and more important in comparison to complete work<sup>7</sup>. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, land art developed into different way of acting, like temporary installations. Their value is their conceptual aspect, not the form – they are often visible during the exhibition opening – so their documentation is crucial. If the installations are durable, they could perform different functions: become an accent in the landscape (open or urban), provoke discussion or create new identity of the place.

As the environmental art, the art where the location determines the work, land art evolved into other related art types, such as: *site-specific art, eco-art, bio-art, Earth art*, etc. The realisation of land art are various, from subtle fragile works to large compositions made from natural materials often present in the specific place or from the materials which are in stark contrast to the landscape. The examples are works made in Wola Sękowa 2007: "In the beginning was the word" by Ivan Novotny and Erika Strykova and "Forgotten roads" by Tadeusz Z. Błoński.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> J. Rylke, Land art i sztuki pokrewne 1973–1991, "Sztuka ogrodu, sztuka krajobrazu" 2014, nr 2[9] p. 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibidiem, p.10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Information on the 2nd International Artistic Action available online at http://bukowsko.pl/asp/pliki/download/071011fan.pdf

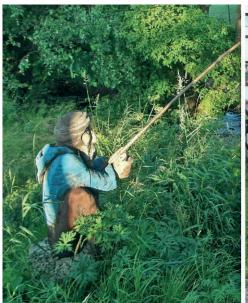




Fig. 3. Sculptures located in Wola Sękowa – on the left "Fisherman" (2014) by Marcin Myśliwiec, on the right "Newspaperman" (2014) by Piotr Woroniec, in the background bus stop decorated together with local inhabitants (2012)

(Photo by the author, 2015).

#### Art in Rural Areas

The artistic events in Wola Sękowa are connected with rural areas and their inhabitants. Thanks to cooperation with local government, the folk high school in Wola Sękowa since its very beginning has been a kind of a common ground shared by pupils, teachers and local community. The example of another village where art changed the perception of inhabitants is Kurówko near Sierpc. Art appeared there thanks to Daniel Rycharski who started to paint murals presenting hybrid animals. Later he engaged also the inhabitants in art initatives, what has changed (in a positive way) their attitude to the place they live in. The artist realised a kind of "acting-art", one of the premises of social art. It is worth recalling here artistic "Acting Group" from Lucim, established in 1980. Artists in their manifesto explained among other things the way of acting with local community, which should be co-author or the only author of creation and the role of artists for that matter is to provide incentives. In this manifesto reference was made to "acting art", the purpose of which is to exert influence on local community. After some time, the inhabitants should initiate artistic actions by themselves. This kind of social art has no specific author. Its character is collective.

The works of Daniel Rycharski in Kurówko and his cooperation with local community, as well as International Artistic Actions in Wola Sękowa, all follow the principles of social art. In both places important aspects are: dialogue with inhabitants, their participation in the art process, direct connection between works and their context (in the sense of the landscape and the culture). In the interview with Łucja Malec-Kornajew, Daniel Rycharski defines his murals as "rural street art", and "acting-art" which he initiated in Kurówko considering them as something important, a kind of inspiration for people who have lost it. He points out that inhabitants feel the lack of integration within their community. Despite new devices and the access to media (television, internet), we still need to exchange thoughts, interact, create something together and it is beyond times we are living in.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ł. Malec-Kornajew, *Bo ludzie oczekiwali nowego święta* (rozmowa z Danielem Rycharskim), "Autoportret. Pismo o dobrej przestrzeni" 2012, nr 4[39], p. 67.





Fig. 4. Sculptures in the landscape – on the left "Wandering carpenter" (2014) by Radosław Kapcia, on the right "Scarecrow" (2009) by Marcin Myśliwiec

(Photo by the author, 2015)

## The Role of Inhabitants, Artist and the Landscape in Creative Process

For Folk High School in Wola Sękowa, but also during artistic actions, the interaction with local community is important. Artists are not only working for themselves, but are also sharing their experience and knowledge through workshops and speeches. Also inhabitants of Wola Sękowa (mainly children and youth) were involved in some actions. For example in 2012 a group of children and artists renovated and decorated steel bus stop in Wola Sękowa (Fig.3 on the right).

After a week, at the end of artistic action, there is an official opening of a collective exhibition, often connected with some extra cultural event. It is a moment when artists meet with local community, but also with invited guests. From that time, works have been living their own life in the open air, coping with wind, rain and snow.

We may ask a question, why International Artistic Actions in Wola Sękowa are so unique? One of the most important factors is the "initiative", a wish to create something together for ideological reasons, something that has a "meaning". This happened during the first action "Exodus" in 2006. An important factor is also "openness" of participating artists to each other, who meets in common ground of discussion. So it comes to "meeting" between artists, but also between artists and the "place". For about a week time, participants are living together in a small space of a school building, They are creating and eating together, talking about different topics. Such a "meeting" initiates ideas for the future. It changes the participants. Pallasmaa in his book raises the issue of a direct artists' involvement in the process of creation, of their whole body and mind. The external factors are not that important, because the "place" where art incurred, is the artist himself<sup>10</sup>. It is visible in the way artists work – their commitment and internal fight. It is also the meeting with nature, architecture and landscape, because works occur in a specific context which sometimes decides about the form of art. The context and the work stay in a unique dialogue which would not be possible in a different location. Pallasmaa writes that when we "meet" a piece of art, there occurs the exchange between us. We give it our emotions and it gives us its impact. In the piece of art we meet ourselves<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> J. Pallasmaa, Oczy skóry. Architektura i zmysły, "Instytut Architektury", Kraków 2012 pp. 16-17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibidem, 77.

If an artist puts his emotion in his work, it is somehow visible. Pieces of art made during artistic actions in Wola Sękowa have this impact. They "talk", sometimes even "scream". In these works (especially sculptures) we can see also the formal coherence. They refer to folk stylistics, but in a specific way. They are connection of high and low style, where tradition and contemporary art are visible <sup>12</sup>.

International Artistic Action in Wola Sękowa have been continued since 2006. Each event brigns many valuable pieces of art, often with deeper meaning. The localisation of the Folk High School of Artistic Handicraft near the base of the Low Beskid, in a small village surrounded by an open space, encourages to make works connected directly with the context. This place gives also the opportunity to "leave everything behind" for a week time and focus on internal fight during the process of creation.

The village Wola Sękowa and Bukowsko commune, thanks to their positive attitude to artists, gained new value. Many works are visible in this area and this has an impact on tourism development. Events organised by Folk High School in Wola Sękowa are cultural initiatives, noticeable in Podkarpackie Voivodeship. They fit into popular trend of integration in local communities and international groups. Their interdisciplinary character makes them more interesting and helps to promote the region in universal language of art.

#### Conclusion

Artistic Action in 2015 referred to Tadeusz Kantor and his works (Fig.5). Artists inspired by scenography, characters, the difference in Kantors' plays, created joint composition of "the stage" in the open air. Every International Artistic Action was result of some kind of needs (ideological, practical), of trends in art or important events in life. This artistic initiatives are like a mirror of collective creative ideas which get form and size. These thoughts become pieces of art and start a dialogue with ordinary people, changing their consciousness.





Fig. 5. Sculptures in composition of a stage, "Kantor 2015", on the right paintings in the landscape by Piotr Jargusz which were "looking" at the stage – the integral part of the stage composition.

(Photo by the author, 2015)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See: M. Fołta, Styl wysoki i niski. Mechanizm obiegów treści w kulturze (dialogowość kultury) na przykładzie Uniwersytetu Ludowego Rzemiosła Artystycznego w Woli Sękowej, Biuletyn Muzeum Kultury Ludowej w Kolbuszowej 2015, No 3, pp. 35–45.

Tab. 1. List of the International Artistic Actions in Wola Sekowa

No	Year	Subject
1.	2006	"Exodus" – the result of the 1st meeting of the artists was a statue in the form of a sculpture, consisting of 140 figures made of wood and symbolising people expeled from this region during the 2nd World War and the following years. The sculpture was completed 2007.
2.	2007	"Artists for Nature – Water"
3.	2008	"Artists for Nature – Air", additionally this year, initiative entitled "Roadside Sacrum."
4.	2009	"Artists for Nature – Earth", additionally the same year continuation of the initiatives "Roadside Sacrum" as well as an outdoor sculpture "Sisyphus' Obsession."
5.	2010	"Artists for Nature – Fire"
6.	2011	"Inspired by European culture."
7.	2012	"Formulations" - works installed around ULRA and in the village of Wola Sękowa.
8.	2013	"Formulations," action dedicated to the late Bogdan Biernat, sculptor, graduate of the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts, teacher in High School of Fine Arts in Krosno, participant of all previous Actions in Wola Sękowa.
9.	2014	Works for the sake of the local community – installed and made within the area of the village of Wola Sękowa and of the Bukowsko commune.
10.	2015	"Tadeusz Kantor", with its subject, action was a reference to the Year of Tadeusz Kantor, announced by UNESCO to commemorate artist's $100^{th}$ birthday anniversary. Works were installed in the ULRA garden in the form of a stage.
11	2016	International Artistic Action – Wola Sękowa 2016.

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### KASHUBIAN FOLK HIGH SCHOOL IN WIEŻYCA AS A TRUE GRUNDTVIGIAN SCHOOL FOR LIFE – THREE IMPRESSIONS

#### Introduction

"The main objective of the didactic-educational activities of the Kashubian Folk High School named after Józef Wybicki is shaping a modern man of wide horizons – rich in knowledge and kind to other people. On the one hand, we want to instil in our students respect for their own roots, as they contain the basic contents helping to shape one's own identity. And on the other hand – we wish people to be fully prepared to take up all the challenges that the contemporary world brings".

A more than a decade ago we began our jointly prepared sketch devoted to *the Kashubian Folk High School* and its tasks in the new century. In the last two decades these words also became a motto for all the cultural and educational activities taken up in that Pomeranian institution, with which each of us, although in a different way and with different type of ties, feels connected, and in whose works each of us has been very much involved.

For the needs of this article we, from the many of our involvements we have chosen just three – one for each of the co-authors. The light motif of our three voices is showing the Kashubian Folk High School as an institution devoted to and – we want to believe – effectively realizing the contemporary Grundtvigian ideas *school for life* in Polish and Pomeranian social reality. All the three fragments of the testimony present issues concerning the everlast-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> S. Byczkowska, M. Byczkowski, T. Maliszewski, *Kaszubski Uniwersytet Ludowy u progu XXI wieku*. "Oświatowiec" 2002, No 1(11), p. 44

ing institution's searching for its own educational way. Marek Byczkowski (*Impression I*) gives a short lecture on the contemporary "folk high school ideology" showing a few principles which the Wieżyca folk high school follows in its work. Sulisława Borowska (*Impression II*) presents, on the example of practical realization of the concept of wandering folk high school, looking for new methodological solutions in the work of a folk high school. And Tomasz Maliszewski focuses on looking for program areas in the educational activity of the Kashubian Folk High School, trying to get the institution's involvement in multi-culture issues.

### Impression I: Looking for the identity of the Kashubian Folk High School

The Kashubian Folk High School started its operation over 30 years ago<sup>2</sup>. The curricula changed, the students changed, the organizational structure of the school itself changed a few times as well. Also the forms and methods of running the classes were modified. Nevertheless, the main ideas of the educational work have remained the same since the very beginning of the school. We try to be faithful to the assumptions of the Grundtvigian pedagogy/pedagogics adapted to Polish and Kashubian-Pomeranian conditions. We have been doing that for years ... The important questions that remain are, for example: what and what can a folk high school be in the future? or – what social needs did the school meet, does it meet and could meet in the future? Because we do not want to be only practical implementers of the folk high school formula of work at the time in which we are to work. We also have the ambitions to be its modernizers and (co)creators of modern principles of functioning of modern school for life adequate to the changing needs.

#### Principle I

We want Kashubian Folk High School to function in the way similar to the twin institutions operating in the Nordic countries, although we know that the way to achieve the position the Scandinavian folk high school have been building for decades is going to be hard. That is, *inter alia*, why we used to describe our institution as a folk high school on the way. Already a long time ago we realized that pedagogic work at a folk high school is just such an everlasting *being on the road* – that it is not only a constant movement between places in which our cultural and educational tasks are performed but mainly following all the time *the way of search*: both those individual ones – important for self-realization of each member of the folk high school staff but also those collective ones, consisting in everlasting trying to understand what an institution called folk high school should be in our Pomeranian and Kashubian version.

#### Principle II

We try to regularly visit the homeland of Grundtvig – in particular the Free Higher Pedagogical School (*Den Frie Lærerskole*) in Ollerup, which prepares, "spiritually" and methodo-

Observing the work of Danish Pedagogues from *folkhøjskole* have for years been strengthening the conviction that work at a folk high school — if it is to be done properly — must be a sort of "a way of living"

logically the staff to work in Danish folk high schools. Observing the work of Danish pedagogues from *folkhøjskole* have for years been strengthening the conviction that work at a folk high school – if it is to be done properly – must be a sort of "a way of living", as the teacher should be available for the stu-

dents not only during classes but also during their free time, during meals, and even in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the text of Impression I fragments of an earlier publication were used: M. Byczkowski, Posłowie: kilka refleksji o (Kaszubskim) Uniwersytecie Ludowym z perspektywy ponad trzech dekad osobistych doświadczeń, [in:] T. Maliszewski, M. Rosalska (eds), Uniwersytety ludowe – pomiędzy starymi a nowymi wyzwaniami, Warszawa 2016, pp. 397–408.

evenings. There are also: living at the same place (if it is possible because of the character of the course), singing together, active interpersonal communication of "everybody with everybody", possibility of the students' influencing the subjects of the classes and the way of delivering them. And the teacher, listening to the feedback from the students can flexibly and smoothly correct both the content of his class and the way of delivering it.

#### Principle III

We remember that Kashubian Folk High School is and must remain for its students of *school for life*. To be able to effectively face that challenge we must each time undertake various, adequately "formatted" and often also covering broad areas activities individualizing program or/and methodological approach to each person or/and social groups we reach (want to reach) with our offer. It requires constant, laborious monitoring of the social environment of the Folk High School and the way of thinking of potential students – including analysing the causes of the intense and constantly redefined fear of "the new", all the time clearly seen in many of them, as well as making the effort of diagnosing and reading properly the educational needs of the residents of the Kashubian-Pomeranian rural areas.

#### <u>Principle IV</u>

Despite the fact that (temporarily?) we operate at the time in which the funds for subsequent educational activities come from grants, require writing projects and applying for funds to various Polish and international programs, in the Kashubian Folk High School we should never forget about the principles connected with Grundtvig's message and the pedagogy/pedagogics of *school for life* based on that. Despite the uncertainty about the economic basis of our activities we should all the time try very hard to preserve our identity, so that the proud name *folk high school* would not in time become just a "wishful thinking". We do try, although I must admit that in the current situation – let us call it: a situation of short-term project perspectives – it is really hard to remain a true folk high school in Poland. For many years now, not only folk high schools have been dreaming about such provisions of law that would let support adult education in the form of a folk high school in a more permanent way.<sup>3</sup>

#### <u>Principle V</u>

To achieve a deep spiritual transformation of a student, his real awakening – that is the one giving rise to a new attitude in him, a truly civic attitude, more time is needed. A student must

be given time to stop, to think things over, to try to find something that is important for him. So trust – unconditional, authentic and not relative is an important principle in the Kashubian Folk high School. Many of our students have quite low self-esteem – especially if they daily face the problem of unemployment, family problems that they cannot

TRUST — UNCONDITIONAL, AUTHENTIC AND NOT RELATIVE IS AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IN THE KASHUBIAN FOLK HIGH SCHOOL. MANY OF OUR STUDENTS HAVE QUITE LOW SELF-ESTEEM — ESPECIALLY IF THEY DAILY FACE THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT, FAMILY PROBLEMS THAT THEY CANNOT COPE WITH OR POVERTY.

cope with or poverty. So a lot of effort must be put to gradually, step by step, to start rebuilding their trust in themselves and their abilities and possibilities. The students' trust to the Kashubian Folk High School Staff is a *sine qua non* condition of starting "social healing" (inclusive processes).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> As a digression it is worth mentioning that after many years of no interest in regulating the operation of folk high schools on the part of the political decision makers, recently, mainly due to the declaration of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Culture and National Heritage prof. Piotr Gliński and his collaborators (especially Wojciech Karczmarczyk – Director of the Civic Society Development Department at the Office of Prime Minister) – the environment of Polish folk high schools again hope to welcome long-term solutions in this respect.

#### Principle VI

In a way with reference to principle V, I would like to strongly emphasize that if we are talking about trust, about respect, about partnership – and in the Kashubian Folk High School we

In a folk high school all the people are important: a student, a lecturer — even if he were a full academic professor, administration staff or technical staff. There are no better and worse people!

talk to the students about it very often – we cannot just talk about those beautiful features and values. If, for example, we are talking about democratic principles and relations, they must be seen among us, they must be present in the lecture hall, in the classroom,

in the dining room, in other words – everywhere – in each little spot of the Kashubian Folk High School. In a folk high school all the people are important: a student, a lecturer – even if he were a full academic professor, administration staff or technical staff. There are no better and worse people! All the relations in the Kashubian Folk High School are based on a dialogue as it constitutes the very nature of each folk high school and is the essence of *school for life*. An attitude based on a dialogue also regulates what is obvious, the relations between the staff and the students of the Kashubian Folk High School as well as the relations between the students of course participants.

#### Principle VII

The principles of constant thinking about the future of the institution and trying to get the social support of the environment is the last of the few principles of functioning of the Kashubian Folk High School. And that is why some people try to foretell a decline of folk high schools in our country but – it seems – that we should not be worried about the future of the Wieżyca institution. For a few decades of its educational activity it has become deeply rooted in Kashubian-Pomeranian community. So if someone wanted to undermine the educational achievements and negate the Grundtvigian-Pomeranian identity of the Kashubian Folk High School he would surely soon be made to "come to senses" by all the people who for years have treated it as "their own" (the residents of the Kashubian-Pomeranian rural areas, former students from different environments, activists of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, etc.)

## Impression II: Educational *wanoga*<sup>4</sup> – that is about a wandering folk high school

As mentioned above, the Kashubian Folk High School tries to be not only an model and diligent implementer of the assumptions of the Grundtvigian pedagogy/pedagogics in practice but also does its own program-methodological research to flexibly adapt the assumptions of school for life to the real needs appearing in its social environment. From all the methodological solutions that we have developed over the last decade, the concept of work that we called a wandering folk high school (Polish: wędrowny uniwersytet ludowy)<sup>5</sup> is really worth special attention. The origin of the wandering folk high school be looked for at the beginning of the current century when, under a big international project Folk High School – School for Life supported by the European Union funds under Socrates-Grundtvig program, the community of the Kashubian Folk High School – together with other partners from Poland, Denmark,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Wanoga – in Kashubian: wandering, journey; a term very well fitting the methodological concept of wandering folk high school, 'ordering' following the student and reaching with the program as close as possible to the place of his residence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In the text of Impression II fragments of an earlier publication were used: S. Borowska, Wędrowny Uniwersytet Ludowy dla Seniorów jako przykład działalności Kaszubskiego Uniwersytetu Ludowego, [in:] T. Maliszewski (ed.), School for life – przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych, Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, pp. 71–76 and documentation of Wandering Folk High Schools from the archives of the Kashubian Folk High School in Wieżyca.

Germany and Sweden discussed the formula of a modern folk high school<sup>6</sup>. The work under the project included, *inter alia*, cataloguing the educational needs of the residents of the Kashubian-Pomeranian rural areas and discussing possible answers to the needs. We did not have to wait too long to be able to test the developed solutions, because soon – in connection with the planned referendum before Poland's joining the European Union – there appeared a strong necessity to reach the residents of the Kashubian region with solid knowledge on the principles of functioning of the European community – in particular, on civic procedures of making decisions and Common Agricultural Policy. The staff and collaborators of the Folk High School in Wieżyca started to reach individual Kashubian villages with an informational-educational program. The experience gained then proved to be invaluable, as it was based on that experience that the concept of a methodology of work that was then called a *wandering folk high school* was developed.

In total, over the past decade (till the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2016), the Kashubian Folk High School carried out 23 different editions of the Wandering Folk High School in Kashubian villages of a few counties and one abroad (for the leaders of local rural communities of Western Ukraine), reaching with the educational offer directly to the place of residence of the participants of the meetings and including 366 people in Pomerania (and another few tens on the Ukrainian side).

Let us have a quick look at the basic methodological assumptions of the Wandering Folk High School. To start with, it is worth mentioning when we use the concept of the Wandering Folk High School. There are a few premises, that is we work in that way when:

- a person/a group is not yet ready to come to classes or lectures to the seat of Kashubian Folk High School and her/his educational needs must be "awoken" by reaching the place of residence directly;
- a group has not been formed yet, maybe there are not conscious educational needs in a given local community but there is a potential at the place (a "wise" leader, interesting small initiatives, Farmer Women Association, infrastructure, etc.);
- people from the given environment (potential students) are not able to come to the office of the Kashubian Folk High School due to logistic reasons (no driving licence and/or car, no public transport, etc.), or when the family situation (e.g. children, economic reasons) does not let the people to stay at the Kashubian Folk High School for a longer period of time.

These are the situations in which the Kashubian Folk High School does not "force" people to come to its premises but it itself "makes a field trip". When it comes to a given place, the main task of the Wandering Folk High School is to make the local community act – in other words – to strengthen the social potential of the given local environment.

And we do not have any doubts that in doing so we remain fully in agreement with the assumptions of the Grundtvigian pedagogy/pedagogics and the concept of *school for life* in its most valuable form. As setting off for *wanoga* we still remain a true folk high school! But ..."in a drop". Our mobile folk high school wants and can reach (and reaches) each place where there is a group people willing to learn something, to talk, to develop. Such a group is the base, the core of all our activities. And then there is a Kashubian Folk High School teacher with a "rucksack" with a song book, that is essential, sometimes other materials (paper, paints, a pen), sometimes also a projector, a laptop or a book or photographs, maybe *Nordic walking* sticks. Just one more thing – a roofed area for bad weather – and there is a complete folk high school.

Apart from the things mentioned above a Kashubian Folk High School teacher also brings to the given village all the things that the folk high school movement calls *school for life* – first of all – openness to another man and his environment, curiosity and kindness. The knowledge and skills from the given thematic area the meeting is about is, of course, necessary. But equally important, or even more important is also the way of sharing the knowledge with the participants. A wandering folk high school teacher must have a big experience

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Comp.: M. Byczkowski, T. Maliszewski, E. Przybylska (eds), Folk High School – School for Life, Wieżyca 2003.

in practical application of all the methodological hints provided by the folk high school pedagogy/pedagogics. Remaining a bit withdrawn – he should act in a sort of a "hiding". Not resigning from the role of a guide – he should not make decisions or put himself into

The knowledge and skills from the given thematic area the meeting is about is, of course, necessary. But equally important, or even more important is also the way of sharing the knowledge with the participants. A wandering folk high school teacher must have a big experience in practical application of all the methodological hints provided by the folk high school pedagogy/pedagogics.

a role of an arbiter. It is an important and difficult role; an inexperienced person can easy get lost ... A true, mature Wandering Folk High School teacher should be mainly an animator, – an active listener, who encourages people to talk and can prepare the conversation properly from the organizational point of view. Let us remember that dialogue is the essence of Folk High Schools, the essence of democracy!

What else should we remember about? About everything that constitutes the canon of educational work in a folk high school. Let us enumerate a few of the basic methodological guidelines for the Wandering Folk High School:

- the offer should be adapted to the needs of the participants, in other words it should meet their needs (conscious or unconscious);
- we should take care of developing personal competences (self-knowing, discovering resources, strengths) and social competences (conversation, dialogue, asking questions, team work);
- teachers/trainers should use the language adapted to the perception abilities of the participants and make sure that they get feedback from them;
- building mutual trust and setting the rules regulating the functioning of the group and developing co-responsibility for the final effects of joint work are the necessary conditions for a pedagogical success of the Wandering Folk High School;
- due to their character the classes of the Wandering Folk High School should be held close to the place of residence of the participants and be delivered mainly as workshops with constant presence of the staff; it is also worth complementing them with study visits to show the participants the good (and bad) practices from the given thematic area.

The experience of the Kashubian Folk High School connected with the Wandering Folk High School gives rise to an optimism. Many groups from the Kashubian rural environments that participated in the subsequent editions of the folk high school *wanoga* still meet, now independently developing various initiatives for the personal and social development of their members as well as of the entire local community.

## Impression III: Multi-culture of Kashubian-Pomeranian school for life type

Apart from looking for new methodological solutions in the operation of the Kashubian Folk High School community, there are carried out constant works on looking for new educational niches to be accommodated.

For many years various studies on the Kashubian Folk High School have shown that the main educational work focuses on three main areas: civic education, ecological education and regional education. The first signals about setting a new direction of work of the institution started to appear at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. For example, in a short note on the operation of the Kashubian Folk High School in "Rocznik Andragogiczny" for 2009 there appeared short information that the problems of multi-culture start to play a more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In the text of Impression III fragments of an earlier publication were used: T. Maliszewski, Poprzez edukację wielokulturową ku pomorskiej wspólnocie regionalnej – uwagi na kanwie nowego kierunku działalności Kaszubskiego Uniwersytetu Ludowego, [in:] A. Stopińska-Pająk, A. Fabiś (eds), Społeczno-kulturowe przestrzenie uczenia się ludzi dorosłych, "Edukacja Dorosłych" 2011, No 2 (65), pp. 179–191.

and more important role in the functioning of the institution. And it was emphasized that the message of those activities was obvious:

"it is about putting clear emphasis that in the Kashubian and Pomeranian areas, besides the Kashubians there also live other Polish people (who came to this land e.g. as a result of the migration from the Eastern Borderlands right after the Second World War), and also the Ukrainians, Lemko people, Gypsies, the Germans, and the Jews; that apart from the Catholics we also meet representatives of the United Church, Orthodox Church, Polish Old Ritualists, the Muslims, Judaism believers and representatives of the new Christian churches. Making the people of the region aware of such a great variety is an important step towards both mutual understanding of the neighbours and using joint activities (civic, economic, cultural, etc.), the potential of all the residents of the Pomeranian land." (RA 2009, p. 488).

Many later initiatives of the Kashubian Folk High School confirm that the identification proved to be correct and that the issues of poly-culture became a permanent and significant element of the cultural-educational activity of the institution. It can also be clearly seen that we managed to attract to the Kashubian Folk High School a team of specialists who can both justify from the theoretical point of view and practically run various educational projects on multi-culture. Thus it seems that the Kashubian Folk High School again becomes one of those institutions of adult education in Pomerania which set new trends of educational work in the communities of the region living in rural areas and small towns.

It was similar a quarter of a century ago, in the 1980s when, let us remind ourselves, a group of teachers – enthusiasts interested in promoting Kashubian culture and wanting to develop their own competences in this area – found home in the Kashubian Folk High School. Then this fact became one of the significant signals of starting by the regional community a way towards subjectivity and rebuilding pride of their own identity after years of Communist centralization and the myth of the uniformity of the society. Before 1989, the Kashubian Folk High School and its activities were watched not only closely but also – at least by some people and institutions – with certain anxiety and fear of Kashubian separatism, as they became a decade before recognizing the knowledge about regional differences – including the Kashubian culture and language – as an integral and important part of education of Polish people. So historically speaking, the school takes an important place on the map of the institutions that contributed (and keep contributing) to the emancipation of the Kashubian people and recognizing their own identity as being worth saving and nourishing.

So continuing its regional activities, during the last decade the Kashubian Folk High School took up new initiatives – this time having to show the residents of northern Poland, and the Kashubians in particular, not a homogenous but multi-cultural character of Pomerania. With a number of projects of the previous decade on multi-culture character of the region the Wieżyca folk high school again set at least some of the directions forwards for the other cultural-educational institutions of the region.

One can say that the Kashubian Folk High School gradually matured to multi-culture projects. It collected experience on multi-culture activities during implementation of the projects with international partners – mainly Danish and German. We could also observe how the problems of inter- and poly-culture were handled by other entities of independent culture and adult education in Poland. And here the most interesting seem to the the experience of the Popular Folk High School named after J.J. Lipski in Teremiski, the Ecological-Cultural Association "Grain" in Grzybów, Sejny Centre "Borderland of arts, cultures, nations" and the "Dialogus" Theatre from Parchowo.

All those activities gradually led the environment of the Kashubian Folk High School to take up multi-culture projects addressed to its own environment – the residents of Pomeranian villages and small towns. The year 2009 turned out to be a turning point in this respect. A program for education towards multi-culture was developed then. It emphasized the fact that regional and multi-culture education have parallel and not excluding each other character.

Many people say that one needed to mature to be able to up up the problems of Pomeranian multi-culture, that it had to take time and required defending against making the national,

ethnic and religious differences political. Clear connection between multi-culture education and life-long learning are also noted. On the one hand, due to the fact that the first one requires mature inter-disciplinary approach, the ones who would like to deal with it professionally would have to learn all the time, on the other hand – still significant "negligence" in the sense of the multi-culture character of the Pomerania by the adult residents of the region are so great that there is still a need to implement numerous educational programs addressed to them. As building a mature Pomeranian regional community is the supreme objective of the multi-culture education.

About a decade ago, the environment of the Kashubian Folk High School formulated, in the context of the postulate of its taking up the tasks of multi-culture education, a cardinal question: can nowadays a folk high school be an effective tool of multi-culture education? An answer is given by the analysis of the activities taken by the Kashubian Folk High School on that over the past few years and their effectiveness (long-term effects). The experience of the institution seems to be important in so much that it is worthwhile continuing this direction of activities also in the future.

#### Conclusion

The Kashubian Folk High School is not the oldest now existing folk high school in Poland. This honour surely belongs to the Folk High School in Radawnica – twice as old as the Kashubian institution, established in 1946 in Złotów land. The Folk High School of Artistic Crafts in Wola Sękowa in Podkarpacie region, which continues the tradition of the Folk High School in Wzdów, established in 1959, has an almost quarter of a century longer history. So the Wieżyca institution is the third oldest in Poland functioning school for adult education for rural educational entities referring to the Grundtvigian pedagogy/pedagogics.

Now the Kashubian Folk High School is in the fourth decade of its active and manifold operations for the communities of the Kashubian and Pomeranian regions. So the institution has significant and worthwhile noting achievements in the many areas and directions of functioning in which it has taken up cultural, animation and educational activities. The three impressions from the life of the Kashubian school seem to illustrate that.

As "involved" authors, knowing the Kashubian Folk High School for years – although each of us from a different perspective – we are aware that the institution will keep changing – constantly looking for its place in the changing reality and for the role to play in its

One thing will remain unchanged: faithfulness to the pedagogical assumptions of School for life and to the traditions of the activities for development of its environment.

own local and regional environment, in the entire country<sup>8</sup>, and maybe even in the international movement of folk high schools<sup>9</sup>. It is obvious that also the program content as well the forms of work will keep changing. So the Kashubian Folk High School will

change – the cultural and educational needs of the people using its offers will change. But one thing will remain unchanged: faithfulness to the pedagogical assumptions of *School for life* and to the traditions of the activities for development of its environment. And we hope that it will let the Kashubian Folk High School preserve and strengthen its position among the avant-garde educational institutions for the adult residents of Kashubian-Pomeranian rural areas.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> E.g. as a part of Ogólnopolska Sieć Uniwersytetów Ludowych [National Network of Folk High School], established in Wieżyca in the spring of 2016, of which the Kashubian Folk School is a member and of which it wants to become one of its active members.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> E.g. under such undertakings as the project: "Building key competences vs. the pedagogics of folk high schools in Europe of the 21st century" implemented under the European Commission's program ERASMUS+, although here we are not sure to what an extent we can influence the solutions in other countries.

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## FROM AN APPLE TO AN ORANGE EXPERIENCE OF THE ECOLOGICAL FOLK HIGH SCHOOL

#### By Way of Introduction

I wrote about my fascination with Grundtvig's thought in my previous articles already, for example in the publication "School for Life" issued within the frames of the same project as this one. For twenty years, this fascination has been bearing fruits in a form of different courses conducted, based on the method of the folk high schools.

Altogether there were app. 40 courses organised, lasting from 4 to 10 weeks and run mainly in rural areas of European countries. In another publication – "Sowing Seeds Of Future" – we have gathered our practical knowledge gained during a three-year project realized within Socrates-Grundtvig 2003–2006 programme and encompassing 34 courses organised in 22 countryside or small-town communities from six European countries, carried out using the educational solutions of folk high schools.

In the above-mentioned book, one can find a detailed methodology including description of target groups: from housewives in the countryside of Podlasie or Masovia region, through travellers communities<sup>2</sup> in Ireland and Roms from Slovakia, to refugees and migrants from one of the outskirts of Odense. There is also a presentation of results achieved both with reference to raising basic competences like writing or reading (courses in Clonakenny in Ireland or in district of Odense in Denmark), developing digital competences (almost all the courses), acquiring new skills required to get additional earnings (i.e. course in Vigantpetend in Hungary or in Leśna Podlaska or Lipsk), but also in relation to development of social compe-

The courses were instrumental in bringing out the changes of attitudes of some of the participants. Moreover, they acted as a stimulus to take initiative, helped break shyness, powerlessness, helplessness, stagnation and isolation. They let participants discover their new skills, awakened new fascinations, let experience the pleasure coming from creating and acting, let many people feel more appreciated raising with this their self-believe, increasing self-confidence. As a result, they became an impulse for further development.

tences needed to start communication and cooperation between inhabitants of rural communities (i.e. courses in Poland: Milicz, Grzybów or in Babrungas in Lithuania).

Professor Krystyna Gutkowska who provided us with analysing of project's results, carried out based on polling and a variety of other evaluation tools, wrote: "The courses were instrumental in bringing out the changes of attitudes of some of the participants. Moreover, they acted as a stimulus to take initiative, helped break shyness, powerlessness, helplessness, stagnation and isolation. They let parti-

cipants discover their new skills, awakened new fascinations, let experience the pleasure coming from creating and acting, let many people feel more appreciated raising with this their self-believe, increasing self-confidence. As a result, they became an impulse for further development.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Publication "School for life. Guide to the contemporary folk high schools" is also available online: http://www.ziarno.grzybow.pl/images/publikacje/projektowe/ScholForLifeEN.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Travellers is a name of a nomadic group coming from Ireland, having its own language and culture and bearing some similarities to other nomadic groups (i.e. Roms).

The effects of the courses are also integration of local communities, new acquaintances, promotion of gender equality as well as support of the integration between generations.

[...] Attempts have been made to establish new associations that should serve the inhabitants of the commune. Many participants continue to develop themselves. Many people have decided also to take up further education within the frames of other school as well as out-of-school programmes".<sup>3</sup> Referring only to Grzybów itself, we can give the example of two participants with basic vocational education who having finished the courses of folk high school, started education in extramural secondary schools, passed leaving exams and started studies which they also completed afterwards. Yet another participant made a successful attempt of creating social cooperative.

Those results are particularly significant since the majority of participants were people with secondary, vocational and primary education (80–90%), whereas the amount of higher-educated participants oscillated between 10 and 20%, depending on a year.<sup>4</sup>

The first attempt of adapting Grundtvig into the conditions of Polish (hence European) countryside of the beginning of the third millennium brought successful outcomes. Educational

intuitions of this brilliant Dane resisted the test of time. His ideas proved to be deeply rooted in authentic needs of any human being: a need of inner development, a need of discovering own talents, but also a need of community, of building relationships with others and improving communication.

It has been over ten years now since the time of the courses – years that were important for the development of the Polish countryside. The strongest catalyst for change that altered the face of the Polish countryside was

The first attempt of adapting Grundtvig into the conditions of Polish (hence European) countryside of the beginning of the third millennium brought successful outcomes. Educational intuitions of this brilliant Dane resisted the test of time. His ideas proved to be deeply rooted in authentic needs of any human being: A need of inner development, a need of discovering own talents, but also a need of community, of building relationships with others and improving communication.

accession of Poland into the European Union in 2004. The change can be seen not only in the easily noticed improvements of infrastructure, but also within the rural communities. While researching social capital on Polish countryside, B. Fedyszak-Radziejowska reached a conclusion that 'the social capital within farmers and inhabitants in the villages started to grow systematically in consecutive years after accession.' According to this researcher: 'The Union strengthened the sense of security among the farmers and inhabitants of villages, provided them with stability and predictability of agricultural policy as well as with the sense of self-worth.' 5

This change that we could observe taking place in the rural communities concurred with the proposal of the VELUX Foundation to form cooperation for the sake of establishing a boarding folk high school in Grzybów. What should the contemporary folk high school be like? What kind of needs and questions we would like to respond to? What and how we would like to teach? Serious questions require

deeper reflection and strong motivation.

This was precisely the point where the two visions met – one of mine and the other of Peter Stratenwerth, my husband; visions which we both have been carrying in us since we made one of Mazovian villages our home,

What should the contemporary folk high school be like? What kind of needs and questions we would like to respond to? What and how we would like to teach? Serious questions require deeper reflection and strong motivation.

that is for over twenty years. Underlying my vision was the idea of Grundtvig's folk high schools. Peter for that matter derived his inspiration from the type of school established by the organic farmers and devoted to teaching the vocation to next generations. He graduated himself from that kind of school in the 1980s. This type of school describes also Reto Ingold

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> E. Smuk-Stratenwerth (ed.), *Siejąc ziarna przyszłości*, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne "Ziarno", Grzybów 2006, p. 149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The data analysed encompassed 3 years of courses: 2004, 2005, 2006.

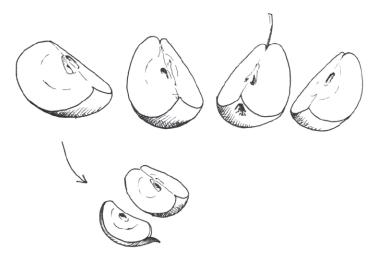
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> W. Knieć, W. Goszczyński and C. Obracht-Prądzyński, *Kapitał społeczny wsi pomorskiej*, Wieżyca 2013, pp. 88–89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Peter Stratenwerth refers to his experience in the article published in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the book: 'Cooperation and Communication as the Keys to Development.'

in his article entitled: 'Swiss Dual System of Vocational Education and Training,' included in this publication as well. As we discussed our perspectives, we arrived at the idea of running the Ecological Folk High School and courses in organic farming in Grzybów. This design allowed namely to combine pedagogy of Grundtvig with the Swiss experience of farm-based teaching with farmers as educators and a dose of theory. Further analysis showed us even more similarities and tangential points between the two. For instance, the Swiss school of biodynamic agriculture<sup>7</sup> puts much emphasis on creativity and art classes as well as spiritual development.

At the same time, it turned out that the first Danish folk high schools (folkehøjskoler) established by Grundtvig, bore much similarity with vocational education and training. Most frequently, they were orientated at training future farmers. An example of this is the folk high school in Rødding, Jutland, which in autumn 1844 opened for 22 farmers' sons. During the opening ceremony, Johan Wegener, its first director, said: 'We are establishing a school, a folk high school, for the sake of farmers and for the sake of citizens. Similarly to other schools, this school aims to teach, form and improve the youth. Yet, it is specifically designed for farmers' class that is, it will transfer knowledge and skills most required when you are a farmer. Our teaching and learning is neither about obtaining positions nor about climbing the career ladder in the public service. We assume that the young people who have come here, will remain farmers and citizens in the future, and we will just teach them what is necessary to become independent, venturesome members of the society.'8

#### An Apple or What We Teach



#### Activity description:

Arable land constitutes one of our natural resources. Take the apple and say that it stands for the Earth globe. Ask your students about how much of Earth's surface – according to them – is the arable land. First wait for the answers and then begin the activity. Cut the apple into four pieces. Take three of them away and ask, why it is not possible to plough or grow crops on those three parts (they signify water). The one piece which remains, cut into another two. Take one and ask, why it is not possible to grow plants on this piece (those are deserts, swamps, tundra, mountains – harsh environments for living). The one piece that

remains, cut again into four smaller pieces. Discard three of them (they represent cities, suburbs, factories – areas inhabited by the men but not used to grow crops). The peel of the remaining piece (1/32 of the apple) is the soil capable of being cultivated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Biodynamic agriculture is a form of organic farming based on biodynamics – an approach incorporating elements of science, cosmology and philosophy. Its foundation is traced back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Rudolf Steiner being considered a founding father. It has been developed intensively in Germany and Switzerland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> T. Rørdam, *The Danish Folk High Schools*, Det Danske Selskab, Copenhagen 1980, p. 27. By the way, the further part of Wegener's speech quoted in the book of Thomas Rørdam is also very interesting. Wegener speaks about patriotism which was a matter of great importance in the time when folk high schools were created (I write more about the socio-historical background in my first article to this publication; the issue is also taken up by Ingrid Ank in her text: 'Grundtvig and the Idea of Folk High School'). Despite serious tensions and hostility between Danes and Germans, even stronger in the South Jutland where Rødding is situated, Wegener was saying: 'To love one's country does not mean to hate the country of the enemy, or to deny seeing beautiful and good things present in other nations. Not in the least. German nation is an important and great nation. The closest relatives of Scandinavian people. Affinity, borders sharing, culture and appearance, common interests, the same sufferings and fears, the same hopes and desires, to some extent also the same values and failures, all this should make our nations the closest friends.

This simple activity<sup>9</sup> is what we sometimes use to show young participants of our workshops, how important it is to protect our planet (both the Earth and the soil). For over fifty years people have been realizing the immense impact we have on the world around us as well as how important it is to change our attitude towards the environment. Anita Idel from Germany, scientist working in the field of agriculture and environment, whom we can sometimes have as our lecturer, says: 'During my veterinary studies in the 1970s, I was taught industrial agriculture: how to improve mineral fertilizers, monocultures and spraying using chemicals. This cannot be improved. It is simply a wrong direction. We have to choose totally different path.' Hers is not just an isolated voice. Nowadays more and more people and institutions are noticing this imperative: European Commission, United Nations Organisation, as well as a number of smaller organisations, the so called grassroots, which build various cooperation nets and with that circumvolve our planet with care. The examples are: IFOAM (*International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements*) – a federation established 1972 at the initiative of five associations working for organic farming; Slow Food – a movement initiated in the 1980s by Carlo Petrini from Italy, or finally Nyeleni – the movement for food sovereignty. <sup>11</sup>

Similar voices can be heard also among the Polish scientists. Here is the quote by Prof. Józef Zegar from his article: "Agriculture in Poland in Comparison to Global Conditions and Tendencies": "As for the agricultural development, the direction of sustainable growth is no longer questioned. In general, it is the way of arriving at the sustainability that has been argued. There are two main opposing prospects with respect thereto. One of them believes to achieve sustainable agriculture through accelerating the industry and more precisely through scientific and technical development as well as increasing the independence of the human being from the natural ecosystem of the Earth and replacing this system with the artificial one. The acolytes of this alternative are then the followers of the Enlightenment ideas defining Nature as driven by me-

chanical laws and having merely instrumental value: nature has value to the extent it provides it to the human [...] The other alternative sees further studying of natural laws, use of the agrobiology as well as inclusive society systems based on the family farming, as the solution to the question. It says no to the excessive concentration accompanied inevitably by

WE TEACH WHAT WE OURSELVES FIND IMPORTANT AND WE DEEPLY BELIEVE THAT OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE IS CREATION OF GOOD EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES WHICH WOULD SHOW THIS NEW AGROECOLOGICAL DIRECTION AS A WELL-GROUNDED PATH AND NOT MIRAGES OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO TOUCH WITH REALITY.

farm labour out-migration, although it is of no doubt that the concentration is favourable to some fraction of the farmers allowing them to increase their labour efficiency and income. The problem however is that the lion's share of the consequences of the increased efficiency in the agriculture fell and still has been falling to the others. It is even more true in the era of globalisation – of the omnipotence of corporations.'12

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The description of the activity can be found on the website of Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej (pol. for Centre for Citizenship Education): http://www.ceo.org.pl/sites/default/files/JAK/scenariusze\_zajec\_z\_edukacji\_globalnej jak urzadzic swiat do pobrania.pdf [Document in Polish language, translator's note].

Anita Idel is a co-author of 'Agriculture at Crossroads – Synthesis Report', prepared within a project 'International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development' by an international team at the request of the UNO. The report can be accessed online: http://apps.unep.org/redirect.php?file=/publications/pmtdocuments/-Agriculture%20at%20a%20crossroads%20-%20Synthesis%20report-2009Agriculture at Crossroads Synthesis Report.pdf [English version, translator's note]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Supporting the foundation of the Polish branch of Nyeleni (the name is derived from the name of a legendary African woman, who saved her tribe from starvation) were two students and a teacher of Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> J.S. Zegar, *Rolnictwo w Polsce na tle uwarunkowań i tendencji światowych* [eng. *Agriculture in Poland in Comparison to Global Conditions and Tendencies*], Realia 2017, p. 63. Prof J. Zegar continues even more bluntly: 'Farmers are under the illusion, supported by the neoliberal thinkers, that their problems can be solved by accelerating the tempo of industrial development. Well, they will be solved indeed, but not in the way, we would wish for. Namely, the problems will be solved by eradicating this social class. Equally illusive is the "progress" realised through "enrichment" of the food products. For decades, people were told that the longer the way from the field to the table, the more developed they are. To support it, the following arguments were used: economic reasons, bigger added value, saving of consumers' time, advantages of the addition of preservatives, aroma and taste-enhancing substances. Some benefits of it cannot be denied indeed. There is however some doubt whether the nutritive and health values have not been forgotten – maybe the food is getting worse instead of getting better, and all this because of the economy.'

Standing up for the peasants (or as we will call them today – "smallholder producers") is also Pope Francis. In his ground-breaking 'Encyclical Laudato si,' he writes: '... there is a great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world's peoples, using a modest amount of land and producing less waste [...] Civil authorities have the right and duty to adopt clear and firm measures in support of small producers and differentiated production.'

We teach what we ourselves find important and we deeply believe that of critical importance is creation of good educational programmes which would show this new agroecological direction as a well-grounded path and not mirages of the people who have no touch with reality (this is how the organic farmers were perceived in Poland at the beginning of the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

#### The Beginnings of the Ecological Folk High School

Owing to the subsidy we received from the Velux Foundation, in our centre in Grzybów within the period of slightly over a year, there rose a building of the Ecological Folk High School consisting of four seminar facilities: main lecture room and three premises for workshops, as well as dormitory for about 30 people. In this way, we came into possession of comfortable and spacious place to organise our courses in.



Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów. (Photo by the author)

#### Creating the Programme

The courses in organic farming based on the method of folk high schools came into being, for that matter, as a result of the encounter of our visions. But how can we transfer the long-term Danish and Swiss experience into Polish reality? How should we plan the course? Where should we look for the teachers? How should we organise the programme? Will we find people in Poland willing to take part in a four- or five-year course in ecological farming conducted according to a totally new method? To whom should we basically address our offer?

There began an arduous process of "translating" dreams into reality. Of great help in this respect turned out to be the project which I had written for the sake of *Erasmus*+ Pro-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, *Encyclical Laudato Si'*, p. 129. More about the ecological encyclical of Pope Francis one will find in the article by Fr. Stanisław Jaromi in the third part of this publication: 'Eco-Tasks for Folk High Schools 2017.'



Workshop with Peter: learning soil profile in practice. (Photo by the author)

gramme: 'Building Key Competences and the Pedagogy of Folk High Schools in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.' Thanks to this project, we could benefit from the support of more experienced colleagues from Germany, Denmark and Switzerland, when designing and implementing our programme. Ultimately, we decided to have two-year course consisting of the 14-month apprenticeship period held on the best organic farms in Poland and 104 days of full-time studies in our centre in Grzybów. The education provided in the centre was by no means conceptualised as theoretical study. Instead, it gathered basic information and skills concerning the domain of ecological farming.

When structuring the programme, we were referring to the core curriculum for the profession of "a farmer", since unfortunately the profession of "an organic farmer" is still not included in the Polish Classification of Occupations. At the same time, we searched for inspiration in the programmes prepared in other countries, especially in Switzerland and Germany.

In its final form, the hourly-structured programme includes about 520 hours devoted to topics more closely related to vocation and 300 hours of classes dealing with the more "Grundtvig-related" issues. <sup>14</sup> The vocational subjects are divided into four blocks, each dedicated to an important agricultural area, that is: soil, plants, animals, human being. Among the general topics, for that matter, here called Grundtvig-related, one will find for instance the following subjects: communication and teamwork, the art of learning and documenting, music, art and craftwork. Moreover, we have entered into the programme two other important subjects which we have called: Big Questions and Genius Loci. The Big Questions is about the important issues usually of a global character, related to agriculture, the influence of a man on the environment, or more generally even – to the history of life on the Earth.

The Genius Loci (meaning in Latin: "spirit of a place") aims for that matter at learning the very nature of organic farm which usually plays far broader role than the conventional farms. Of course, all farms function to produce food but in the case of the organic farm it is important to cooperate wisely with the nature, that is not through exploiting its resources, but – as Prof. Mieczysław Górny put it – through creativity: 'It is necessary to bring the farmer back to the nature, to show him ways of a new creative commitment. The creative attitude entails among other things that a man learns nature and, through subtle cooperation based on the knowledge of natural laws, he gives it a shape in a wise manner. [...] Underlying the organic

Detailed programme of education that we prepared within the frames of the project, can be accessed on our website: http://www.eul.grzybow.pl/images/curriculum.pdf [Polish version, translator's note]



Students of the 1<sup>st</sup> group on the organic farm of Dorota Łepkowska in Masuria. (Photo by the author)

farming is humility towards nature, acceptance of its mysterious character – and hence of the necessity that it has to be constantly observed and studied by the human being – as well as trying to adapt to it and to act together with it.'15

The subject of "Genius Loci" is realised mostly while visiting various organic farms. During the course namely, in the time of the three-day study visits, we call on over 20 different organic farms. Some of them specialize in vegetable farming, others produce cheese or bake bread, yet others undertake social activities, such as for instance farm in Wandzin where they work with drug or alcohol addicts. Trips to those places give the students possibility of experiencing the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each place, determined by the nature of a given area, its soil, landscape, social and cultural resources but then again also by the farmers themselves (be it he or she) with their passions, talents and skills. Since the course has been intended for the persons willing to start their own organic farm, this subject is of special importance when discovering and planning their own future path.

#### Recruitment

The application process opened in January 2015. To promote it, we used a variety of tools: posters, leaflets, radio and television broadcasts, press articles, as well as Internet and social media. We received over 200 applications. We were reading candidates' letters with great interest: 'You are a godsend to me!', 'I've been dreaming about the school like this!', 'Your Ecological Folk High School is what I have been wishing for.' Yet, when the second application stage, that is personal interviews, began, "the dreamers" started walking off slowly the moment they realised that the course does really last two years. Ultimately, the courses got under way with 33 participants: 13 people in August 2015 (1st edition) and 20 people in April 2016 (2nd edition).

#### Who Are Our Students?

When launching the admission, we thought that our candidates would be mostly young people upon completion of formal education, e.g. technical college, upper secondary school or vocational secondary school, or even postgraduates or university students who need more thorough

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See: M. Górny, Ekofilozofia rolnictwa, Krosno 1992.

discernment of their "vocation", their talents, and direction to take in the future. We also expected those who are specifically interested in organic farming. We expected people born on farms. Already at the stage of receiving applications, however, it turned out that the majority of candidates come from cities or towns and are for the most part higher educated people.

Based on the report prepared by independent evaluators, the majority of participants of the EFHS (short for Ecological Folk High School) have higher education (23 out of 33 people). The others completed secondary schools, mostly upper type with only one girl having stopped at the lower level. As for the education received, most of the applicants were trained in humanities, i.a. pedagogy, history, sociology, anthropology, marketing and advertising. One of the participants got the degree in art (sculpture), three persons graduated from sciences (biotechnology, environmental engineering). Only two participants completed studies related to agriculture – horticulture and farming. One more person started agricultural studies, but he resigned after a year. Vast majority of the applicants come from the cities and towns. Only four persons wrote in their application that they were raised in the rural areas. The youngest participant was 20 at the beginning of the course, the eldest – 64. The average age was 37. As far as the sex composition is concerned, the number of females was somehow greater than that of men: 20 to 13.

Before starting the course, most of the students were not much acquainted with oragnic farming. Their interest for it was developed frequently as a result of hobby for cooking or due to health problems. This is how they described their experience of oragnic farming in the application forms.

This subject happened to interest me as a consumer. Seeing the deteriorating quality of the food products I ate, I decided to look for less polluted and less modified food. (Z 2)

For many years, I had been struggling with various allergies and that was the main reason why I started taking interest in the influence of diet and environment for health. Since no one from my family showed concern for this issue, I had to find every information on my own. I had the proof in the form of the reaction of my own body to how much harm the food stuffed with chemicals and flavour enhancers can do. (Z\_1)

One of the participants revealed that his interest for oragnic farming began early in the upper secondary school when visiting the farm in Grzybów during a class trip:

I discovered the topic of oragnic farming in the secondary school already, when together with my class we went to the farm in Grzybów. Due to my interests, I started studies at SGGW (pol. for Warsaw University of Life Sciences). Nonetheless, after a year I quitted them (unfortunately). (Z\_4)

Even though the vast majority of the participants had no contact with farming job before enrolling for the course in the Ecological Folk High School, some of them tried to develop their interests by looking for the information in the Internet or taking part in the events or Internet courses devoted to the subject:

Quite often, I take part in the webinars organised by the Cohabitat organisation concerning the topics of natural building, permaculture, hydroponics, etc.  $(Z_4)$ 

I participated in many courses, lectures and workshops related to oragnic farming, i.a. cheese-making workshops, course in farm processing of cereal, vegetable, meat and milk processing, workshops on making lavender products, and many others. (Z 6)

Two participants had purchased and cultivated own garden or small farm already before starting the education in the Ecological Folk High School. Another two (a couple) bought land shortly after the beginning of the course:

Oragnic farming and gardening have been my hobby for several years now. Three years ago, I moved from the town to the countryside and so far I have started an oragnic garden. I grow vegetables and fruit on my own. I have my own smokehouse. I read a lot about oragnic farming and gardening. (Z\_3)

Among the students of the  $2^{nd}$  course there were slightly more people with some experience of oragnic farming. Those few persons raised in the country highlighted the fact that organic farming has been an issue for them from a young age. The course was supposed to help them continue this passion:

Since I lived in the countryside and helped in the house garden, I feel this is something mine.  $(Z_26)$ 

I grew up in a small village, on a farm with a big garden cultivated by my mum ever since applying natural farming methods. Those values instilled in me already in my childhood are the reason why ecological plants and healthy lifestyle are of great consequence for my life. (Z 27)

Some part of the applicants had never worked on a farm before. They drew their inspiration from travelling and occasional visits to the countryside (to further relatives or friends):

No, I hadn't had this experience firsthand. I heard about such places, I heard about such people who are coming back to nature, to growing vegetables in the most natural way, and only this awoke my interest and curiosity. Most of my life I spent in the city (Poznan) and knew nothing about life in the country, about farming. Almost 4 years ago I set off for a trip around Poland (that is why I do not have any domicile) – I left city, I am attracted by the nature, forest, soil. I have been often to the countryside – my chum took me in for some time: I observed little pigs, dug up potatoes and this gave me a lot of fun! (Z 25)

Those people who discovered their passion for oragnic farming early (a few or several years ago), tried to develop it by volunteering on the farms, working in ecological shops, cultivating oragnic gardens or taking part in various initiatives related to this topic (i.a. consumers' cooperatives):

I worked for a longer period of time on oragnic farms within the frames of WWOOF<sup>16</sup> volunteering programme (in Scotland and Spain). While I am in Poland, I support such initiatives as consumers' cooperatives, community-supported agriculture, as well as I try to support local oragnic producers by promoting their products among friends and people I work with. (Z 22)

Most experienced applicants of the  $2^{nd}$  course graduated from agricultural studies, have own ecological and permaculture gardens, or took part in numerous workshops dealing with the same issues:

With some of the concepts I got familiarised already during my undergraduate studies, during the lectures on Ecology and Environmental Protection. I am now student of agricultural studies at the master level, and I am writing a master thesis on analysis of the inventory and of the importance of goat and sheep farming on oragnic farms on the territory of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province. I read a lot of articles related to oragnic farming. I participate in the regional ecological fair events where I can make discussions with the countrymen. (Z\_20)

In the years 2012–2014, I was one of the persons cultivating community vegetable garden (permaculture) in the urban wasteland and I helped to establish another ones for which I was remunerated – all those pieces of experience taken together gave me self-confidence so necessary to start the farming. Yet, in a longer perspective I saw myself and I have been still thinking about myself as living in a country. (Z 23)

I am very much involved in the alternative eco-villages and eco-communities movement, and I am very fond of travelling. A few of such places in Poland and Europe I have visited and lived myself in (i.a. EkoseloBlatusa in Croatia, EcotribeTeuge in the Netherlands), and I could learn much about the permaculture there. (Z 16).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), initiative of volunteering on organic farms.



Students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> group upon completion of permaculture workshop. (Photo by Anna Sarzalska)

The above comments when put together, create a kind of a sociological picture of the students, which turned out to be different from the one, we had in mind when launching the application. It became apparent that there is a quite significant group of people in Poland, of different age, interested in oragnic farming and alternative ways of living a life in the coun-

tryside. Those people searched out our Ecological Folk High School, and some of them signed up for the course. First stage of the course was marked by a huge challenge which for everyone presented the fact that the group consisted of individualists not used to act as a group. At the very beginning, we introduced the standard practiced in the folk high schools – the students need to choose their "government". First group appointed one "village leader", the other for that matter established management board consisting of several people, with division of responsi-

Wytrwały, sumienny, pracowity, otwarty, mający zapiecze finansowe, etyczny, potrafiący lść na kompromisy, niezależny, pomysłowy, dojrzały, lojalny, otwarty na współpracę, zaangażowany, sprawy fizycznie i psychicznie, zorganizowany, samodzielny, punktualny, lojalny. Powinien pozostać wiermy ideologii ekologicznej. (cyt. z wywiadu) Musi mieć bardzo silną motywację, kondycję fizyczną i psychiczną, jasny ceł związany z uczestnictwem, gotowy do ciężkiej pracy codziennie, mobilny, otwarty na inność i akceptujący. (cyt. z wywiadu)





bilities. This facilitated communication as well as helped exact the engagements from the students, for instance the participation in maintaining tidiness in the EFHS.

During one of the sessions, when evaluating, students described and drew a perfect student of EFHS (see picture beside).

When I think about our students from EFHS, often the majority of words that occur to me are those fustian expressions: nobility, perseverance, passion. Some of them are people of faith, another are still searching, yet another – atheists. Significant number of them feel best in the contemporary movements of the so-called "deep ecology". As a poetical exemplification of this philosophy, one can use the lyrics of a song by Agata Jałyńska which was eagerly sung by our students:

A flame we are,
burning from the beginning.
Thread of life twirls on a par,
giving death the spinning.
From the air we are,
by the skin divided.
With the soil we are,
by the skin united.
Part of the Earth we are, and you as well,
There is a beast dreaming in each living flesh.
Trees we are, fire,
Anatomy of eternal powers.
Rock we are, water.
All prove to have life memories.

Encountering them during my life journey is an enriching experience which provides opportunity to look deeper and more critically at your own work and your place on Earth. The experience of discovering the precious ore of being a human in them, not covered up by the present materialism or consumerism, moves you and makes you come from the sluggishness of discouragement to life again. When I look at them, I think – as Marek Grechuta, minstrel in the days of my youth, sung: 'beautiful is the world, where everyone thinks everything is still not good enough' – because there are people ready to grab the hoes and bring back life to the places laced with poison, bring back the hope where bitterness and doubt have come up.



Students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of EFHS singing folk song. (Photo by Patryk Bugajski)

#### **Educators**

In the last publication issued within the frames of the project: 'School For Life – Guide to Folk High Schools,' Eric Linndsø, Danish teacher and director of a *folkehøjskole*, sums up the most important traits of a folk high school teacher and presents their code. <sup>17</sup> Good educators are a key to success in a folk high school. But what does it mean "good educators"? One more time I let our students speak:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> T. Maliszewski (ed.), *Szkoła dla życia. Przewodnik po uniwersytetach ludowych.* [School for life. Guide to Folk High Schools], Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, p. 101. This publication is available on our website: http://www.ziarno.grzybow.pl/images/publikacje/projektowe/Szkola\_Dla\_Zycia.pdf [*Polish version, translator's note*]



Botanic lesson with Prof. Barbara Sudnik-Wójcikowska from the University of Warsaw. (Photo by the author)

I haven't noticed that anybody came unprepared for the classes. This is in opposition to my other studies, where it is sometimes evident that people would love to leave and don't say a word. Here in general, people try to organise their classes in such a way as to interact with us. We can ask many questions. There is no tense atmosphere. [S 3]

According to the students, the perfect educator should be an open and dialogue-oriented person that is he/she should be willing to consult their students, i.a. in matters related to programme or classes' organisation:

They should be ready to listen to the needs of the participants and to respond to them. That they follow the group. The educator should allow for the dialogue. We are a small-size group, but the enquiring one and it happens sometimes that we want to know what we are curious about and not this, what the teacher wants to tell us. [S\_1]

As maintained by some of the interviewers, the perfect teacher should act not so much as "a spreader" of the knowledge, but more as a mate and companion on the way to discover it:

They should aim for a dialogue, for helping us to find our answers. They do not treat us, as if they didn't mind. They help us explore things which we find interesting. They are to accompany us. More like companions.  $[S_2]$ 

Furthermore, such people should fire others with their passion and have faith in their students:

A perfect teacher should have his/her own passions and feelings for us. A kind of a 'we-cando-it' attitude. But this has to be also a person that knows his/her stuff and is hot on it in fact. This has to be logical, coherent. She/he also asks the questions that stimulate our thinking, prompt us to reflect, cause that we become involved. [S 4]

As stated by the students, a very essential trait of a good teacher is also the capability of responding to mood and needs of their students. The person who showed such competence during the course was i.a. Reto Ingold:

Reto showed what a perfect educator is. He came to give classes and noticing that we look slightly tired, he asked us: "What is that you need now?" Somebody replied "exercise" and he reacted immediately: we went outside and had the class in the open air. [S\_2]



One of the students, Joanna Bojczewska, giving a lesson on seeds. (Photo by the author)

Those several citations picture the most important features required of an educator in the folk high school: passion, readiness to enter into dialogue and discussion, but also professionalism and thorough education. Students stressed also, how much they could learn in addition

I think the greatest challenge for the folk high school educators is to be an authentic, flexible and simultaneously professional "Guide". A kind of a guide who is learning all the time and who is aware that their students also teach them something

to the classes by observing those teachers who accompany them on a daily basis, with whom they could hold discussions in the evening or sit by the fire.

Our educators' team consisted of practitioners, enthusiasts, with university and high school professors among them whose high-

level of theoretical knowledge did not disturb them however to be passionate about their subject and who were very eager to interact with our students. It was not rare that academic professors admitted their having pleasure in teaching people who are so much interested in the subject.

Teaching in a folk high school is not an easy task for the teachers, nonetheless some very fascinating experience. I will make here reference to Bridget Condon, teacher of Sheelan College in Ireland, who 2004–2006 participated in a previous project of ZIARNO Association by organising courses of folk high school for the so-called travellers i.e. nomadic ethnic group of Irish descent:

This course has been for me as a teacher the most fascinating experience, particularly because I could bring "myself" to the class: my personality, even my struggles. I could reveal that I have similar problems too. I didn't have to leave myself outside. The use of Grundtvig's methods was very beneficial for the students, that is: the priority were the students and not the subject we taught. This strengthened in the students the feeling of their value, reinforced their self-confidence and sense of dignity. At the same time, they really mastered a lot. 18

I think the greatest challenge for the folk high school educators is to be an authentic, flexible and simultaneously professional "guide". A kind of a guide who is learning all the time and who is aware that their students also teach them something. Conducting the course, we were not afraid to switch the roles. Some students had great knowledge in certain domains and would offer to hold the classes. We would agree to this and the results were excellent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> E. Smuk-Stratenwerth (ed.), op. cit., p. 56.

### Farmers as Educators

Important members of our educating team are farmers. We call them farmers-educators. They took the responsibility of acquainting younger colleagues with the secrets of their profession, their vocation.



Session on a farm of Joanna and Frank Dubler: students learning operation of tractor inter-row hoe. (Photo by the author)

We did several thousand kilometres across Poland, looking for organic farmers willing to offer apprenticeship on their farms for a student or a couple of students for a few months. We managed to find about 20 such farms representing various production types. During training period, the farmer (be it a man or a woman) takes in a student for at least a month. Most perfectly, the apprenticeship should last several months, but for various reasons, sometimes even related to character, such long training periods were not always possible. Since every student group has its own mentor, students or farmers should contact the mentor first to explain the difficulties, should there be some, and to find the solution. Sometimes the best solution is simply to change the farm. The mentor is also responsible for keeping the regular telephone contact with the students and visiting them on the apprenticeship place to be aware of the progress students are making, as well as to get to know the possible problems or questions they may have.

In most cases, the apprenticeship proves to be some good and very valuable experience. This is how Daniel from the 1<sup>st</sup> group describes his apprenticeship time:

I happened to be in the Ecological Folk High School by sheer coincidence. My wife came across the information about this course in the newsletter of Cohabitat association. Since we take interest in ecology, self-sufficiency and production of healthy food, and we want to pursue it together in the future, we decided to go to the interview in Grzybów. There actually I heard for the first time about the concept of folk high schools and I became fascinated by the idea of such education.

Since my childhood I have been one of those individuals who cause educational problems to both pedagogues and to parents... thus "the school" in which there are no degrees and no testing of the acquired knowledge, in which teacher is your partner and not your "superior", is something incredible and exactly something what I need. Everything I know about ecology and things I mentioned above, I have been learning by myself so far, on my own, from books,

by searching through the Internet and by very few encounters with the people of greater expertise in those issues than me.

Already the first session we had in Grzybów convinced me that it is worth devoting those two years for this course, but the apprenticeship on the farm of Marek Maruszak in Janowica, that was a true shock.

A man whose knowledge, experience and passion for organic farming are extremely precious, let me in to this, gives me this for free: in the morning, at noon, in the evening after the supper. After two days I realised that I cannot leave even one day unrecorded (the Apprenticeship Journal of EFHS Student we were given in Grzybów would not suffice for even 20% of that what I note down), so I write down, sketch and draw on various pieces of paper and file them all together later. From the very beginning, Marek threw me in at the deep end: light harrowing, weeder harrowing, working with combined cultivator or planting potatoes with a planter, are some of the jobs I was doing on my own. I get briefing as to what and how to do, I am "supervised" for a moment, and then Marek says: "you're doing well" and I am left alone on the field – this probably really shows great confidence I, a farming greenhorn, am treated with every day.

It is only here, during this apprenticeship, that it occurred to me how much responsible it is to breed and to farm the animals, since they need to be cared for every day and this from the morning till the evening practically. Feeding, changing of bedding, repeatedly putting animals out to pasture and rounding them up, or even help and assistance by injuries or illnesses. You cannot go for vacation or take sick leave, there are no holidays or "long weekends" – animals need our work and devoting them time daily.

Growing plants is the same. The pace of farmer's life is determined by the series of various processes and tasks that come one after another and they dictate when he/she will have some rest. When work piles up so that there is no breathing space for weeks, one has to learn to live being tired when falling asleep and waking up, with no right to have even one day off "on request".

The most inspiring thing which makes it possible to somehow bear all this daily toil and moil, is the harmony that seems to exist between the organic farm and the environment, the nature. "Sometimes you have to share your crop with the wild nature" – Marek keeps telling me and I see deep sense in his words because organic farms could not do without this wild nature.



Daniel with Marek Matuszak, farmer-educator.
(Photo by the author)

For what it takes away, the nature repays more or less in a different way. It is a constant mutual independence which is so much fascinating to me that I am going to continue it after the course on my own farm.<sup>19</sup>

Farmers hold also classes on the farms and during sessions in Grzybów. Although most of them have not received academic education, they are great practitioners and they know to hold a class or a lecture with such commitment and competence that students happen to forget about the supper.

### Teamwork

Cooperation, teamwork, is one of the most important elements of education in the folk high schools. Obligatory cleaning services as well as craft workshops are usually done in groups of smaller or bigger size. Similarly, the tasks related to self-development are worked on in teams. Originally, we did not think about self-study groups but already in the middle of the first course we realised how crucial it was. First, it helps to notice that we actually learn by ourselves instead of being taught. Secondly, it helps students understand how vast is the knowledge which is worth acquiring. Thirdly, it trains to use various sources, e.g. in our library we have discovered priceless collection of the agricultural literature from the 1960s offered to us by the nearby agricultural school that closed down. Many of those books were great as a source of information on e.g. natural way of hens or rabbit farming. Fourth, it gives the idea of teamwork, teaches delegating the tasks and group realisation. Fifth, we learn best when we learn from the others, and then again to work out the ruminants' digestive system in such a way as to be able to convey this to the others, the presenter has to get the understanding of it him-/herself first.

Of course, teamwork is frustrating as well. There is always somebody reluctant to cooperate or somebody who dominates the team, making the real cooperation more difficult. And yet, it is only when doing this that we can overcome the excessive individualism and discover that together we can do more and better.

Living under the same roof also oils the wheels of group integration, but – as I have already mentioned above – it may be difficult at times. Judging by our experience, the optimal solution for the group of adult students we were working with, were three-week sessions with free weekends. At the beginning we would have longer sessions lasting 18 days that is from Monday to Saturday. Yet, upon consulting the students, we got the feedback that this was too intensive.

Oxford-style debating<sup>20</sup> is a form of a teamwork that deserves special attention. It became known in Poland thanks to Prof. Zbigniew Pełczyński who taught political philosophy at the University of Oxford. In the 90s of the previous century, Prof. Pełczyński founded in Poland "The School for Leaders" and he started intensive advocacy for oxford-style debates that are civilised discussions held based on strict principles. The for this kind of a debate, we choose a thesis which will be defended by one of the groups and questioned by the other, this of course observing the standards of speech and conversation. It is best to choose difficult, controversial subjects but we – especially due to the fact that this form of work caused great reluctance at the beginning – would suggest several topics. Students would choose the questions which seemed "close to their hearts". They would not like to debate for instance about difficult questions related to the problem of refugees but they wanted to argue about whether it is possible to run organic farm without raring the animals. We encouraged the opponents of a given thesis to put themselves in the shoes of its advocates. We could observe significant progress taking place from session to session. Not to mention that the objections against this form of work disappeared, whereas the level of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> This text appeared on the website of Lubelski Oddział Ekolandu [Lublin Branch of Ekoland];[Association of Food Producers with Ecological Methods EKOLAND, translator's note]: http://www.ekoland-lubelski.pl/category/aktualnosci/page/4/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Presentation of the rules concerning holding Oxford-style debate can be found in the Internet, e.g. on the website http://www.klubdebatoksfordzkich.uw.edu.pl/zasady/ [Polish language version available only, translator's note]

More about Prof. Pełczyński can be found on the website of Szkoła Liderów [School of Leaders]: http://www.szkola-liderow.pl/?lang=en



One of the debates during session. (Photo by the author)

debate, the clarity of expression and argumentative skills improved considerably. Additionally, some could incidentally be discovered as having a special gift for theatre and oratory.

### Living Word

Grundtvig considered living word of great importance. Even though he himself wrote volumes of literary works and was an author of over 1500 songs, he would stress the importance of a face-to-face conversation, of the encounter with another man. Living word was very clearly present during our course. Practically, great majority of the activities was based on it. Here I would like to mention several forms of activities based on word that we practiced. First, morning meetings. Every day after the breakfast, all the students and all the teachers present at the moment came to thirty-minute meeting. It would open with singing followed then by the "living word" precisely. The idea was that somebody prepares short speech concerning the topic he/she finds important. It did not have to be related to the session theme or to agriculture. In the beginning, these were teachers who prepared the speeches, and then we were gradually encouraging the students to prepare theirs.

Another type of living-word-based activity were encounters with poetry, art and theatre. We tried to show that agriculture and farms, all constitute elements of an abundant community and cultural life. A farmer who is passionate about the art gave us for instance lecture on animals in painting during which we analysed pieces of art made by Palaeolithic hunters and by contemporary painters. Some other day we invited a farmer who is very talented poet. We also had a highlander from Beskid Mountains as our guest who told us about the traditions of "redyk" (pol. for a festive trailing of the sheep).

There was also a place for theatre during our course in organic farming. To give you the example, together with the students from the first group, we prepared a shadow theatre based on a contemporary Indian legend which had been discovered by Peter while he was reading a book in German devoted to issue of ethics and culture of relations between human beings and animals.<sup>22</sup> We translated this legend into Polish [and English]:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> M. Schneider (Hrsg.), Den Tieren gerecht werden. Zur Ethik und Kultur der Mensch-Tier-Beziehung, 2001, Schweisfurth-Stiftung, Universität Gesamthochschule Kassel 2001 – Polish version by Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth, English version by Elżbieta Wiatrowicz.

Long, long time ago the Earth was full of all kinds of animals inhabiting its every corner. Some of them were as huge as the tallest trees; the others were as small as the grains of sand. Some of them could move their wings and hovered above the Earth's surface. Others swam in the waters of rivers and oceans. Many galloped and sprinted through savannas. There were also some that climbed the trees very skilfully. Every creature lived in its small world knowing as much as nothing about the other side of the river or the forest.

One day, a Great Spirit Wasakuch decided that he would make animals curious about the world. Having settled on a plan of action, he invited them all to a sunny glade for a big assembly. As soon as the invitation reached the animals, they set off for a journey. One by one, they were arriving at the meeting point. Looking at each other, they were sheer astonishment. It was the first time in their life that they met each other! They were lost in admiration for the tail colours of the proud peacock, slow stately-mannered walk of the snail, bright and lively nature of the chubby piggy, serenity and melancholy of the ruminating cow. The diversity and the variety of incredible skills the animals were confronted with (the skills thanks to which they were actually able to expand all over the world), surprised them. Yet, when Wasakuch asked them: "Who are they actually? How did they get here? Why there are so many of them?" the animals had no answer.

Only one young plucky ape jumped down from the tree and came to the centre of the glade: "I will try to find the answers to those questions. I have been looking for some new challenges recently. I have been even trying to walk on two paws and I am quite successful in it. I am going to see the world and I am sure to find the explanation. Come with me!"

But most of the animals didn't want to set off for a journey full of unknown and worse still with a two-paw-walking ape. Only a horse, a cow, a goat, a piggy, a dog and a cock had trust in a little known leader and they agreed to hit the road together.

As it turned out, the ape was not only good at walking on two paws but it also proved to be a very clever, indigenous, crafty creature, able to conceive new plans, invent some tools, and set traps. Soon it started giving names to other animals around and called itself a Man.

Wasakuch observed the course of events with anxiety and began even regretting that he endowed Man with such freedom, that he let him become so curious about the world. He saw how quick Man was at exploring the nature, how fast he was at learning new things, how he managed to discover fire which so far had been solely reigned by the Spirit.

Wasakuch made a decision to stop the Man and he made him forget that he came from the animals. Nonetheless it was too late. The Man couldn't be turned back from the path he once had begun to follow. The problem was, he would not listen. He would not listen to Wasakuch, he would not listen to his companions, he would not listen to the whispering of the wind or murmuring of the brooks. All he listened to was he himself. He thought only about himself. He was cutting the trees. He was poisoning rivers and seas. He was inventing new machines and mechanisms. Some of them could move along the roads, others could swim in the rivers and seas, yet others hovered in the air like sky birds. "I am Great!" – he used to repeat – "I am the most powerful creature on the Earth!" The Man started building camps for animals, to abuse and to maltreat them with no mercy. Animals were suffering and many of them died.

Downhearted as he was, Wasakuch decided to hold great assembly again. As animals started preparing for the meeting, it turned out that many are lost forever. Those who had survived, were very bitter for the Man about the suffering he had inflicted on them. As soon as he arrived, they started telling him this. The Man began to feel very lonely. And he started apologising for all the wrong he had done.

Then a little mouse approached him and asked: "Maybe at least you have found the answers to our questions?" At this instant, the Man forgot about his repentance and began to praise his great discoveries, impressive achievements, incredible machines he invented, demonstrating charts, tables and numbers.



Shadow theatre. (Photo by Anna Sarzalska)

Contemplating his own cleverness, he did not notice that the animals, not able to understand his words, as well as more and more tired and bored, began to leave one by one.

Suddenly, he realised that he is completely alone. He looked around with regret. Everybody had gone. Yet, there was a river at the bottom of the mountain on which he sat. He heard the quite sound of its water flowing. This water reminded him of the blood that was running in his veins. Then he heard tree branches rustling and he felt the air coming from the green leaves going through him. He looked at the mountains in the far distance and he felt that his bones, every inch of his body in fact, is made of the same clay that those marvellous hills were built from. The memories of his true origin came back to him and he started feeling deeply sad and sorry about his roots that he went so far away from, about the things he destroyed, the suffering and harm he caused.

At this same moment however, he started seeing that he is the only one who can still do something about it, who can change something, can restore, can save...

Conveying in a poetic form the philosophy of unity between man and nature we find ourselves be close to as well, this myth was used by our students in a slightly modified form, adapted to their own style. They also prepared a small performance upon the completion of the course, to which they invited teachers and local children.

### Art and Craftwork

During each long session several hours were devoted to art and craft. Sometimes it was just a two-hour "interval" on a farm, to capture some astonishing or interesting piece with crayons. On some other occasions, we held prearranged several-day workshops on carpentry or pottery. Arranging it earlier meant with this respect deciding together the object of the workshops and planning it. This is how for instance the solar-energy herb drying room, a wooden bench or a forest-resembling coat rack came into being.



Student-made small bench (Photo by Maciej Klimczak)



Students of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of EFHS presenting their works prepared during workshop on felting. (Photo by Anna Sarzalska)

In the time of longer sessions which meant intensive coexistence in the dormitory, those activities were like "a fresh wind". People could practice teamwork and at the same time experience that creating items which are neat and useful for the farm is not a difficult task.

### Music and Singing

Syng da livets sang og lær, skønt ingen anden er som du, hvad vi alle har til fælles, for da ser du i et nu: Når din lovsang med de andres kan forsamles i et "vi", er du fri.

[Sing the song of life and learn, although no one else is like you, What we all have in common, is uniqueness of everyone: when your song of praise joins the others and gathers in a "we" you are free]

(Fragment of a song written by Carsten Borby Nielsen and sung in the Danish folk high schools)

Singing in the Ecological Folk High School could well be a subject for writing a separate article. Since my first visit in the Danish folk high school in Silkeborg, I have been convinced that singing is a fundamental part of the life in the folk high school. And I do not mean only

SINGING IS MORE POWERFUL EXPRESSION TOOL THAN SPOKEN WORDS AND ONE HAS TO FIND OUT THEIR TONE, THEIR SOUND, THIS SOMETHING THAT THEY SUBCONSCIOUSLY LIKE. ONLY THEN CAN THEY OPEN THEMSELVES AND START SINGING.

singing by the fire accompanied by guitar and "pint". What I mean is singing to start a day. But how to explain it to young individualists?

It turned out to be a process. The beginning was hard. We would pull out the songbooks and start making some noises which

were not always pleasant ones. Some people would just stand there keeping silent. I was trying to find the tutors who would keep the singing lesson "going". It resembled "a casting" a bit. Some of the tutors were rejected by the group, but since I believed singing to be a really important element, I continued my searching. Once it seemed to me that I have

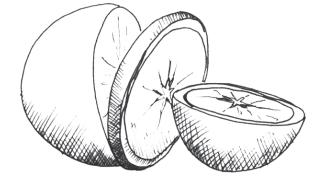


Singing in the morning with Ania (Photo by the author)

finally hit home, but the tutor commuting over 186 miles to work, turned out not to be the right solution. Finally, Marta and Ania appeared: two people who love singing and who know how to listen to the others. Singing is more powerful expression tool than spoken words and one has to find out their tone, their sound, this something that they subconsciously like. Only then can they open themselves and start singing. Writing this, I feel deep emotions coming to me because the way our students opened themselves by singing during our last sessions, was something incredible to me. We used to start our day with 2–3 songs, partly chosen by the group, partly suggested by the tutor. And in the evenings, which during the week were singing-time, we stayed long, longer than planned. Singing is the essence of folk high school. It shows how to express individuality but also helps to build community.

# Activity with an orange or why educating through practice has future

The activity with the use of orange starts with writing the word "orange" on a board. The students are to say everything they learn about the orange from this word. Then we bring the photograph of the fruit and we ask the same question. Finally, we bring the fruit itself and ask the same question again: what we can learn from this object about the fruit itself. As the last activity, we peel the orange and give everyone a piece of it to try. Do you know now what the orange is?



Our students could "taste" what organic farming is. During sessions in Grzybów, we had a lot of practical

activities, starting with examining the soil, through planning the crop rotation in a vegetable garden, creating permaculture, up to goats' hoofs trimming and tree budding. Nonetheless, the most important experience was the apprenticeship on the farms lasting several months and having farmers as educators. On the one hand, it was the possibility to learn the workshop of a farmer with many years' experience, on the other – the opportunity to challenge oneself, to check one's own capabilities, to find out whether this is really my way. And indeed, there were some people who did not want to continue the course in the Ecological Folk High School. They learnt that this is not for them. This is also some experience of importance and value.

Others for that matter could try in a safe and friendly environment what it means to be a farmer. It was a kind of a prelude to their own farming operation. A couple of students began to work on their own land already during the course. And so we could already try honey from Krzysztof's apiary in Gromki and a cake baked using spelt flour coming from the first harvest in Bratkówka by Jola and Sebastian. We are waiting now for the ice cream made from goat milk by Kasia!

### Sample Plan of a Session in Grzybów

Looking at the plan of a session we present on pages 118–120, one can imagine the pace of work during a three-week session in Grzybów. As a general rule, there are four longer sessions during a two-year course. Presented below is a sample plan of a session devoted to animals. Other sessions on: soil, plants and human being consisted of different subjects, but were structured in the same way. Such sample plan may prove to be of help to future followers willing to construct their own plans. Building our scheme, we also drew inspiration from our Danish colleagues from Folk High School in Brenderup, by looking at how they organise the week.

# Sample Plan of a Session in Grzybów

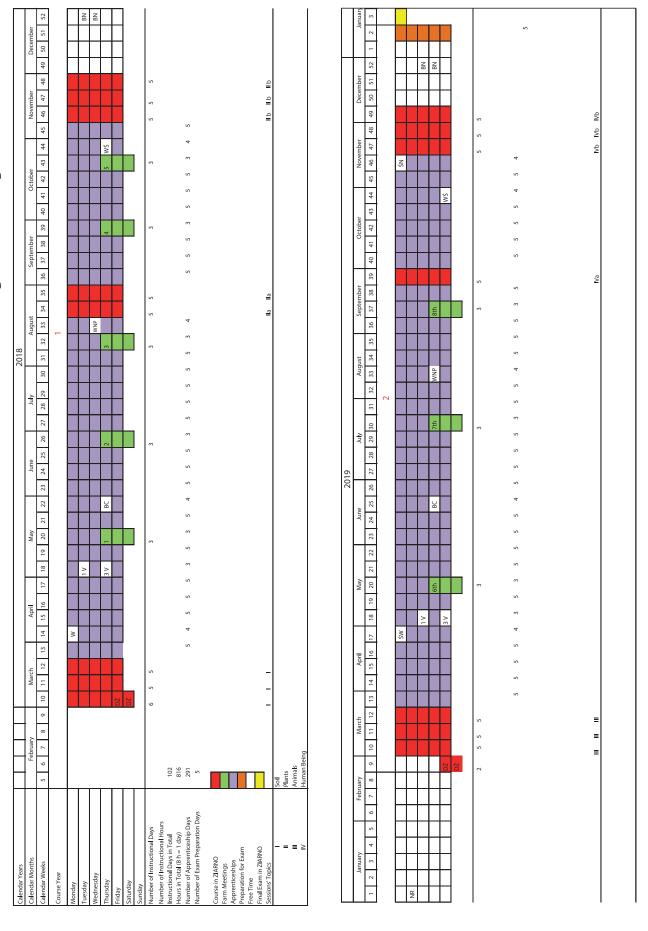
		PLAN OF 2ND SESSION -	SESSION – ANIMALS		p. 1
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	28.11.2016	29.11.2016	30.11.2016	01.12.2016	02.12.2016
7.30-8.30			BREAKFAST		
8.30–9.00	WELCOMING	MORNING MEETING	MORNING MEETING Nina (student) on Mangalica pigs	MORNING MEETING	MORNING MEETING Basia (student) on WOOF
9.00-10.00	EFHS Rules Reminder. Session structure – what and how we are going to learn. Ewa and Peter	Students' presentations of group work on animal welfare.	Students' presentations on most important issues of livestock production certification.	Group 1 – work presentation: digestive systems.	Group 3 – work presentation: digestive systems.
10.00-10.30			BREAK		
10.30–12.00	Introduction. Relationship: man vs. animal. Animal welfare: task selection for group work.	Cycles in nature, material cycles, examples of trophic levels in food chains.  Nitrogen, carbon and phosphorus cycles – group work.	How life on Earth began – lecture by Ewa. Important stages in evolution – movie in English.	Group 2 – work presentation: digestive systems.	Trip to Płock. Mazovian Museum – Culture of the Far East.
	Peter	Ewa			
12.00-12.30			BREAK		
12 30–14 00	12 30-14 00 Groun work - animal welfare	Presentations of group work	Biodiversity decline – what is the problem?	Trip to horse farm of Karol	Trip to Plock. Mazovian
00:11-06:71	Group worn – animal wenate	phosphorus cycles.	Lecturer from University of Warsaw	community	Department.
14.00-15.30			DINNER		
15.30–17.00	Certification on animal farms. Analysis of law acts – group work.	Origin of domesticated animals, livestock production, animal breeding types.	Anatomy and physiology of animals. Cow model. Group work – division based on animals with different digestive systems.	Food sovereignty – Asia B. (student) and Ania about Nyeleni.	Trip to Płock. Mazovian Museum – culture of Mazovia in a folk vision of the world.
	Paweł	Peter	Ewa		
17.00-17.15			BREAK		
17.15–18.00	Group work – animal	Group work – certification.	Group work - digestive	English course.	English course.
	wellale.		systems.	Ewa	Ewa
18.00-19.00			SUPPER		
19.00–20.00	Singing with Marta		19.30 Film night: "The Salt of the Earth"		

		PLAN OF 2ND SESSION – ANIMALS	- ANIMALS		p. 2
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	05.12.2016	06.12.2016	07.12.2016	08.12.2016	09.12.2016
7.30-8.30			BREAKFAST		
8.30-9.00	SUMMARY OF 1ST WEEK	MORNING MEETING Ewa on St.Nikolaus	MORNING MEETING Joanna P. (student) on Horses and Patagonia.	MORNING MEETING, Joanna P. (student) – own film: "Mrs Cecylia Strojna and her Animals"	MORNING MEETING Mateusz Jurecki – History of Physics in a Nutshell
9.00-10.00	Animals Nutrition and Feeding – Introduction. Peter	Animals in Art. Peter	Continuation of the Story of Joanna P. on Horses and Patagonia.	Group Presentations – Diseases.	Group Presentations – Diseases.
10.00-10.30			BREAK		
10.30–12.00	Group work: creating feeding schedule for ruminants.	Group presentations on feeding.	Organic pigs rearing, nutrition and feeding, breeding types.	Craftwork with Wojtek Marchlewski, Agnieszka Niwińska and Ania.	Organic sheep farm, reproduction, requirements, breeding types.
000			Lecturer Irom wolls		Lecturer from SGG W
12.00-12.30			BREAK		
12.30–14.00	Group work: creating feeding schedule for ruminants.	Hoof care (ruminants). Practice. Peter.	Organic pigs rearing, nutrition and feeding, breeding types.	Craftwork with Wojtek Marchlewski, Agnieszka Niwińska and Ania.	Organic sheep farm, reproduction, requirements, breeding types.
			Lecturer from WULS		1,
14.00-15.30			DINNER		
15.30–17.00	Introdcution by Peter to animal health, preventive measures and animal	Preventive measures in goats rearing, goats breeding types and their characteristics.	Organic poultry farming. Group work.	Craftwork with Wojtek Marchlewski, Agnieszka	On sheep farming traditions in Podhale. Andrzej Suszka.
	diseases.Group work.	Lecturer from SGGW	Paweł	INIWIIISKA AIIU AIIIA.	
17.00-17.15			BREAK		
17.15–18.00	On the Universe with Ewelina Grądzka.	Preventive measures in goats rearing, goats breeding types and their characteristics.	Ethics of the 21st century.  Discussion based on text by	Craftwork with Wojtek Marchlewski, Agnieszka	English course.
		Lecturer from SGGW	пешгук эконшоwsкі.	INIWINSKA ANG ANIA.	Ewa
18.00-19.00			SUPPER		
19.00–20.00	Night-Sky observations with Ewelina Grądzka.		Film night: "The Way" film projection and meeting on Camino de Santiago.		
* VV.					

<sup>\*</sup> Warsaw University of Life Sciences.

		PLAN OF 2ND SESSION – ANIMALS	- ANIMALS		p. 3
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	12.12.2016	13.12.2016	14.12.2016	15.12.2016	16.12.2016
7.30–8.30			BREAKFAST		
8.30–9.00	MORNING MEETING, students' presentation on homeopathy	MORNING MEETING the anniversary of introducing martial law	MORNING MEETING, herbal medicine	MORNING MEETING, Mateusz (student) – Monika and Robert Kuryluk and their farm.	MORNING MEETING
9.00-10.00	Presentation by Agnieszka M. (student) on Kirgistan.	Organic rabbit farms.	Introduction to genetics and animal breeding. Ewa.	Oxford-style debate: Is it possible to have organic farm without animals?	Aquaculture and ecology.  Pawel.
10.00-10.30			BREAK		
10.30–12.00	Introduction to beekeeping. Biology of a bee family. Types of bees. Roman Kornas and Krzysztof (student).	Students' presentation on poultry farms.	Animal reproduction. Peter.	Discussion about ritual slaughter	Seasonal bumblebee rearing. Monika Deja.
12.00-12.30			BREAK		
12.30–14.00	Types of beehives. Establishing apiaries. Roman Kornas and Krzysztof (student).	Meeting with a veterinary surgeon. Ultrasound check of a cow.	Meetings on students' apprenticeships.	Craftwork – felt. Danuta N.	Conversations to sum up the course.
14.00-15.30			DINNER		
15.30–17.00	Beekeeper's work agenda throughout a year. Roman Kornas and Krzysztof (student).	Craftwork. Ania.	Circle meeting on problems within the group.	Craftwork – felt. Danuta N.	Singing with Natalia.
17.00–17.15			BREAK		
17.15–18.00	Organic beefarming rules. Roman Kornas and Krzysztof (student).	Craftwork. Ania.	Circle meeting on problems within the group.	Craftwork – felt. Danuta N.	Singing together Christmas carols and course closing ceremony.
18.00-19.00			SUPPER		
19.00-20.00	Singing with Marta.				

Schedule of the 3rd Edition of the Course in Ecological Farming



### Schedule of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Course in Organic Farming

The schedule presented on page 121 shows how intensive the programme of our course is. Since the programmes realised during the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the course were slightly modified, I have decided to present as an example the programme of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition which we would like to start in March 2018.

### The End or *Discernimento* in the Folk High Schools

Pope Francis often uses the Italian word "discernimento", which can be translated as recognition (this is closest to Polish linguistic sensitivity), penetration, recognising, discerning, prudence, balanced argumentation, impartial judgment, common sense.<sup>23</sup>. Folk high schools require discernimento from us. For us, for teachers and tutors, and for future founders of new folk high schools, it is of crucial importance to listen closely to "the spirit of the time". It refers also to discerning character, needs and learning style of our participants. Of those to whom we should give hand<sup>24</sup> and help them find their way, support them in their discernimento. It is because people who find their way in folk high schools are often people who are looking for something, who do not want to copy ready solutions but want to discover their vocation.

This testing is – in my opinion – a key to the future of folk high schools. School for life has to try to discern the "spirit of the time".

Tomáš Halik, Czech priest, professor of philosophy and theology in his book 'Patience with God' writes about verifying the signs of time: 'The time of human life is not a time of things, it is not simply *chronos* – time flowing onward in one direction like water in a river, time of clocks and calendars. It is also *kairos* – time of possibilities – a time of opportunity, mature time, *time for something*.' He continues quoting the Ecclesiastes:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together... (Ecc 3, 1–5)

Further Halik asks a question: what is it the time for now? And he answers: Now is the time to gather stones together. There have been enough stones casted away. Now is the time for being close. <sup>25</sup> And this idea corresponds very much with the philosophy of our Ecological Folk High School – the high school named after the founder of the ecumenical community in Taizé, Brother Roger. <sup>26</sup> His life testimony of a person committed to work for peace and reconciliation is an example of how to keep close and gather stones together.

Writing this the author of the article refers to Polish language as the language of the article; in English however discernimento is translated very much the same as: the act of discerning, the power or faculty of the mind by which it distinguishes one thing from another; power of viewing differences in objects, and their relations and tendencies; penetrative and discriminate mental vision; acuteness; sagacity; insight; retrieved from: http://www.meaningspage.com/italian-meaning/translate-to-english/discernment – translator's note.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Prof. T. Gadacz in the article 'University in the Wasted Time', in the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of this publication, writes: 'nowadays we understand educare as transferring knowledge, and not as the ancient Greeks did who traced this from the word educere meaning to give hand. The teacher is not a person who only transfers knowledge, but the one who should give hand and allow pupils-students to make a change.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> T. Halik, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> More about the life of Bro. Roger as well as about the Community he founded, can be found on the site: www.taize.fr/en.

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### Jadwiga Perek Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów, Poland

## MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE FROM THE COURSE AT THE ECOLOGICAL FOLK HIGH SCHOOL



### Introductory Remarks...

I started this course as the biggest critic of my own decision. I have always been shy, withdrawn, and diffident girl with imprecise interests and ideas about my career path. However, I received a solid theoretical background to begin the course at the Ecological Folk High School (EUL) because I completed horticultural studies with an engineer degree. I studied this field with enjoyment and engagement, however I did not like the teaching style used there and the low level of practical experience I gained. After all, I did not feel being competent enough to pursue a profession which I was taught. For this reason, I felt disappointed and deceived. Furthermore, already during my studies I realized that I do not support the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides as their inappropriate use may be harmful to the natural environment. At that moment, I was developing interests towards holistic attitude to human health, among others through healthy diet, use of herbs and taking care of mental well-being. Simultaneously, I have taken up an interest in policy and the history of my country. Since the earliest years of my childhood I have been a devoted admirer of all kinds of animals. I did not anticipate, that I would be capable of amassing and developing such a wide variety of interests in one profession. One coincidental visit to an ecological farm was all it took to discover my supposed 'life mission' to be. It was an honest enlightenment for me at that time. At one moment I found my life's passion and felt motivated enough to develop it, even on my own accounts. In spite of this, I thought this was yet another crazy idea in my life, that has no perspective for a well-payed job, for which I would lose passion sooner or later anyway. Thus, I decided to complete the current studies that were anyway on graduation and then search for further possibilities for development in my newly found passion.

To write and defend my master's degree in the moment when I had lost my conviction into the sense of doing it proved to be an extremally difficult and frustrating task. Just after its completion I undertook some temporary job which humbled me and taught me that if I don't take care of my own personal interests no one will do it for me, and that for this reason it is not worthwhile to waste my life and charisma to be employed in a dead-end job. After finishing my studies and before the start of my course at EUL, I also had the opportunity to think about myself and uncover some personal truths, as well as to discover a joy of dance. At the beginning of the forthcoming year I read an article which anticipated the start of a course for organic farmers. I took it as a sign, but decided to proceed with caution and to await further information on this. With the beginning of spring, I made a decision to begin a work within my professional background, even though it did not ensure the best salary; I was determined to work. Retrospectively, I realized that I could have learned much more from this job but my lack of initiative and self-motivation drew me away. I was also irritated by the people that I was working with. I kept in mind the information about the course on organic farming. Even though I had reservations and no faith in myself being able to afford it, I completed the application form. Some coincidental circumstances inspired me to register for a qualifying interview as the first person. In June, I found myself there feeling as if I were in a new world full of good people who would support me in my interests. There I was also acquainted with another person from the course with whom I believe our paths were destined to cross. Generally, since the initial visit to the ecological farm, I had been experiencing an incredibly purposeful order of chances, people and things. The circumstances and the people I was amongst were supportive to take up the new opportunity. I myself felt very uncertain about it and foresaw certain threats connected to such a decision. Finally, I decided to take up the challenge. At last the course schedule assumed 14 months of practical coursework and only a few theoretical assignments. Therefore, would I be able to imagine a better turn of events which would fulfil my wants and dreams?

At that point, I started my course at the Ecological Folk High School being an individual lacking self-confidence and a confidence in her life expectations, afraid of any changes in life, with some aspirations and expectations of the people. I had enough studies of subject matters which I disagreed with, and which did not interest me. I regarded myself as a helpless person with no initiative, timid and unwilling to loudly voice my opinions. I recalled living life in the countryside mainly from the visits that I had had on my grandparents' farm. In this short essay I would like to share my experiences and thoughts regarding whom I became thanks to taking this course.



Session on Małgorzata and Sławek Dobrodziej's organic farm, I<sup>st</sup> group, Jadzia is the last one on the right (Photo. Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth)

### Dialog and Cooperation

The organic farming course at the Ecological High Folk School consisted of four three-weekslong thematic sessions at the schools premises, a few short student visits to organic farms within Poland, and 14 months of practical work in the cooperating organic farms. Additionally, in September 2015 we had an introductory one week session when we could get to know with each other and with organic farming in general. After that gathering we began our practical work in the farms owned by cooperating farmers-educators. At the end of October our first long thematic session themed 'Soil' begun. In the meantime we had two short trips to Mazowsze and Lubelszczyzna. The following long session themed 'Plants' took place in February 2016, after which we went to continue the practical work on the farms. In between we

had several three-days trips to Zachodniopomorskie, Waminsko-Mazurskie, Mazowieckie, and Pomorskie Regions. We finished our practical work in November the same year, and then we had another long session themed 'Animals'. In February 2017 there was the last long session themed 'Man', after which we started our last season of practical training.

I personally did practical work at four farms. The first one was committed to growing vegetables and their processing. At the farm there were developed diversified ways of distribution of the products and goods. The second one was a complete opposite to the first one as there the farmers dedicated to breed different kinds of livestock on a small scale. I also had the opportunity to participate in a short internship on a farm focused on baking bread and production of matured cheese. Currently, I am finishing my internship in Wandzin, where farming is connected with therapy for addicts. My former university studies provided me a good theoretical background, which helped me at every farm where I took the internship. I believe, however, that thanks to this course I have learned much more on how to cooperate and coexist with people then real farming. First of all, it made me develop my communication skills as well as other soft abilities needed in such work. The most demanding in this respect were the practical experience at the farms and the three-week sessions at the school. The beginnings are always the most difficult. Sharing a room or home with a stranger is a challenge. The imperative is to get to know each other and learn how to respect the needs of your roommates / home mates as well as your own. Everyone has his/her own habits, different ways of coping with stress and tiredness, and needs of maintaining relationships. If you are not aware of these disparities and do not communicate them than even sharing a bathroom may become an area of conflict. It was particularly difficult for me to establish personal boundaries at homes of our hosts. Only by sharing the living with them we became a part of their families with all the inherent positives and negatives that this would bring. The first long sessions in Grzybów also demanded self-improvement. I have an impression that the whole-day communication and self-assertion workshops helped us a lot. We also needed time to get to know each other and work out acceptable ways of living together under one roof.

I sometimes thought that it was impossible to find a solution that would please everyone. I remember how long and frustrating it was to establish menus for all during the sessions.

This experience, therefore, taught me responsibility for myself within a group. I learned that my own displeasure and fatigue will very quickly be noticed by the group, which will most likely react with similar feelings toward myself.

Many times, I wished to come to a compromise which were not to my liking, only in order to resolve the conflict. This type of sacrifice eventually ended with the feeling of unfair treatment and filled me with distrust and displeasure with the group. And this kind of feelings used to create an atmosphere

which had a huge potential to start a conflict. This experience, therefore, taught me responsibility for myself within a group. I learned that my own displeasure and fatigue will very quickly be noticed by the group, which will most likely react with similar feelings toward myself. It is, therefore, vital to be aware of your own feelings and can manage them or just explain them to the group. They would anyway expertly recognize your emotional state of being, but may not be able to understand where is it coming from. I learned to take care of my personal basic needs in the first place, to be able to genuinely share myself with the group. In my case it was vital to first allow myself the proper amount of sleep and privacy. My body also started to demand some physical activity after hours spent in a lecture hall.

This being all true, living with a group also demands selflessness. It is important to come to the realization that some types of behaviour are not going to be welcomed by the group and you must resign from these. It is critical to learn openness for others different opinions and to be able to respect them. In our group, we needed to learn to respect each other particularly because we were a group including vegetarians, carnivores, religious, atheists, messy people, partiers as well as cushy and orderly people. I honestly did not believe that it would be feasible to form a supportive group made up of such contrasting individuals. From session to session, however, I began to observe with much of surprise less and less frequent conflicts and spats during meals. Is it in fact possible to unite the worlds of meat eaters and vegetarians, pro-dairy and anti-dairy, and gluten free eaters and lovers of sweets? I did not believe it

would come true, but through observation of the group, I concluded that as a matter of fact it is possible!

When we worked out these things between each other, our cooperation as a group during our activities, as well as other initiatives got better too. I didn't foresee that we would be able to work together so delightfully. Morning song is written into the tradition of folk high schools, however, in our group this was a pastime we used to engage ourselves without any great passion. All the more, the decision to present one of our songs to a wider audience and, especially, that this was not at all a failure, surprised me. Apparently, singing helps to build community, and observing how it evolved throughout the four

long sessions, I feel proud.

IT WAS POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT THESE THINGS AMONG US, BECAUSE WE WERE UNITED AROUND OUR COMMON PASSION.

It was possible to work out these things among us, because we were united around

our common passion. Not all persons starting the course were able to finish it. I think that the reason for this might be just lack of readiness to sacrifice or the ability to get used to live in a group. This course is demanding in this respect, which not all can afford.

### Studies

I recall school as an uninviting place. I was unable to find myself within my group of peers because I continuously compared myself with others in respect to my look or achievements. While lacking self-confidence in my abilities and the own value I always came out for the worse in these comparisons. It was, thus, decreasing my confidence even more. Accustomed to tests and exams I sceptically approached the idea of studying without such forms of checking one's knowledge. I did not foresee that this would be effective. In fact, there is no sense to compare yourself to others as each of us absorbs knowledge at one's own pace and tests and exams only vet a certain type of intelligence. During the course, each of us had our own internal motivations to learn organic farming. Tests and exams would only spur rivalry and take away from individuals confidence, lower motivation, and lower desire for further studies. Given the freedom to learn without pressure, we can learn about what we deem to be worth for us, and grants us an expansive knowledge on our own accord.

As already said, after the completion of my university studies, I did not in any way feel competent to proceed in the profession which I had learned. I was already bone-tired of theoretical knowledge not supported by practical experience, and which seemed to me empty. I had also enough of writing scientific papers just to achieve a diploma, which would in no way support any practical skills. Not until my courses at EUL was I grateful for the knowledge that I acquired during my studies.

I realised, however, that I should not rest on my laurels, but should train myself and continue learning for the entirety of my life. This is because, in life one needs a lot of competencies, including the mundane abilities, such as use of a washing machine, cooking, driving a car, and speaking a foreign language, as well as specialist such as for example running own horticultural business. Thinking that because I have finished my studies there is nothing left for me to learn is outright stupid and hampers one's personal development.

An unarguable benefit of studying at the folk high school is the partnership relation with our professors. After years spent at school, it is incredible to encounter teachers devoted to assist their students in meeting their needs. Educators from public schools are not able to build partner relationships with each student; that is why only the exceptional and below average students are noticed, while the remainder are not. The less demanding the student the better from the point of view of a teacher. I myself belonged to the group of undistinguishing students until finally at the Ecological Folk High School someone was willing to hear what I have to say and to adjust their teaching offer based on my interests. At last I was treated with attentiveness and respect, as a partner in a common project.

EUL is a new initiative. I admire the knowledge and engagement of our founders. It must have been an extremally difficult a task to prepare such project, that required all-embracing expertise, knowledge and acquaintanceship. Even finding farmers willing to take in and teach students must have been a challenge.

Therefore, we together create this project, thus, we learn from each other. Nevertheless, as a course participant I learn different things than my teacher do while participating in the same activities. This understanding even more greatly convinces me that learning is a life-long

We together create this project, thus, we learn from each other. Nevertheless, as a course participant I learn different things than my teacher do while participating in the same activities. This understanding even more greatly convinces me that learning is a life-long process and that one learns from every person one meets, no matter what is his/her age or education.

process and that one learns from every person one meets, no matter what is his/her age or education. During this course, I have met people of different age, with different life experience and attitudes, from whom I could also learn a lot of worthwhile things.

Owing to the course, I became aware how difficult it is to be a teacher, especially at the folk high school. Being a counsellor requires being comprehensively talented. It

is not enough to be a competent speaker with extensive knowledge in the field, it is also necessary to be a self-conscious person with much wider perspective on the world. I also became aware of what kind of difficulties do farmers-educators encounter. It must be demanding enough to take in students under one's own roof, not to say having the ability to convey their expertise to them; of course not everyone is able to be a good teacher. During the practical it was even more important to practice one's soft skills, to be able to communicate one's needs and to respect the needs of the hosts. Equally the teacher should work on himself, because he should be able to deal with dissatisfaction, tiredness, lack of enthusiasm or critique of his work.

Self-discipline and respect to the work of others was known to me before the start of the course. However, I experienced how important it is to have respect for your teachers. It is in fact distracting when someone is unsettled, chatting or is busy with things other than the course. I experienced this personally when I presented a topic to the group during one of classes. Learning by teaching others is indeed effective because it requires a good understanding of the topic which needs to be presented. I experienced first-hand how important it is to combine theory and practice. If you do not put into practice what you are studying, you are losing it.

It is also important to allow for independence in studying. It is probably frustrating to witness helplessness and ineffectiveness of a student. It is, however, inordinately unfair to relieve them of the difficult tasks and leave the easier ones for them to complete. A temporary benefit would result in lack of resourcefullness in the future. I noticed as well, that a student does not need to understand everything that he/she does to benefit from it in the future. It is nice to have a consciousness of what you are doing, but surprisingly I noticed how many good practices I had been taught when I was a child on my grandparents' farm. At that time, I did not understand why I was not supposed to stand on the flight path of bees returning to their hive or why my grandfather was unhappy when we trampled the lawn which he had planned

I learned also that it is important to not be afraid of making mistakes. The consequences of them are sometimes severe, but they can also teach us a great deal.

to cut with a scythe. It did not harm to gain these good practises, for which I am now grateful. These experiences made me aware that it is important to teach children practical abilities already at a young age, not to wait until they grow older and have more under-

standing. I experienced as well how important are breaks in the process of learning, and allowing students to move around during classes and breaks. Teaching trough practice is in this way beneficial because students are not overwhelmed with only one form of activity.

I learned also that it is important to not be afraid of making mistakes. The consequences of them are sometimes severe, but they can also teach us a great deal. For instance, there was not enough organic farms that could receive trainees at the beginning, which forced us to take an initiative and search for them on our own; thanks to this we found many more interesting places.

I cannot forget to mention a change in students that I had noticed, which was probably thanks to this form of education. There was one person who at the beginning of the course did not want to express herself. She was reclusive and critical, but with time she became a per-



*Ist group after permaculture classes* (Photo. Anna Sarzalska)

son with a smile on her face, able to express her opinions, and with a growing enthusiasm to working within a group. It is unbelievable how relieving is acceptance and support for one's

interest. I also met a person who was unable to talk about her needs at the beginning, who transformed into someone who could take care of herself and courageously go after her own dreams. I also met people with strict rules who with time became more tolerant of others' opinions. I also noticed that even people who appeared to disregard group working were able to have self-discipline and react

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to the needs of the group. I cannot cease to admire the fact that such an unconventional approach to teaching proved to be an effective tool for teaching such a difficult career as agriculture to people who had never previously had such experience. After a year of studies, the students could crop their own cereals, build an apiary, learn to bake bread, milk animals, culture cheese, and care for vegetables, etc.

### Organic farming

Thanks to the course I learned how well-rounded a good farmer needs to be. Optimally he/she must have many professions such as: engineer, builder, plumber, electrician, veterinarian,

gardener, forester, cook, driver, accountant and also fulfil oneself as a family member. A farmer should also take part in local activities and politics, keeping in mind that his actions affect the health of the entire planet and its inhabitants.

A farmer should also take part in local activities and politics, keeping in mind that his actions affect the health of the entire planet and its inhabitants.

How much the work of a farmer influence the health of the planet I was convinced when I observed an experiment we did on one of the thematic sessions at EUL. We decided to check if there is any difference in the behaviour of soil from fields used for organic farming and that

of conventional farming. After pouring large amounts of water into two baskets filled with two kinds of soils we observed the results immediately. The soil cultivated in organic way was darker and consisted of more organic material for which it better absorbed and retained water. The convectional soil, however, was lighter, dusty, and did not absorb water, only allowed for run off. This experience impacted me even greater, due to the severe drought being experienced in Poland at the time.

I experienced that deciding to grow only vegetables, one needs to be ready for difficult work throughout the entire season with the opportunity to rest only during the winter months. Vegetables are the most desired by customers of organic products. They require, however, much work by hand and machine (weeding, harvesting.) Most often these tasks are performed in one position for many hours at a time. Hiring workers seasonally is critical, but it is becoming more difficult to find good workers. With vegetables work is not reliant upon the weather – if you have committed to regular deliveries, you need to fulfil these and gather the ordered vegetables regardless of the weather, and complete this even if that means working into the night. It is critical to produce large amounts to sign a contact with large dealers and not fulfilling such commitments can ruin a farmer.

Deciding on keeping livestock, you are deciding on an all-year long regular work of moderate intensity. Livestock requires responsible and regular care and a regular daily schedule. Preparing your own feed for animals requires cooperation with the weather – there will be no good quality hay if semi-dried grass becomes wet once again. Animals are like children which never mature. You cannot leave them without care and it is necessary to take responsibility for them (for example, if they escape and cause damages). Destruction of an entire plantation of tomatoes due to pests did not impact me as much as the death of only one animal. With animals, few workers are needed, but they are needed throughout the entire year. The market for ecological meat in Poland is not organized.

I noticed also the advantages from buffer strips in between fields – they increase biodiversity as birds and insects can live there, they improve microclimate for cultivations (protecting them from wind which prevents soil desiccation and support the cultivated plants) and provide anti-wind shield. A rational forestry provides firewood which allows farm's self-sufficiency and a possibility to manage hard-to-reach space e.g. steep escarpments. It's easier for small farmsteads to keep diversity of stocking and cultivations.

Moreover, I experienced how much time, work and investment is necessary to develop a farmstead. Often only the third generation of farmers has satisfying benefits from the previous generation's effort.

### City versus countryside

Thanks to the internships at the farms I discovered also advantages and disadvantages of living in the countryside.

An undoubted advantage is the constant contact with nature and seeing its beauty. A certain luxury is the possibility to drink herbal infusions from your own garden and to consume your own fruits and vegetables. Working on a farm makes you move outdoors which helps to maintain health. You can feel the freedom of living far from neighbours and you can benefit from eco-friendly solutions such as solar panels, sewage treatment facilities, your own composter, etc.

From the other side as you would need to wait a long time for professional help, in the case of natural disasters, you need to count on yourself or on your neighbours. Nights are very dark, which may cause some people to feel uncomfortable. A local society is pretty closed and does not usually foster unusual hobbies. It's also difficult to find interesting ways for spending leisure time. You need to be aware of the need to drive to school, the city, and shops.

A countryside situated close to a big city has more advantages than disadvantages of the location. The parcels, however, are more expensive and smaller so you are surrounded by neighbours to deal with. They are mostly people escaping the city and know very little of living in a countryside which could cause conflicts as they are not aware of eco-friendly initiatives as having apiaries when the neighbour's kids are allergic to bees or do not accept an unpleasant smell coming from liquid herbal compost.

A hectic lifestyle, condensed development, anonymity, noise, light and air pollution, electrosmog, difficult access to good quality ecological food and no possibility to benefit from renewable energy are arguments against living in a city. However, it is easier to get help, a good job, find people with similar interests and pursue the last ones. My family and friends live in my hometown and I have already discovered how important to me is having a possibility to meet them.

### About me

Being a part of the course helped me appreciate my own family. I realized how much my grandparents taught me and how much my parents are helping me. I am also grateful for the fact that I was born and raised in a big city where I could easily develop my passions and broaden my horizons. Thanks to the course I realized that from one side I could be active and

take initiative, but also that I can resign when I know that others will manage a situation better than me.

I did not suspect I would give interviews and have speeches so many times and that I would translate an English lecture in spite of lack of confidence in my skills. I also did not assume I would sing so loudly and eagerly as I am a person who does not like her voice and if I sing than only in my room alone and for my own pleasure.

Thanks to the course I already know I do not want to be a slave of my passion, which means I do not want life where I would forget about my other needs, and being surrounded by the beauty of nature I would have no time to appreciate it. I would also not support initiatives not respecting a human-being.

I really need environment where I would be able to keep my personal borders. I am capable of being support for others only if I respect myself. I need challenges and the possibility to grow. Absolving me and making my life easier is making me weak. We need to be responsible for the initiatives we take. Hiring employees on your own farm leads to be taking responsibility of supporting their living.

There is nothing wrong in being sincere and reprimanding. Lack of reaction or hiding disapproval is way more harmful. It is difficult, but we need to learn to express our discontent in a way that does not offend the interested party.



The author in the carpenter's studio (Photo. Peter Stratenwerth)

Considering somebody invaluable is really penalizing and restraining. Every person is valuable and can teach us something new.

There is no one and only good way. There is no one and only valuable work. Every profession is useful to make our world a better place.

I do not know yet whether I will become an organic farmer once I finish the course, but it will be my conscious decision letting me avoid mistakes and disappointments.

JADWIGA PEREK – graduated from Garden Art program on University of Agriculture in Cracow, she was a participant in first course in Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów. Interested in phytotheraphy and healthy nutrition. Her great passion is dancing West Coast Swing.

### Agnieszka Makowska

Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów, Poland

### STUDENT'S NOTES



Yes, this text is not objective and lacks generalisation required by science. But in fact, it is not a scientific analyse, sociological text or evaluation report. It is reflection, my own and my colleagues' from Ecological Folk High School, written down during talks after first year of our studies. I wanted each thought in this text to be attached to its author. My colleagues' statements are mixed with my own, very personal reflections on my studies at our Folk High School.

Maybe there are no everyday problems in this text: that the lunch tasted bad or that a room-mate was annoying and I didn't want to talk with her on this day. But I wanted to show more of our thoughts about the idea. The idea of Folk High School and its practical implementation.

When I made a decision to start education at Ecological Folk High School, I did not know what a Folk High School was. For me it was just a form of informal education and place where I could acquire knowledge about agriculture. At the beginning I didn't even pay too much attention to the fact that I would need to devote most of the time to work on a farm somewhere in Poland. And yet I knew that it would require my time and engagement, so I faced the fact that I would need to quit my current job. Anyway, I chose the school in Grzybów mainly because that was the only one that offered a course in organic agriculture and I hoped to fulfil my dreams of studying it.

Already at the first meeting I understood that it is a totally different place, compared to those that I had known before. At the beginning, the perspective of spending three and a half weeks under one roof with strangers scared me a little. During the first days it turned out, however, that the experience opened me, inspired me and pleased me. I suddenly found myself in a place where I was surrounded by people who could share a lot with me. Becoming a student once again at the age of 40 I discovered that learning is one of the most important and wonderful experiences in one's life. Grzybów gave me a place and a community, fostering my will to study and learn from one another. Thus, at the same time, I discovered one of the most important principles of Folk High School.

Ola: The most important thing in our Folk High School is the master-student relationship. I can learn from people who have my respect and I see a great value in the ideas they pass on. Nobody is controlling me, there are no exams, I learn the way that best suits me. Ecological Folk High School offers a totally different system compared to what I knew from my former classic education.

Sebastian (course 1): The most important issue is the possibility to learn from masters. When we began education in Folk High School, we actually had no idea what we wanted to know, and now we can learn from masters, we can listen to them not only during lectures, but we can also work with them and live under one roof during meetings and internships.

Jola: Our teachers share their knowledge with us because they want to share it, it is their passion and a way of life. Teachers are open to discussion, and also – to criticism. There is no

place for *ex cathedra* statements nor for hierarchical relations between "a professor" and "a student". I have a feeling that we form a community and together with teachers we create a teaching program. For instance, additional classes on permaculture were organised on our request, even though initially they were not included in the program.



The first group of students at Ecological Folk High School during classes at organic farm owned by Mirosław Rojek

(Phot. Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth)

Nina: For me it is important that we can co-create our school and programme of consecutive meetings. I don't feel like a student, I feel that I am a partner for our teachers in mutual learning.

Mateusz: Folk High School has a unique character, it does not restrict its students by imposing an education program. We can change it and suggest new topics. Other schools do not give such opportunities. We are not given theories and statements top-down, therefore we have more space to act. Teachers inspire us to experience and improve knowledge independently. This approach helps me to develop myself freely.

Maciej: At the university the knowledge is passed on directly, just to memorize it, pass the exams and get the diploma. In Ecological Folk High School we have more independent work on the topic. Teachers do not push us to choose one specific theory or area of knowledge, we have to work on it by ourselves, but it gives us more chances for personal growth.

Joanna B.: The thing that differentiates folk high school is its cognitive process. First we get vivid information which inspires us to do the research in different areas and look for the answers to many questions: e.g. what really interest us. We also get some space where we can share our experiences. Emphasis on internships and direct contact with teachers-practitioners was a lacking element in my former educational experiences. Now I see that it gives me possibility to choose my own, individual path, and many possibilities to learn cooperation.

Ewa: For me folk high school is a place to learn about building community, relationships and cooperation in a group, which happens during our practical classes, teamwork and shared time during meetings.



Danuta Kuroń tells the students from group 2 about Common University in Teremiski (Phot. Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth)

I came here for a very specific knowledge, and also to check how I could deal with work on the field. It was supposed to be an exam if my ideas about villages and farmers' work aren't too much idealized. But it is impossible to restrict the time spent in Folk High School to gaining agricultural knowledge. Our community life during meetings, internships at farms, where we need to adjust to the day rhythm of our hosting family, require a lot from us, but they also teach us a lot.

I started once again to discover long forgotten questions, engage into discussion not only about agriculture, but often also about fundamental human issues, to fulfil myself in artistic projects. Suddenly I started to try things, about which I formerly just shyly though – picking herbs and wild fruits, felting, carpentry or vegetable and fruit fermentation. And I don't have to be perfect at it, I try, make mistakes, but what's important – I let myself do this and thanks to this – I do not give up.

Jadwiga (course 1): In my opinion people who are already self-aware will take the most advantage from this form of education. A person who does not know what she wants from life, who she is, could get lost in our Folk High School. And if you already know who you are, if you know what pleases you, you can name your emotion and desires, then in my opinion you will use this time much better.

Jola: And I think that also people who want to find the answer to questions who they are, if it is the way they want to go, can take advantage here. For instance, internships give an opportunity to check how we really feel living on a farm, with everyday monotony and everyday duties. If the thought about life on a farm isn't too idealized and too idyllic. I think that at least some of us are still looking for the answer which way to go. I still remember Ewa's words, she said that it is not important that we all become organic farmers – if somebody after these two years states that he or she wants to be and astronaut, then she will be happy that they have found their own way.

Emilia: For me Ecological Folk High School is often a big challenge. I came here with a specific goal which was a course in organic agriculture. I was surprised and sometimes it was too much for me that so often we were talking about community, personal development, growing up. After all I am an adult. Probably my former educational path made me think that "school" means sitting at a desk, taking notes carefully during lectures, passing exams, going to the next level. Everything according to a top-down, unchangeable plan. And now it is a big challenge for me not to sit at a desk, not to get all answers at a time, let oth-

ers interrupt, change the course of the class, including suggestions that were not planned earlier, or that seem to be not necessary or weird.

Joanna B.: After several years of individual path, staying under one roof with a group of strongly individual people is a big experiment for me: how I will cope with it, what my inhibitions are, where my borders are, when something starts to annoy me, how much I can face physically and mentally during our very intense meetings. Our Folk High School in form of community which we create during two years offers me a possibility to get to know myself through getting to know others and noticing differences between us.

Do we still look for sense of life in our adult life, do we develop our personality, do we form our thinking and independency? According to the idea of folk high schools, a man develops himself, educates and learns his whole life. After all in each period of your life you can start something new, change something. Many of us still try to form our lives, to ensure that they are more creative, we are opening ourselves to new challenges.

In Ecological Folk High School, at least to a minimal extent, I can check if the next change will bring me what I am looking for. People – both: teachers and my colleagues, influence my intellectual and emotional development, inspiring and motivating me to deepen my practical knowledge about agriculture, acquiring new skills, cooperating with them.

For the first time in my life everything is happening so fast. After all the intensity of what I can experience in Folk High School is huge. Going to the first meeting I didn't know much, and after it and after first months of internship I felt that I had learnt and experienced a lot. When I started my internship at my chosen farm, the most important thing to achieve was to prove that I was capable of doing this, that the work and monotony of everyday work would not overwhelm me. Of course it was also important to acquire specific knowledge and skills, but the most important thing was to test myself.

Bartek: Due to the form of learning – everyday work on the farm and constant contact with people, the internship is a very intense period. It sometimes overwhelmed me. When you experience something intensively, it can be very tiring, but on the other hand, when you learn how to work living in one specific farm for few months, then it is a very valuable exam. You can really answer a question if this is the thing that you want to do for the rest of your life.

Jola: For me this intensity is very good. Thanks to this I managed to build a network with people who have similar philosophy and worldview in a relatively short time. I know now that in the future I will be able to call them and ask for their experience or solution to a specific problem. And it applies not only to people from my group, but also farmers that we get to know. Ecological Folk High School and Ewa are a pass that opens many doors for us.

Joanna B.: One important thing that came up during the internship was the generation gap in understanding roles of different sexes and hierarchy in relationships that depend on the age. It was quite easy to integrate with the family I was living with, but still, there were situations, when some relationships or a way of communication were unacceptable for me. For instance, I had to bring the meal for the men straight to the table. Normally, as you can imagine, I don't do such things. This generation gap in understanding the role of women and men was an interesting observation for me. I could experience it only because I went for the internship to older farmers.

Agnieszka R.: For me the internship was quite a difficult experience. I sometimes had the impression that the farmers who accepted me as an intern didn't really know what they were agreeing to. We were entangled in situations, mainly connected with family life, that might have been awkward for us. I think that every year the farmers taking part in the programme of Ecological Folk High School will be more and more experienced in working with interns.

Mateusz: Yes, no matter how well you would feel in the house, taking part in the family life can be awkward. I would rather not take part in many situations, e.g. not witness family arguments, even though they are an inherent part of everyday life.

Nina: I have experienced living in two farms. I was lucky and both families were really open to strangers in their own houses. We could talk openly about problems and my expectations. And I just normally took part in their life. For me it was really interesting to watch farmers in their everyday relations. But of course everybody needs some private space where you can be alone and isolate from everything.

Sebastian (course 2): I had an opportunity to do my internships with three different farmers. These kind of situations, better and worse, just happen, but I don't think it is bad. It is exactly the same as in real life and human relationships. Of course, there were moments when I felt irritated by the fact of not getting well with the farmer, but now, when I see this in retrospective, it is just an element of life. The most important is what we are going to take from the internship, and not the moments when we couldn't get along with the farmer. In each of the places I learned something, that time gave me a lot of thoughts and now all those good and bad moments have great value for me.

I sowed, planted, weeded, harvested. I processed, packed, sold. I fed, led to the pasture, milked. But of course I know that Ecological Folk High School won't transform me into a real farmer during two years' time. All the farmers, practitioners whom I have met in Folk High School repeat that the agriculture is a very specific field. You acquire the knowledge you need your whole life, all the time learning something new. All the time you have to cooperate with nature, and it does not always respond according to our plans. It has its own rhythm which we should learn to read and humbly defer. Very often we got irritated that there are no simple answers and formulas on working in the field, with plants and animals. We would like to get unambiguous formulas and solutions for agricultural success. And every time we required it from our teachers, we received the same answer: in agriculture unambiguous answers do not exist.

Bartek: I feel that after those two years I won't have enough knowledge to call myself a fully educated farmer. In my opinion our course is based on basic issues and I will still need to learn a lot from my own mistakes. On the other hand, if I hadn't got to Ecological Folk High School, I would not know where to start. Here I get a possibility to look more widely at agriculture, see different farms, specializing in different crops or farm animals. And this enables me at least for now to be sure of what I don't want to do.

Kasia: In my case, I feel that Ecological Folk High School prepares me for work on a farm. I came here with a plan: I want to work with goat husbandry and food processing. I have a farm which has already started to work. In Ecological Folk High School I have a possibility to check what I want to do and to get practical skills.

Mateusz: I remember when Peter while talking about a school of biodynamical agriculture from which he has graduated stressed that 4 years of studying agriculture is definitely not enough. That is why I treat Ecological Folk High School as a seed that has been sowed. Now it is all up to me how I will take care of this. I think it is a very good method – I got the most important guidelines, and from now I will look for more by myself.

Agnieszka P.: There are no two identical pieces of ground and no two identical places. Agriculture is a very specific field. We could travel 10 years more to different farms, and then get a piece of land and suddenly it would turn out that we need to learn everything anew. That is why Ecological Folk High School is a place which is rather giving me courage, encourages me to be open for different possibilities than specifically prepares me to become a farmer. I used to live in the countryside where I had a few hectares of land and several possibilities to make use of them. Still I didn't know how to start working on it. At the moment I have enough courage to experiment and start working.

Jola: From Ecological Folk High School we got courage to act. We hadn't had in-depth knowledge but we decided to till, sow and harvest in our farm. If we had been all alone, we would have never taken such a challenge right at the beginning. We would have been too scared, it would have overwhelmed us.

Agnieszka R.: Ecological Folk High School showed me different directions about which I hadn't even thought before. Of course I had some ideas about my life in the countryside,



Classes about influence of tillage on the soil – with a sense of humour (Phot. Anna Sarzalska)

how it would be organised, but only now can I see that I can join many things and they can create entirety. This awareness is the most important thing for me. The knowledge itself is of course also important, but the most important is that Ecological Folk High School gave me the basics to prepare a plan which I want to follow.

Sebastian (course 2): For me Ecological Folk High School is an incredible idea because what counts here is not only the organic agriculture, but broadly understood ecology. And it is not bad if any of us won't have own farm in the future. We can act for ecology also in a different way, by raising awareness amongst people, even in our closest neighbourhood. Constant dripping wears the stone, and thanks to us and through us the knowledge can spread over the world. I would wish that there were many other initiatives like Ecological Folk High School.

The first year has passed. I'm finishing it with a conviction that I have found an important place and people who will have huge impact on my life. Those people and this place are an important part of my education in Ecological Folk High School, they inspire me to act, help to look at me from a different perspective, at my disadvantages, but also to appreciate my advantages. I discovered almost spiritual relation with the world of animals. I love taking care, touching and talking to cows, goats, hens. A wonderful discovery was for me the awareness of connections within the world of nature, that a handful of soil contains million creatures, social systems and alternative worlds.

Agnieszka R.: The thing that had the biggest influence on me during this first year at Ecological Folk High School is the approach to the soil. Our classes about the soil and almost metaphysical approach of our teachers to the ground opened my mind for totally new things, about which I hadn't earlier thought at all. This new view on nature, structure of plants, their functions, seeing the unity within the world of nature were a shocking experience for me. It is also crucial that I have a place and people to talk about it.

Mateusz: Ecological Folk High School has really changed my perception on what the agriculture is. I have totally different outlook on my life in the countryside now. I look at it more humbly, but I also cannot imagine a different way of life for me anymore. My life is often full of chaos, and here I learn to be more systematic and scrupulous. Family, animals in the farm, it all requires responsibility each day.

Ewa: Yes, I think that we a lot learn to be humble. It is necessary in agriculture. You work with the ground, in specific conditions that are not always dependent on you. Nature, which is changing, teaches me to have more distance to my ambitions, more acceptance and peace. This year was very inspirational for me, it gave me sense of sensibility of my actions and certainty in following my chosen path. I got more power and courage. I could also get many practical skills, about which I had dreamed for a while, but I lacked courage or time.

Emilia: At the moment there is one valuable thing that I can name given to me by Ecological Folk High School. It is a place, community which gave me the possibility to follow my passion. For a long time organic agriculture was very important to me, but I didn't know how I could make my dream come true. Even though I travelled to many places, I was in Germany and Switzerland, where I got to know schools of biodynamical agriculture, I still lacked land where I could sow my seed, so that it could grow and sprout. Like dandelion seeds spread by the wind to different places. I waited several years and finally in Ecological Folk High School I got such a ground, I have people, schedule, knowledge, specific place where I can make my dreams come true.

Sebastian (course 2): Our conventions, classes and internships – all this sowed a seed in me and now I know that when the right moment comes, it will sprout. All the information and skills acquired here are valuable for me. I mostly enjoy simple things, e.g. that I learned to milk goats, mow with a scythe. Maybe in the future I will harvest my land in a more archaic way, without maximisation of profit, saving as much sustainability as possible. For that reason I'm glad we had all classes on crafts, felting, candle making, it is what will be needed in my simple life.

Ola: Finally I'm doing what I like. It gives me a lot of enjoyment. Everything started to fit in the best way, just like jigsaw puzzles, creating something like a path which I know I should follow. I acquired a lot of courage and self-confidence, a lot of acceptance. I noticed a lot of possibilities that I want to use and implement. Fear that I had miraculously disappeared and I am confident that I will get everything I want to have. Because the only limitations are those inside of me, and I can fight with them.

Krzysztof: For me people are the most important. Ecological Folk High School gave me a possibility to get to know people with similar worldview, approach to life and nature.

Jadwiga (course 1): Slowly I understand more and more what life is about.

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For the farmers, by whom I took my internship, the first passing year with Ecological Folk High School was also a new experience. Often very hard, but as they say, interesting.

I talked with Bogdan Chara and Joanna and Frank Dubler.

Why did you agree to get involved in Ecological Folk High School as farmers-educators?

Bogdan: I grew up on a traditional farm and I learned agriculture from my parents. For 35 years I have managed the farm inherited from my parents, I constantly invest in it and develop it, which ensures me that I am a good farmer and I can and should transfer my skills to my heirs and also other people who want to acquire knowledge needed to manage a traditional and organic farm.

Joanna: Together with Frank we graduated from agricultural schools in Switzerland – Frank from vocational school, me – from biodynamical agriculture school. In Switzerland there is a very long tradition of practice-based learning, when a student, while working, learns from a master. That is why when we heard that an idea of organisation of such a school for farmers in Poland aroused, we naturally wanted to be included in the project. Especially as in Poland there is no other possibility to learn agriculture through practice. And it is impossible to learn how to plough or sow by sitting at a desk. Simultaneously we think that after several decades of practising agriculture and many years of managing the farm, we can transfer our knowledge to others.

### What does it mean to teach new farmers?

Joanna: During the internship we can show what we do ourselves, how our farm functions, also the trial and error method that we have developed. We can teach to observe nature because it is crucial in a farmer's life. We can give students the possibility to experience everyday life of the farm – sometimes chaos, sometimes order, improvisation, stress, getting over your limits. In the work on a farm you can expect everything and you have to be able to cope with that. And it is impossible to learn it theoretically, you have to experience it.

Bogdan: The student of Ecological Folk High School usually gets to the farm full of enthusiasm. Our role is to cool it down a bit and help to find the talent for agriculture because not everybody has it; some of us have talent to exact sciences, others to humanistic and artistic studies, some to mechanics, and some to agriculture... Beside the talent you need to like this kind of work, have theoretical and practical background and also have money to set up your own farm. The capacity to participate in all works on a farm is necessary if you seriously want to work in the area of agriculture.

Did you have any vision about this internship? Did any of your own experiences in education help you during the internship for students of Ecological Folk High School?

Bogdan: It quickly turned out that it is impossible to stick to one vision or regulations initially elaborated with Ecological Folk High School. Each student is different and requires different approach, as each work on the farm and each day in the field is different. Sometimes there is a lot of work, the other time – there is not enough work, sometimes there is time for theoretical classes, and sometimes there is no power and willingness even for those. That is why flexibility during the internships is needed: students decide by themselves about the rhythm of the work and rest. I think it was quite a good idea because without the pressure of time they engage in work more willingly, and in total they work more and therefore get more experience.



Second group of students of Ecological Folk High School after classes with the organic agriculture pioneer, Mieczysław Babalski

(Phot. Anna Sarzalska)

I still value conversations with my parents a lot. Since my childhood I have had the possibility to participate in many agricultural works, helping them. It was for me a practical learning of agriculture. I try to transfer my knowledge and skills to my students in a similar way. When we start new work, I explain and show what and how it should be done. After that I leave them alone with the machines, but of course I stay nearby in case they need me. Theoretical classes in the evening planned in the internship's programme should only complement it.

Frank: We have seen a great value in it because we as adult people took a similar educational path. It enables us to understand the situation of the intern and our role during the internship. We weren't born in the countryside, we had to learn agriculture, just like any other field of knowledge. We experienced it first-hand how huge this knowledge is, how much time and possibility to acquire practical skills is needed. My master would repeat that the minimal time to learn anything is seven years. The students from Ecological Folk High School have only two years, that's why they need to decide quickly what they are looking for. And this is not easy, especially for people from the cities, who until now had no deeper experience in agriculture.

Is the programme proposed by Ecological Folk High School a good form of learning for adult people who come already with quite a big experience, both privately and professionally?

Bogdan: In my opinion it is the best form of education for such people. I would also like children of farmers to get such a school if they are preparing for taking over a farm. Contact with experienced farmers and work on good farms can bring only good results.

The interns become a part of the farm, they try to help in everyday work. Sometimes it works well, sometimes it does not. Interns change a bit the rhythm on the farm, which can be hard to accept by the hosts. The hardest is work with animals, but I think it is the crucial part because the traditional farm cannot work without animals. The intern who doesn't like work with animals, or is afraid of them, should really think if he or she really wants to become a farmer.

Joanna: If someone wants to become a farmer, in my opinion has no other possibility but learning through practice. You can study agriculture for years to no avail if you don't acquire practical skills. It is not possible to replace it with anything else. You have to experience it, work through the whole cycle, see how different farms function, and Ecological Folk High School gives that possibility.

Frank: As educators we of course need to take into account that adult people have their limitations. There is a great challenge ahead of us and interns – living together under one roof for a few months. Not everybody feels good with that. Sometimes some of the works on the farms seem to be useless to the interns, for example chopping wood – what can an intern learn from that? But in our opinion all the works that the intern is able to do on the farm are valuable for him or her and we are trying to show it. It is important to find golden mean, accommodate the rhythm of the farm with the one left to the interns, so that they could accommodate the whole spectrum of works on the farm and time for theoretical studies.

What was the greatest challenge for you connected with the arrival of the interns from Ecological Folk High School to your farm?

Frank: We feared most that strangers would come to our home. After all we didn't know who would it be, if we manage to communicate, what they would expect from us. It is a very complicated situation for both sides if somebody who comes to acquire knowledge and experience doesn't know exactly what he or she expects. We didn't know also how to plan works on our farm, we couldn't foresee in advance how much students would engage into the rhythm of the farm and into the everyday work. We had to create conditions which enabled all of us to keep our privacy, to have a chance to be left alone, a place to which one can withdraw.

Bogdan: A hard and new problem for me was a new person in my house and farm. It is for me a kind of limitation, you have to have more self-control, and the house stops being an asylum because there is a stranger in it, even if the person is liked by the hosts. Interns sometimes engage very much into the family life, they judge the hosts and try to impose their own style. They treat the stay on the farm as an adventure, forgetting that it is just an internship. It all leads to hosts being tired of interns. To avoid it, hosts and interns should always keep each other at a distance.

How do you evaluate the first passing year of the internships? What most valuable did the interns get? Did you learn something in that time?

Frank: Internships is not only an experience in agriculture, but also an everyday experience. It is hard to separate agriculture from your private life. You are not a clerk who closes the door to the office at a specific hour. That is why I think that the internship is a very holistic experience, just like agriculture is. You experience everyday duties connected with farm management, but you can also experience for example being in a family. Internship is not only work in the field, but also evening talks at the dinner table.

Joanna: Thanks to the internship I could look at my farm through a stranger's eyes, eyes of a person who comes from outside, eyes of a novice. Students' questions made me think. Suddenly different senses opened.

Bogdan: I had a chance to remind myself a lot from my knowledge. Normally we act routinely, and here we got the possibility to organize all that we know anew. Also, in a sense, this experience made me more sensitive to problems of other people and we realised that some professions and skills are getting forgotten and we have moral duty to save as much as we can through transferring our knowledge and skills to others.

AGNIESZKA MAKOWSKA – After ten years of work in a non-governmental organisation and implementation of developmental projects in Russia and Central Asia, she decided to start practising agriculture and to fulfil her dreams from childhood. In 2016, she became a student of the second course of Ecological Folk High School. She co-manages a small agricultural farm "Ekopoletko" in Stryszów in Małopolska region. She is a co-founder of Nyeleni Food Sovereignty Movement Poland.

# HOW TO TEACH ORGANIC FARMING IN "FHS STYLE"?

### How did I learn to teach?

I am born in the sleepy suburb of Basle in Switzerland near the German and French border and my parents came form villages happy to have left the limits of poor agrarian life at their family homes. They did not have the chance to go to university and of course they hoped that their children would take the chance to choose an academic career.

But I was very early already interested in agriculture, went to the Alps with my grandfather during summer holidays and did free practices at vineyards in autumn, which my parents did not understand at all. So we met somehow at a cease-fire, I went to agricultural university. After three semesters I could no longer close my eyes to that false compromise: the agronomic studies so far did not relate to farming at all. I quit the course and went to do practise on a biodynamic farm. I had met this farmer in my home region and he wanted to take over a new farm in the French speaking part. I was pleased to hear that he obviously needs somebody to help him to overcome this first year of change.

Looking back I have to state that this was a wise decision and probably my last opportunity to "follow the heart". Abstract knowledge about agriculture already choke to much my

Abstract knowledge about agriculture already choke to much my open mind toward practise. I was already to much working with the head and had difficulties to "just do it" and perceive what was going around me when working with soil, plant and animals.

open mind toward practise. I was already to much working with the head and had difficulties to "just do it" and perceive what was going around me when working with soil, plant and animals. I have really to thank this farmer that he thought me with patience not always to start with what I meant to know

about something but just let me fall into the work and develop an active presence towards the world. Examples? I was for instance mowing hay with all my prudence that a student should have, I tried to control the work of the mower, the cut height, velocity and output, but I was simply not able to hear that the machine started to squeak because some screws loosened and finally broke before I was aware of. How was it possible that I did not see that a cow stood in fever with hanging ears, not eating nor chewing and I passed behind her without noticing anything?

Five and an half years I took myself to develop my own picture of what is working and what is agricultural practise. It gave me an important background that I would never ever miss today. I was only able to go back to university because I had this basic knowledge that made me sure of what we talk in agriculture.

It was during my agricultural practise that I discovered my interest for teaching. It made me happy to introduce people to organic and biodynamic agriculture. Therefore I joined in this time the only existing informal course for Biodynamics in Switzerland and decided after to deepen my knowledge in agriculture and teaching by returning to studies and added a formal pedagogical training for agronomist to it.

I suppose I was a much better teacher with this practical background later as if I would only have done agricultural studies without knowing the basics of organic and biodynamic agriculture practise. Another aspect I consider as very important for my teaching skills, was the chance to learn agriculture with that farmer I was during my first two years. Fritz Baumgartner was a warm-hearted person, straight and honest in his work and open minded for development, culture and research. He was an experienced, even wise farmer, which was consulted by many other young or old farmers and project managers. He always took me with him when he went to advise somebody or when he was teaching biodynamic agriculture somewhere. He never judged anybody, he always gave everybody a second chance to address his or her issue and he was always ready to reconsider questions that came up again. He taught me patience and interest towards students, young people, which he always saw ahead in someway of himself, as they were born after him, more in the future and therefore richer somehow in culture and common experience than himself even if they did not know it, could not show it now, nor even behaved like this. There was always respect in his teaching or advice.

It always kept his noble example in the back of my mind when I started to teach in official farm schools in Switzerland, later in organic courses and in the Swiss Biodynamic farm school. Over 23 years I am now teaching in this field and Fritz Baumgartner, the wise old farmer, is still present in my thoughts.

Biodynamic farm school of Switzerland is a dual vocational course combining 4 years of practise on Biodynamic DEMETER farms in Switzerland and additional block courses (around 2000 lectures) over the whole period mainly during winter time.

The farm students are busy in their farms that they have chosen for at least one year to work and when they go to school from time to time they have first to adapt again to sitting in the school benches and sitting still to listen. They are full of recent experiences that they have gathered on the farms and they want step by step to reflect what they learnt. Agricultural practise should, if school works well, be completed by the school curriculum.

### How to teach organic agriculture in vocational training

Here my main findings about how to teach agriculture in vocational training today:

### 1. Drawing the whole picture

It is not enough to bring a lot of knowledge even if it is connected to organic production. For me the important thing is to transmit "connected" knowledge, to show facts, procedures in the whole picture of the agricultural practise. That means that I try to show things from dif-

ferent sides and levels like we walk around a tree and describe it from different perspectives. I try to bring additional bits of knowledge into the whole picture. One could say that I try to bring knowledge into an "ecological" environment. If I add another lesson of teaching I will not double the facts, I will

To draw the whole picture means for me also to connect practise and theory. Questions on what this new piece of knowledge makes with us, culturally, in our society and for our future spiritual development, are important and need to be addressed.

only show additional insights of the same that make things become more vivid, living. I try to sort out knowledge in a way that connections become visible and information get a depth, that knowledge does not stay only on the surface. To draw the whole picture means for me also to connect practise and theory. Questions on what this new piece of knowledge makes with us, culturally, in our society and for our future spiritual development, are important and need to be addressed. To draw the whole picture makes me visible and understandable for the student. If I am successful drawing the whole picture, it makes also me authentic as a teacher.

### 2. Teaching on all levels

Drawing the whole picture does also mean not to remain in intellectual explanations only. I try also to change levels of apprehension. To understand with the "head" is one thing, probably the easiest access but also the most superficial one. Things cannot stay in one's mind a long time, as they are soon covered with newer elements that take your attention. Therefore

it has to be taken by the "heart" if it should come closer to my mind. What I experienced, is, that students mostly "listen with their heart" but most the time teachers do not teach with the

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heart: "This is important for or against me" is the message if you teach with the heart. Organic agriculture is a very living field for teaching with your heart: Do things have to do with sustainable agriculture or not, is an important question for the student to have the possibility to find the place for this piece of knowledge that I teach. Facts seem to be

not interesting or important just for the sake of themselves, they become only essential with this "heart" aspect.

A good example for "teaching with the heart" is this story: I once had to teach students about manuring with fresh manure of cows or compost. We learnt a lot about the advantages of compost. But today I had to inform them that compost can cause also an accumulation of phosphorus in garden soils because other nutrients often get leached out before they arrive in the soil. The students were "not amused" by these complications. They thought to have understood that animal manure is good for the soil. Now they should have a closer look and

Another level of learning is "doing", to do things that you have to learn. In my teaching I always try to include practical work. Not only talking about examining soils but also doing it during the courses.

differentiate about movements of elements in the composting process. Where to put this information now?

But everything changed when we referred to a similar case in food science. We were asking ourselves if an accumulation of phos-

phorus in the soil could be harmful for people. Phosphorus has been in question to support Alzheimer illness when consumed in high concentrations in processed food. Everybody agreed that phosphorus should not be brought in into the ground in lager quantities for food production if not needed. The heart was speaking: You never know!

Another level of learning is "doing", to do things that you have to learn. In my teaching I always try to include practical work. Not only talking about examining soils but also doing it during the courses. My favourite activity in soil teaching is the "spade analysis". This method is simple, as no more tools are needed than the spade and your active senses. The feed back of my students is always very positive when we have been outside, even when it was cold, when we break open the soil of a arable field or a pasture and when we put our nose deep into the fresh soil. This way soil science much better adapted than only by listening to dry theory.

#### 3. Exemplary teaching

Another pillar of my teaching is that I always try to stay essential with what I teach. There are so many things that we could share in a lesson, but some things seems to be more important than others. Being essential means that I have to set priorities and sort out the decorative material. I prefer to work on real practical examples than to install a systematic overview. A good teacher for how to be essential, is Martin Wagenschein a German science educator and professor at pedagogic university of Tübingen. In his book "Verstehen lernen" he showed that we should orient on practical issues, problems, questions instead of creating "storage" - knowledge (things that can be filled and stored in boxes like an emergency supply). He created an important picture for me how we can learn to understand the world: If we can understand an essential example in all its depths and connections, which he calls "exemplary teaching", we can use the example on which we spend our learning time like a pillar on which the student can build by its own a bridge from one example to the other. There is no need to teach the full broadness of knowledge (and not having enough time for anything) to make adults capable to learn. It seems to be more effective to stay on an exemplary issue until the students have the chance to move with it on their own. This will give them the selfconfidence, the motivation to explore and understand other fields.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> M. Wagenschein, Verstehenlehren. Genetisch – Sokratisch – Exemplarisch, Beltz, Weinheim 1968.



Reto Ingold giving classes
(Fot. Anna Sarzalska)

# How does the folk high school pedagogy fit to my experiences in teaching agriculture?

I found the folk high school "ideals" very close to how I want to teach. "Learning by doing" was already mentioned before, but also to make content "living" is what I try by "telling the whole story", by teaching in an essential exemplary way.

It is important to install a non-competitive environment in the classroom to allow the student to develop self-confidence in exploring an issue and to ask his or her own questions. This is for me part of the empowerment towards self-governance. In agricultural schools I often met two ways how tolerance can be blocked and must be in the focus of the teacher:

One is the arrogance of knowledge! Students are normally very much aware that knowledge from the teacher must not be useful and practical knowledge for daily life. But to pass a test it is crucial to adopt the teacher's lessons. But is it really important? I met teachers that make you feel how important their knowledge is and that "silly" questions show the ignorance of the uninformed student. Perhaps within the lessons! But often in real life this "knowledge" can only be used to keep "simple farmers" away and to create distance. As a teacher I want to create an atmosphere where every student with his or her background is unique and bring a fruitful addition to the discussion in the class.

The other dragon is the arrogance of practise. And I have to say frankly that I experienced this one much more often than the intellectual snobbism. Sometimes I faced the feeling that students coming from farms where not open at all for "a good and helpful theory". They want you to recognize that they know everything from practise and that theory is much to far away from "real" practise! Outsiders and students, which do not come out of agriculture, do not even dare to ask a question because practitioners laugh and call them ignorant. This is not helpful for adult learning. There must grow a mutual interest from both sides to overcome this gap, which sometimes is not easy because of group dynamics in the classroom (Oxford debate where participants have to take over the role of the other side, can help!). As a teacher I have to support the learning community by mutual recognition and search to culture the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> K.K. Ægidius, *School for Life concept – objectives, values and methods*, [in:] M. Byczkowski, T. Maliszewski, E. Przybylska (eds), *FHS – school for life*, Kashubian Folk High School, Wieżyca 2003, pp. 246–248.

open discussion between all individuals in the learning group. If this can be installed a synergy between inside and outside knowledge, between practitioners and experts can help all.

In organic and biodynamic agriculture we depend very much on this synergy, because traditional practise is on one hand the source to overcome misled newer "chemical" knowledge and on the other hand also the trap in which the farmers are caught and cannot develop creative distance to innovate new ways of farming.

If we change during the classes from studying in theory to practise, to "doing it" in practise together, we can also create an living interaction between us, between students and teachers, between experts and farmers which offers much more possibilities to learn than only in the classroom. This seems to me very much integrated in the folk high school concept. In folk high schools it seems to be an addressed issue that we can have different roles. In one subject I am a teacher, in another I will be a student. This can be the case from older to younger (sometimes our farm students are older than their teaching farmers), but also from teacher to farmer (in the classroom I lead the learning process, on the farm it could be the farming student). Often in vocational training there is a lot of new impulses coming into the group if roles can change along life experience of the participants.

I am sure that the openness we create and train successfully between us, will also be applied later by the participants outside of the classroom. I believe that we arise this way global awareness out of our local examples. I support Grundtvig's approach that the learners needs has to be addressed (humans first) in the classroom, that we cannot separate ourselves to much from the learning subject. We are always part of what we teach; this is what I called "to draw the whole picture".

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# **GIVING LIFE DIRECTION**

# THE LANDVOLKSHOCHSCHULE NIEDERALTEICH: ENCOUNTERS, REFLECTION AND AWARENESS-RAISING IN RURAL AREAS

# Brief history of the development of educational work and "long courses"

The Niederalteich Rural Folk High School (Landvolkshoch-schule – LVHS) was founded in 1950 in Englburg near Tittling in the Bavarian Forest. The school was established in this form thanks to the efforts of the former youth priest and later Deacon Eduard Pletl. At the time, the goal of the educational work was: personal development by preparing young people for their responsibilities in the church, politics and society.

The first courses for men and women begin in the year of the school's foundation. Construction of the school in Niederalteich gets under way in 1958 on a piece of land owned by the Benedictine Abbey. The Niederalteich Catholic Rural Folk High School is inaugurated on September 13, 1959; its patron is St. Gunther. The Rural Folk High School exists in both places until 1971. The women's courses are held in Englburg, the courses for men in Niederalteich. The courses, called "long courses", are 4 weeks long before Christmas and 6 weeks long after Christmas. The long courses are extended to 8 weeks in 1962. The first 12-week course starts in 1969.

An extension is built in Niederalteich with room for 72 overnight guests in 1971. The LVHS completely relocates to Niederalteich in 1972. Year-round courses and conferences are expanded in the 1970s: rural women's days, education days for senior citizens and arts and crafts weekends are now offered throughout the whole year.



"Sculpture of Saint Niklaus von Flüe "Brother Klaus", Patron of the Catholic Rural Youth Movement and the Rural Adult Catholic Movement, in the courtyard of LVHS Niederalteich © LVHS Niederalteich

In 1978 the arts and crafts courses are considerably expanded and priority is given to the issues of environmental protection and ecology in the school's educational work. During this time, the 12-week long main courses have a high rate of attendance (40 participants). In the 1980s educational work focuses heavily on encouraging people to be politically and socially active. In 1994, a department for village development is newly created and the "regional cuisine" project launched. Numerous renovations are carried out, extensions added and the capacity for overnight accommodation steadily increased. The education program is continuously expanded and reaches up to 100 courses per year.

The school currently has a capacity of 85 beds in single, double and dormitory-style rooms. There are 5 seminar rooms available for groups of between 12 and 130 people.

# Self-image, profile and program today

The Niederalteich Rural Folk High School sees itself as a place for encounters, reflection and awareness-raising in rural areas. Education today focuses on:

- personal development and education for life
- faith and spiritual life
- health and soul
- family and partnership
- parents' school
- art and creativity
- community and togetherness in the village
- agriculture and life on the farm
- Creation and ecological practices

All of these areas bring together the personal and religious-spiritual dimension, the experience of community and broadening one's personal horizons. At the school, people experience their "human vocation" and "Christian vocation" both personally and collectively. In projects

ALL OF THESE AREAS BRING TOGETHER THE PERSONAL AND RELIGIOUS-SPIRITUAL DIMENSION, THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY AND BROADENING ONE'S PERSONAL HORIZONS.

that deal with sustainable regional development and environmental education, we project a clear image with our Christian values (and we are also sought-after and recognized for these values).

In recent years two courses come to the fore that offer the opportunity to receive a certificate in the end:

In the area "faith and spiritual life" there is a strong demand for the training course "Pilgerwegbegleiter/in" (pilgrim path guide). The participants learn how to organize and conduct walks on one of the pilgrim paths in Bavaria and surrounding areas. They find out, which paths, topics and format fits to their personality, spirituality and profile. The course consists of three modules that offer a wide range of contentual ideas and useful methodical impulses.

In the area "Creation and ecological practices" the certification course "Kräuterpädagogik" (herb education) has become a big hit. So far, more than 100 herb educators have been trained who meet each other regularly for further training and exchange.

Basic elements of the course are

- Discover, identify and collect local wild herbs,
- Overview on ingredients and active substances of local wild herbs,
- Ethno-botanic knowledge (traditional usage of indigenous wild herbs),
- Plant symbolism as bearer of cultural-historical and Christian orientation in legends, myths, stories, customs, art, architecture and the course of the seasons,
- Learn how to create a herbarium,
- Learn how to organize and conduct herb walks,
- Recognize and deepen one's own relationship with nature through creative games, exercises, literary texts, meditation and music.

To receive the certificate in the end, the participants have to take a written and oral exam.



Course for herb educators
©LVHS Niederalteich

The LVHS is still intended to be an educational center "for ordinary people from rural areas", for people who work in agriculture, from villages, from local politics and from the parishes in the region. The issues and questions that concern this target group are also raised in the LVHS. For many years and decades, they have gained many new insights, had positive collective experiences, experienced the church and have found reinforcement and support for their individual responsibilities and activities in their own families, in the church and in society.

The most important aspect for the groups of guests is the Christian atmosphere which is evident in the hospitality of the people working at the school, in the facilities and design of the rooms, in additional services and the consistent respect for creation and farming (including regional cuisine).

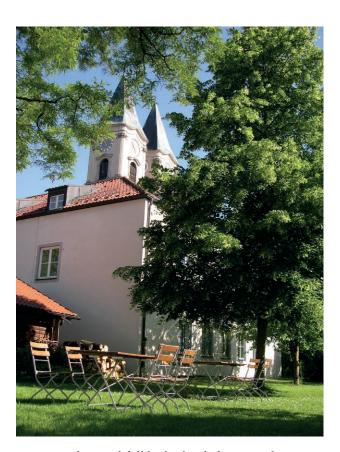


Joint service for guests of LVHS Niederalteich
© LVHS Niederalteich

# Ecology and sustainability

As early as 1978, the LVHS incorporated the subjects of ecology and environmental protection in its educational work. Encouraged by political currents in the Federal Republic of Germany (1983, the Greens in the Bundestag), the peace movement (in response to the Cold War), the "conciliatory process" of the churches for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, the people responsible took the opportunity to look at these issues in more depth. For the first time, issues such as structural change in agriculture were addressed and alternative models for agriculture like organic farming discussed. For many incumbent political forces, this was already too much and they labelled the LVHS as "green".

But the LVHS remained true to its principles and began to focus consistently on ecology. The themes were reflected in the educational work and at agricultural and environmental conferences, but were also specifically put into practice at the school. The goal of the "regional cuisine" project, launched in 1994, was to supply regional and seasonal fair trade products to educational centers and institutions in the Passau diocese. A total of 18 institutions were involved in the project. Many of the centers continue to uphold some of these principles. The goal is to pursue eco-friendly business practices as much as possible. The LVHS today buys a majority of its food from regional, seasonal and organic farmers and it goes without saying that it buys fair trade products.



Basilica and folkhighschool close together

©LVHS Niederalteich

Courses on how to build solar panels and wooden houses looked at alternatives in the use of renewable energy, ecological construction and insulation materials. Regular lectures and informational events that deal with environmental issues have become standard at the LVHS.

The LVHS uses almost no energy from fossil fuels as it buys green electricity, gets heat from the wood chip heating plant of the Niederalteich monastery and operates its own solar thermal system.

#### Outlook

Under the motto "Giving Life Direction", the educational work of the Niederalteich Rural Folk High School aims to give people encouragement, to help them tackle new challenges and find balance. It empowers people to take responsibility for shaping society, the church and local politics. In keeping with the saying "Check everything and keep what's good", the LVHS provides space to thoroughly examine the pressing issues of our time. The LVHS is an advocate for rural areas and campaigns for lifestyles and concepts that serve "life to the fullest".

Rooted in the Christian faith, the education center aims in its everyday activites to express the hope that fills it – knowing that it is close to God and the people

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# CONTINUING EDUCATION POLICY IN GERMANY

#### STRUCTURE AND LEGISLATION

# Definition of continuing education

To date, the prevailing definition of continuing education is the definition established in 1970 by the Deutscher Bildungsrat (German Council of Education): "the continuation or resumption of organized learning after completion of an initial training phase of varying durations". According to this definition, continuing education includes areas such as:

- advanced vocational and on-the-job training
- further training and retraining
- political education
- trade union education
- religious education
- basic and general education (including adult literacy education)
- cultural education<sup>1</sup>

The current structure of continuing training has evolved historically and is not organized by the government. The structure is extremely multifaceted. For example, continuing education can be as short as an individual evening class or comprise training programs that last several years.

# The legal framework

It is not easy to describe the system of adult education in Germany as it is embedded in the federal principle upon which Germany is organized. The Federal Republic of Germany is made up of 16 federal states which vary in size and population.

Continuing education was included at European level in the Maastricht Treaty. Continuing education is not regulated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, known as the Basic Law, and was also only expressly enshrined in the constitutions of just a small number of the 16 federal states.

Below the constitutional level, there is also no comprehensive legislation on continuing education that applies to all of Germany. This means that there is no system for non-vocational adult education controlled centrally by the federal government. Each federal state is independently responsible for education and may set its own priorities and goals in this area. The legislative powers for continuing education lie with the federal states under the scope of the federal system. Accordingly, relevant laws and regulations are mainly passed at state level.

In exceptional cases, however, the federal government can assume responsibility if a general national interest is at stake. The federal and state governments also coordinate with one other in the event of overarching national interests in education.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> E. Nuissl, Erwachsenenbildung/Weiterbildung, [w:] A. Rolf, S. Nolda, E. Nuissl (Hrsg.), Wörterbuch Erwachsenenbildung, Julius Klinkhardt – UTB, Stuttgart 2010.

The laws of the federal government as well as the federal states both concentrate on defining:

- general conditions
- funding regulations
- target groups

# The federal government

The federal government sees itself as responsible, especially when it comes to vocational training outside of schools, and has adopted the following laws related to continuing education which are valid nationwide (federal law) (see also DIE below) in this context:

• Berufsbildungsgesetz (Vocational Training Act – BBiG)

The scope of the Vocational Training Act for continuing education relates explicitly to vocational training and retraining and focuses on the institutional framework for this area.

• Sozialgesetzbuch (Social Security Code – SGB)

The Social Security Code guarantees people who participate or aim to participate in working life a right to advice and individual support in their professional development.

- <u>Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz</u> (<u>Upgrading Training Assistance Act AFBG</u>) This law forms the basis for financial support for skilled tradespeople to upgrade their training and attain higher qualifications.
- Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz (Distance Learning Protection Act FernUSG) This law protects participants in distance learning courses.
- Hochschulrahmengesetz (German Higher Education Framework Act HRG)
  This law defines continuing scientific education as a central task of the universities in addition to research, teaching and studies.

The federal responsibilities for continuing education are largely bundled in the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft – BMBF). The Ministry has two separate directorates responsible for vocational training and lifelong learning.

# Continuing education laws of the federal states

In accordance with the federal structure laid down in the Basic Law, each federal state has legislative and executive structures and is independently responsible for legislating and administering the area of education.

Almost every one of the 16 federal states in Germany has adopted its own continuing education law which defines the structure for continuing education in the respective state.

According to Kuhlenkamp (2010)<sup>2</sup>, these laws:

- contain structural political statements on the tasks and aims of the continuing education and
- define the requirements for governmental acknowledgement of the institutions.

Facilities such as folk high schools (*Heimvolkshochschulen*) are free and independent institutions for which government recognition is necessary to obtain financial support from the federal state. The prerequisites are similar in all federal states and require, for example, that the facilities:

- are consistent with the Basic Law/constitution in their goals and content
- are accessible/open to everyone

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> D. Kuhlenkamp, Weiterbildungsgesetze, [in:] A. Rolf, S. Nolda, E. Nuissl (Hrsg.), Wörterbuch Erwachsenenbildung, Julius Klinkhardt – UTB, Stuttgart 2010.

- disclose their programs, work results, staffing, number of participants and funding at the request of the federal state
- headed up by an expert with the appropriate training and experience and make regular training for their teachers possible
- perform their work systematically and continuously
- are located in the state and mainly offer training and education to people from that state
- have their educational work regularly evaluated and perform quality assurance measures on a regular basis
- regularly furnish evidence of their economic performance and offer assurance of permanency

In the state of Lower Saxony, for a folk high school to be recognized as such, it must also operate a boarding school because this is an integral part of its special methods. In some federal states, financial support is also tied to a minimum number of participant days.

Financial support for recognized continuing education institutions is what is known as complementary financing in most cases. This means that only part of the costs incurred is assumed, and the facilities and participants in these institutions have to cover some of the costs themselves.

The continuing education laws are supplemented by state-specific laws or regulations related to educational leave.

#### Trends

The amount and type of financial support for continuing education institutions in Germany has changed over the past decades. The financial resources provided by the states have steadily declined<sup>3</sup>. Institutions like the folk high schools were therefore forced to finance an evergrowing share of the cost of their education work with higher participant fees or other public sources (e.g. in the form of project funding at state, federal or European level). To the extent that the continuing education facilities depend on tapping into other sources of funding outside of continuing education laws, these law become less important and lose clout because the financial incentive is eliminated<sup>4</sup>.

For educational facilities like folk high schools, this trend means that they can look for project funding beyond the limits of their own educational departments and find new opportunities for financial resources in other policy areas (e.g. agriculture and rural development). At the same time, this continuous search for new funding options and the administrative workload association with managing many individual projects results in enormous personnel costs which is detrimental to the actual pedagogical work.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> E. Nuissl, op.cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> D. Kuhlenkamp, op.cit.

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# CIVIC EDUCATION IN NORWEGIAN FOLK HIGH SCHOOL



There are altogether 79 folk high schools in Norway. They are divided into: Christian (30) and secular (49) as well as private (Virke) and national/regional/communal (KS). With no entrance examination, the folk high schools admit from 40 to 200 students aged 18 or more, the age being however subject to exception for it is also sometimes possible that 16- or 17-year-old students can be accepted as well. According to Norwegian people, folk high schools are for everyone and it is first of all the motivation that is considered of importance. Nonetheless, on some occasions, it can be the level of proficiency in a domain specific for a given school which plays important role in an admission process, this however happening rather rarely. Folk high schools are to be found all over the country: in the cities, towns and on the suburbs as well as in the wilderness regions, forests, mountains, and on the coast. Very frequently, the location of the school is related to its profile. Great majority of the studies offered are one-year courses. There are however also schools which run 10-odd-week courses. The educational offer of the folk high schools covers over 300 subject areas. Some of the schools specialize in one domain, as for instance: dance, film, sport. There are however also schools which provide teaching in various subject areas. It is up to the students, whether they pursue to specialize in a given domain or to gain general knowledge.

Grip demokratiet meaning Grasp Democracy was the slogan used by Norwegians in 2014 on the occasion of commemorating two anniversaries – both of great importance for the history of their country. Importantly enough, this motto with which the celebrations were opened, carries a two-dimensional message. Its receiver namely, is not only to understand the democratic rules but also to spot and implement them in an everyday life. The opening event took place on November 1st, in the cultural centre in Hamar. It is in this place and on this day that the first Norwegian folk high school was opened 150 years before, with its name being Sagatun.

The double jubilee – the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Norwegian constitution and 150 years of existence of Norwegian folk high schools – were considered an opportune time to organise a joint celebration. Giving his opening speech, Olemic Thommessen, the President of the Parliament of Norway, highlighted that those two apparently not related events have in fact much in common. The folk high schools were namely immensely important for the development of citizenship awareness among people of Norway as well as for the integration of rural population. This for that matter proved to be of key significance when in 1905 Norwegians had to face dissolution of the 91-year-lasting union between Sweden and Norway preceded by 400 years of Danish reign. The education provided by the folk high schools prepared namely the ground needed for building a democratic society which would be characterised by the community spirit and open dialogue. Folk high schools became centres for spreading education to the whole Norwegian nation, with the main programme assumptions of that time being: the concept of national community, identifying Norwegians roots and culture as well as providing an open access to education for all social classes.

Significantly enough, folk high schools still continue to play their part as centres preparing for life in the society, but they operate now in a slightly modified way, with their actions being attuned to the spirit of contemporary times. Needless to say, subjects and themes have

been revised and altered to suit the needs of the present generation of young people. There is namely a very great chance that instead of learning horseshoe-making, people nowadays will prefer courses in digital photography for instance. In similar fashion – though of no significance during Grundtvig's times, issues of environmental disasters or sustainable growth have become vital topics. Furthermore, education for democracy has also reversed its direction – the former approach based on national identity has been replaced with global perspective and has become more cosmopolitan-oriented. At the same time, with all necessary programme and ideology revisions being conducted, every effort is made to preserve the distinctive atmosphere and ideas of the original folk high schools. Along with the most obvious elements of schools' life such as communal activities, no grades policy and free will underlying the learning process – the individual approach towards students has also been continued with and previous personal experience with education has been still factored in. On the top of that, even now the priorities are – the practical experience and students engagement, often manifested by lively dialogues.

Beside the study of core courses, there is also an occasion to address universal timeless questions concerning life itself – what it is about, what its sense and purpose are. Now, the goal which the folk high schools in Norway pursue, irrespective of the times and sociopolitical situation, is to prepare an individual to their life in the community and in the time conditions into which they happen to be placed.

Considering the wide range of courses offered by the Norwegian folk high schools, as well as numbers of scientific publications, studies, critical reviews and testimonies of people involved in the field, this institution can be claimed to be a consistent and integral element of educational system in Norway, and a part of the country's tradition and culture. Every year around 7000 young Norwegian people choose this form of education. They make up over 10% of their generation. As for the motivations for taking up the learning in the folk high school, there is a variety of them. To provide an example, we have: the will to learn and to grow in the community as well as the desire to throw oneself into a particular domain which makes one thrill, which count as two most frequently mentioned. Many people consider this year as a kind of a creatively spent break and a time for reflection on their future.

As a consequence of ever changing times, the representatives of the folk high schools keep searching for new inspirations which could help them successfully prepare their students for

ACCORDING TO PRESENT PREMISES, CIVIC EDUCATION IS ABOUT: CREATIVE, OPEN AND CRITICAL DIALOGUE, ETHICAL LIFE IN THE GLOBALISED WORLD AND MOST IMPORTANTLY—BUILDING THE AWARENESS OF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE LIFE OF AN INDIVIDUAL AND THE LIFE OF THE SOCIETY. THE AIM IS BASICALLY TO CREATE A CERTAIN SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND MUTUAL INFLUENCE.

life in a democratic society. According to present premises, civic education is about: creative, open and critical dialogue, ethical life in the globalised world and most importantly – building the awareness of the connections between the life of an individual and the life of the society. The aim is basically to create a certain sense of community and mutual influence. Witnessing the globalisation and

current changes in the society, folk high schools have an extremely difficult task to do - so claims Øyvind Krabberød, editor-in-chief of the Folkehøgskolen (Folk High Schools) magazine. He goes on however saying: "We won't give up our fight against indifference and exclusion. By helping the people to deepen their understanding of democratic ideas, we will continue to prepare them to take an active part in societal life. Let's give the young people courage to believe that it pays to be engaged and that each voice does make a difference. Being involved has a great worth!". Seeking to clarify the objective and motivation underlying the civic education in the folk high schools, it is worth mentioning the perspective proposed by Oveg Korsgaard, the Danish professor, (cited in the Folkehøgskolen magazine) who claims that learning democracy is not only about mastering the art of dialogue but also about becoming aware that democracy means being able to develop one's own opinions and having courage to speak out on them. The folk high schools should continue to work on democracy – as the professor holds – but democracy should not be so much regarded as a school subject itself but rather as a design to be pursued and a standard by which the society should be orientated. Furthermore, Korsgaard proposes in this era of globalisation to start thinking about man as a citizen of the world, bearing traits of individuality but also being capable of, entitled to and responsible for self-determination as a member of smaller and bigger societies.

# Civic education in practice

To gain proper understanding of the democratic principles in the context of a state as well as to be able to implement those in a real life, all students of Norwegian folk high schools had been involved in a project called *Demokratibudstikka*, created on the occasion of the aforementioned jubilee year. 75 folk high schools operating in Norway (both secular and Christian as well as the Swedish one) were invited to partake in the undertaking. The task consisted in

each high school being supposed to organise an event to explore the topic: Wordless Democracy. With the only prerequisite being that the event should be presented in a nonverbal form, students were given much freedom for their creativity in the realisation of the theme and were encouraged to act unconventionally. The project was arranged to resemble a relay race with each folk high school handing off "the baton" to the next one by sending an electronic report. The action continued until each of 76 folk high schools organised its own event. The deadlines for the accomplishment of the "citizenship relay race" had been arranged over the span of two months. Even though the project had been addressed to young people, its impact was far broader due to the way the undertaking had been organised. It cought the attention of the society and the media at the same time, con-



Students of Fosen Folk High School in Rissa, Norway, during the break

(Phot. Archive of Ecological and Cultural Association ZIARNO)

sequently focusing the local societies on issues of democracy and constitution as well as on the role the folk high schools play in bringing them closer to a larger audience.

Initiated with regard to historic anniversaries, the promotion of democratic ideas has also found its way in the social media. The resulting project is an electronic coverage prepared by the students travelling the country or the world and asking others about what the democracy means to them. Registered answers (such as e.g. "Democracy means the right to do what you want, within the limits set by law", or "Democracy means that I can dress as I want and take interested in things which I choose myself") can be accessed on Instagram by entering #democracywall.

Yet another interesting example of applied democracy is the case of the folk high school in Skogn, and more precisely – the way it is being managed. Great majority of the members of the school's board (i.e. the supreme governing body) namely form the students (6 students and 5 persons from the staff). Arne Sporild, the principle of the school, recounts only positive experience resulting from introducing this management model. In his opinion, participating of the students in the board proves beneficial not only with reference to practical, everyday issues but has also educational value.

The occasional events promoting democratic attitude and general citizenship education are complemented by extended courses in democracy provided by some of the high schools throughout a whole year – the folk high school in Seljord offering the course entitled "Political science and democracy" is one of the examples. Among the students who decide on this study area, one will usually find those who want to study the political and societal issues in more depth and often plan to embark on similar studies at the university in the future.

As for other aspects of citizenship education, the proposals for teachers also merit a few words. And so, since 2013 there has been organised a course entitled "Practical implications of the philosophical issues plus responsible citizenship", which provides teachers with knowledge and tools required for conducting education on topics related to democratic life in the society.

# Refugee integration as an element of citizenship education

Offering support and help to people in distress belonged to and has still been considered one of the goals which the Norwegian folk high schools set themselves. In the 1980s, many folk high schools were actively participating in the humanitarian actions around the world. Similarly now, in the times of people's migration witnessing the pressing need for places which will integrate the newcomers and adapt them into Norwegian society, the high schools also open their doors.

Stressing the importance of the year spent in a Norwegian folk high school for their life, the foreigners give much positive feedback on this education. Avtar Jasser (a Hindu boy who

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settled in Norway at the age of 18 and soon after his arrival decided to attend one-year course in the nearby folk high school) wanted to learn not only Norwegian language but also the culture of the country. In the case of the refugees namely, the problem of their children born in Norway already is not that of the language or subjects taught at school, but the lack of knowledge of the culture and society in which they live now. During their stay in the folk high school, they can develop social skills and improve their understanding

of the Norwegian culture – of the forms of cooperation and co-existence typical for this country, as well as deepen their insight into the democracy as such. As a result, it is easier for them later on to build successful professional and personal relationships.

# The biggest challenges for the citizenship education of our times

How can we meet needs of individual students and support them in the process of discovering who they really are, and simultaneously prepare them to take actions for the benefit of the world? The topic of a perfect educational programme for our times is currently the subject of much debate. On the one hand, we have a threatened democracy, ecological disasters, abuse of human rights, and on the other – there is a young man, often uncertain, desiring to develop his interests, and seeking for self-fulfilment. How we should conduct the educational process in the institution built on the tradition of community ideals when we have young people coming from the societies in which community no longer exists?

The time has come for the Norwegian high schools to ask new questions and find new answers.

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Jasser S.A., Gründer, sosial innovatør og jobber med rekruttering

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ANIKA KONOPKA – student of the first course in Ecological Folk High School. Thanks to her connections with Norway and good command of Norwegian she prepared this chapter to our publication. Now she is responsible for the Polish-Scandinavian cooperation in the area of development of the organic agriculture and she is assisting farmers in establishing international contacts and in exchange of experience.

# THE SITUATION IN THE RURAL AREAS AND POSSIBILITIES OF IMPLEMENTING EXPERIENCES OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS IN BULGARIA

The rural areas cover 81% of the territory and 39% from Bulgaria population. During the last years by reducing the number and density of the population and increase the risk of depopulation of large territories in the rural areas most affected are less populated areas (villages and small towns). In the period 2007–2012 the population especially in rural areas decreased by 8%. In Bulgaria the share of the population living at risk of poverty or social exclusion is high (49% in 2012). The most affected areas also are less populated rural areas (61%). A higher risk of poverty in rural areas is due to lower employment of the working population, higher unemployment, lower educational level of the population and lower income. The risk of poverty and social exclusion is higher among the Roma ethnic group, long-term unemployed, the elderly people and people with disabilities.

Education of this population will give them new alternative to find job or to develop their own business. In this unpleasant situation application of the principles of democratic education, including increasing human skills and knowledge what is being done in folkhighschools will give a new perspective for a better life of the local population in rural areas.

The utilized agricultural area (UAA) in Bulgaria is 5.12 million hectares, which is 46.1% of the total area of the country. The agricultural land is not contaminated with long lasting pesticides which is good prerequisite for development of organic agriculture. The demand for organic products is increased especially in larger cities. Over the last years there has been significant growth in organic production. Organic production has experienced significant growth for last years. The certified agricultural land increased from 0,4 % from UAA in 2012 to 2,4 % in 2016. The number of people involved in organic farming has increased from 2000 in 2012 to 6100 in 2016. This trend creates an opportunity for those living in rural areas and small farmers to begin dealing with this type of farming.

The process is sometimes obstructed by the lack of specific theoretical and practical skills and knowledge of people willing to create and grow organic farms. This lack can be filled by organizing short-term or long-term courses for local people living near or close to it. Same time as the agriculture, rural areas have great potential for development of sustainable tourism (cultural, adventurous, spa, rural and other types of tourism) through the preservation and exposure of natural and cultural heritage and promoting continuity in terms of living heritage and traditions. The community centers continue to be the support of the local cultural heritage.

There are two major programs in Bulgaria supporting and encouraging education of elderly population in rural areas:

- 1. National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014–2020, administered by the Development center for human resources
  - This Strategy is implemented by Development center for human resources with funds from the state budget, with EU funds and EU program "Erasmus +".
- 2. Rural Development Programme (RDP) (2014–2020) administered by the State Fund Agriculture.
  - The program is financed by EU funds.
  - Both programs can be used for additional education of rural population. There are several measures financed by RDP. The beneficiaries applied for any of these measures should have documents proved acquired professional skills and knowledge in the field

of agriculture. As an example the support schemes for "Young farmers", "Agro-ecology" or "Organic agriculture" requires secondary or higher education in agriculture or veterinary medicine or certificate attesting course completion and acquired professional qualifications in the field of agriculture (at least 150 hours).

# How we can use the experience of Folk High Schools for this purpose?

Typical folkhighschool like these known in Scandinavian countries, Germany and Poland do not exist in Bulgaria. Nearest similar institution part of which activities is connected with education of local population is Cultural Community Centers (CCC) ("chitalishte" in Bulgarian). Together with inherent cultural activities (maintaining of libraries, art activities, hand-crafts etc.), some of existing CCCs in rural areas could be places for organization and conducting of short or long vocational courses for the local people. They can apply for financing of such training courses under the program for rural development RDP program.

CCCs will ensure logistic for organization of educational courses (classrooms, internet access, etc). For achieving the objectives of the training in conducting the theoretical courses may be involved specialists from the agricultural vocational schools or universities. The most important part of the learning process will be the involvement of local organic farms, where the students can practice. This is very important part of education because the organic farmers will have the opportunity to share their practical experience and knowledge with students and they will get the necessary practical skills in order to organize their own farm. Insufficient practical education is the main disadvantage of formal agricultural education in Bulgaria. The dual system or system of apprenticeship for young people, when they study any craft or profession, is not developed in Bulgaria.

In this aspect the developed curriculum for Organic Farming Course in the frame of Erasmus+ which is applied in folkhighschool in Poland, could be applied entirely or partially in Bulgaria. Except vocational agricultural learning very important part which is included in this curriculum are acquisition of skills which are needed for everyday life of the students – communication, teamwork, music, arts, crafts, using of internet, genius loci of local farms and

The educational system of folkhighschools will be very useful for education and integration of minority populations living in Bulgaria, mainly Roma population and refugees from Syria and other problematic countries — problems faced by Bulgaria and other European countries now.

surroundings, basic knowledge in English for organic farm, etc. These methods of education can be included also partially in formal educational systems especially in secondary education.

The educational system of folkhighschools will be very useful for education and integration of minority populations living in Bulgar-

ia, mainly Roma population and refugees from Syria and other problematic countries – problems faced by Bulgaria and other European countries now.

There are some good practices for integration of minority groups in Bulgaria. Some NGOs are strongly committed to the integration of the Roma population and other poorer groups of rural areas. A good example is the NGO "Land sources of income" which found specific sustainable way to support people living in risk of poverty and give them opportunity to feed their livelihood.

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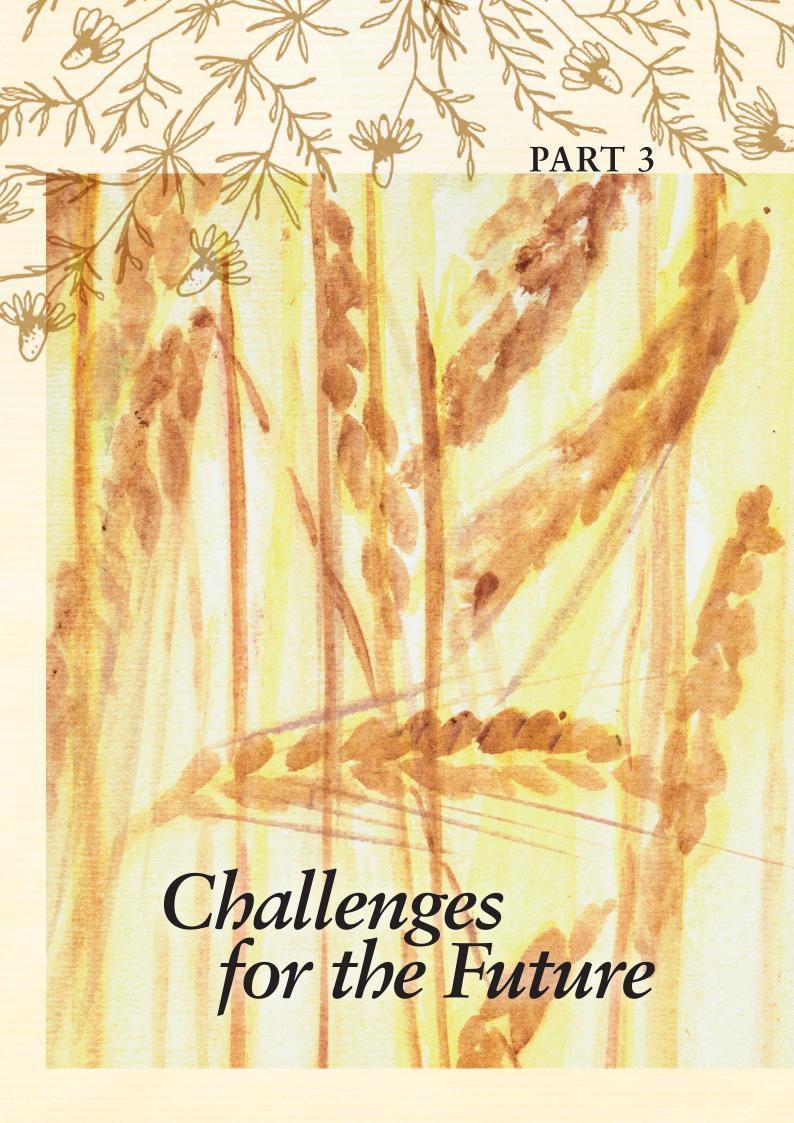
#### Once more did the dawn cock crow

Once more did the dawn cock crow, flapped its wing, dew-clinging – joy the golden sun will show, with the light be bringing, when in secret Him we praise, though all suns confessing, who has made such beauteous days, life's school we are blessing.

Days for action he has made, eventide for resting, no one knows when life will fade, no time let's be wasting: be of use while day shines bright, all our strength be showing, sure that what then comes aright from its source is flowing!

Spoken word and printed page teach our youth life's story, so it power and tongue engage, life too, to God's glory: then our manhood, strong and wise its fine name will merit, be the school of life's great prize, its great boon inherit.

(1833)



# It's so delightful to be as one

It's so delightful to be as one,
For two who dearly life would be sharing,
Each joy is felt to be doubly won,
Each sorrow's burden is half the bearing;
Yes, it's fair weather
:I: To walk together,:I:
Two birds, one feather,
:I: In love, true love!:I:

It's so agreeable everywhere
Where great and small the same mind are sharing,
And those great loads which we all must bear
Are lessened by the heart's tender caring;
Yes, it's fair weather

:I: To stay together,:I: When now and ever :I: Is heart's true voice!:I:

It's so inspiring to know each day
We have a Master of all life's stations,
He'll not forsake us when we are grey,
His mercy lasts to all generations;
Yes, it's fair weather,
:I: That altogether:I:
Both now and ever

:I: Is God's true word!:I:

It's so distressing to have to part For those who dearly life would be sharing, But God be praised! All those dear of heart Re-meet in heaven to joy unsparing;

Yes, it's fair weather: I: To live together,:I: When now and ever: I: Is love, true love!:I:

Each wedding couple who pledge their vow In Jesus' name, and in fullest measure, Though earthly fortune be high or low, Will find both early and late life's treasure:

For it's fair weather :I: To sit together,:I: When fired for ever :I: By love, true love.:I:

# DEMOCRACY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND FOLK HIGH SCHOOL

Denmark 2017. When I want to prepare a particularly nice meal for invited friends I would rarely trouble myself to look in the bookshelf to find a cookbook that can give me inspiration. My telephone is right at hand. When I need ideas for my next vacation, I don't seek out a travel agent, flip through some brochures or get advice from a nice employee. My telephone is right at hand. Following a feature in the TV news I want to look for some background information but I do not visit the library and search for a book on the history of Hungary. My telephone is right at hand. When I need to make myself acquainted with a case of social importance, I will not attend political meetings and listen to different arguments. My phone is right at hand – and I can easily find many opinions on just exactly this case and I can easily find followers.

A characteristic of peoples' lives today is that access to information is as easy as ever before. In other words, we can extremely fast and cheap seek and gain knowledge about anything possible. The electronic media are amazing to give us input in precisely that defined field we sought information about. It is very convenient and one of the technical development's many positive aspects. The drawback of this development is that we in our browsing automatically put our trust in the various search engines and we don't really have influence in how they operate. We are often very uncritical with what is shown as truth and simply due of the screen size on the phone information and messages are boiled down to short and over-simplified statements.

More questions occur.

- 1) What does it mean for our everyday lives?
- 2) What does it mean for our way of conversing with each other?
- 3) What does it mean for our ability to create an overview and thus connect with the fights fought by previous generations and connect with future challenges?
- 4) How will democratic processes be affected by a radically changed way of acquiring information?
- 5) How can civil society find its place in this context?
- 6) What are the most important battles of our time and how will each person emphasize her/his participation in the development of society?
- 7) What are the challenges for young people?

# Ad 1) What does it mean for our everyday lives?

It's getting harder to be off from work!!! It becomes more difficult to be quiet and just stare into vacancy because with the social media and the hardware they appear on systems are invented meaning we are constantly reminded of yet another bit of information ticking in. The dividing line between work and free time blurs easily when it is expected that you may be contacted by anyone at anytime. It requires conscious thought to choose one's own pace for the flow of information to invade one's life. And sometimes it can happen that it will be taken amiss if you do not call back. "I assume you're on, right"?!! This constant state of being alert is not healthy for

a human being and we are maybe only at the beginning of a development that will bring even more stress and complications! Here is an area for extra attention and we need to put a critical eye on the ways we use various media platforms. Along with the benefits of these technological advances there are certainly also side effects that can lead to direct physical illness.

### Ad 2) What does it mean for our way of conversing with each other?

At first sight it might seem that the possibilities to quickly get in contact with each other helps promoting communication and dialogue. There is certainly more communication – just think

THE CONVERSATION IN A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING HAS IN OTHER WORDS BEEN MUCH MORE DIFFICULT WITH THE SOCIAL MEDIA'S SUCCESS AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DEVELOPMENT.

of the number of e-mails/messages that you receive and send every day. It was a very different picture just a few decades back when letters and telephone calls were the most commonly used ways of contact. But the amount of communication doesn't necessari-

ly enhance the yield of the communicative interactions we have with each other. There are many examples of "shitstorms" where social media are the channels to pour dirt in the face of a person/company/organisation which through its action will be the butt of a dissatisfaction that can quickly get lots of followers. In these cases the dialogue/conversation entirely recides into the background instead of the desire to understand and reflect on the statements and behaviours which perhaps is controversial. It is as though the ability to hide behind a virtual alias eliminates some person's filters on what can be expressed publicly. A certain amount of cynicism is spreading in the virtual debate and from time to time this pattern is observed among politicians where some media without filter brings this cynicism to the arena. It can be dangerous because politicians – by definition – have more space in the media and thus a great ability/power to shape the public opinion. Therefore the responsibility to ensure a dignified and proper tone is so much greater for the politicians to ensure. The conversation in a face-to-face meeting has in other words been much more difficult with the social media's success and it is important to raise awareness about the possible consequences of this development.

# Ad 3) What does it mean for our ability to create an overview and thus connect with the fights fought by previous generations and connect with future challenges?

Every news media has a "Breaking News" section which of course is established to be first with the latest news. Sometimes it happens that no "breaking news" is happening but the sta-

In other words it is important to continually support every person's desire and ability to involve in political issues so decision makers may obtain a wide sample of public opinions as reference points in their policy making.

tion is on-air and broadcasting time must be used for something leaving the idea that it's landmark. This mechanical action gives the impression that even the fairly bland news has huge importance and perhaps this constant bombardment with news is adding to create an illusion that you as a user have to

follow everything that is served. Thus upsetting many users' impression of what is substantial news and what might just need to go into the bin in a hurry. News becomes entertainment and moving away from the necessity to give complex issues a serious coverage where there is also the opportunity to look at the values behind arguments and attitudes. In my view there is a danger of manipulation with common sense and thus the basis for making up one's mind about political issues becomes more uncertain. The situation can of course be exploited by politicians and their media advisers which makes it more difficult to see through the opinions/arguments that are brought forward in the debate. Moreover the big focus on breaking news is also helped to push the historical overview in the background and we are led to believe that the world never has worked without internet and cell phones!!! A lurking feeling of becoming historyless will making up one's mind about complex issues even less transparent and the risk to give up involvement in social issues is unfortunately present. It gives reason to

frown concerning future challenges in the political field where already many difficulties are in sight which will require great skills to navigate through. The active participation of citizens is absolutely necessary to avoid polarisation in socio-economic/political issues and to take part in the major transitions which will occur due to ressource depletion during the next generations. In other words it is important to continually support every person's desire and ability to involve in political issues so decision makers may obtain a wide sample of public opinions as reference points in their policy making.

# Ad 4) How will democratic processes be affected by a radically changed way of acquiring information?

At different levels of society elected politicians decide in the sphere they are appointed to lead. In Denmark this system has been in use since the middle of the nineteenth century and

with various reforms in the division of secondary and tertiary levels it is still the spectrum in which the political processes are unfolding. After 1972 an additional level concerning EU has come. Development in all areas of society and increased globalization

This increased number of News Providers will make it impossible to follow more than a few and it will require great efforts to get a wide range of viewpoints.

makes the political work an even more complex and labor-intensive field to discharge. It also means that citizens must have greater insight and knowledge in order to follow the political processes and to be able to take competent decisions when going to the polls. The acquisition of this knowledge relate very much with the flow of information from the various media – both the nationwide news broadcasters and the newer social media platforms. This increased number of news providers will make it impossible to follow more than a few and it will require great efforts to get a wide range of viewpoints. As I see it there is a tendency that political single-issues get a lot of attention where opposing fronts are marked sharply. Thus complex topics are neglected for prime-time broadcasting and will be dealt with in more hidden processes which is not a development in voters' interest. Perhaps a democratic deficit??

#### Ad 5) How can civil society find its place in this context?

According to sociologist Jürgen Habermas civil society is the institutions arising out of what he calls the "lifeworld" – as opposed to the state and the market. Most will know these institutions very well and majority of people are linked to one or more through involvement in political, recreational or charity activities. With the ubiquity of social media opportunities have arisen for civil society groups to communicate extremely fast and effectively to their target audience (and potential followers). It can also be through involvement in civil society groups that many are experiencing democratic processes up front and thus get an invaluable experience of participation in work which is beyond personal/family matters. In many ways the rapid and easy access to communication provide civil society groups an advantage in comparison to capture the interest of potential followers and thus create the opportunity for great dynamics in areas where it previously has been a more lengthy process to get things to happen. Quite naturally civil society groups use new media platforms to manage their tasks and to make their influence seen in the contexts they operate in. No doubt that civil society groups in all their diversity have great importance in the lives of many and also importance in the interaction with institutions/ companies which have origins in the political life or in the market. Many cross-over links between the three worlds are in effect and perhaps necessary – in any case many will be involved not only in one but will have affiliations with several groups.

# Ad 6) What are the most important battles of our time and how will each person emphasize her/his participation in the development of society?

With a changed media landscape a change also occurs in the picture of what are important issues to fight for and how the individual case can generate substantial force. There are sev-

eral examples over the past years (Kiev, Istanbul, Hong Kong) where the mobilization of large crowds of people have been able to take place outside of established political systems' traditional communication channels. Instead it has been social media channels that brought crowds of thousands together to mark their discontent and thus provided a strong influence – and often also changes in tense political situations. It is difficult to identify a trend of what determines the important political struggles of our times. It is as if that almost unlimited and very diverse flow of news makes it quite arbitrary what people will gather around. Each person will to a greater extent make her/his choices based on what is ticking in at the phone and to a lesser extent opt out of beliefs founded through long-term political education. There may well be a desire to help shape the development of society and the way it translates is closely linked to the predominant form of communication in the population.

#### Ad 7) What are the challenges for young people?

The results of research in pedagogy and learning environments are being rewritten to politicians' language and passing of bills which decide the changes in the child-care sector and schools. In recent years there have been much focus on having an eye on children's different learning styles and in general institutionalizeing children's lives to give parents the opportunity to continue working life virtually unaltered by having children. It means that many teenagers seemingly earlier and earlier develop into very clever and articulate young people with a good understanding of the society they are growing up in. They are very much ready for their next step in the educational system which in many cases also contains studying at universities abroad. With the acquired skills it often leads to employment in companies and organisations which structurally adapt to exactly this type of employees. The challenge for the "successful and well-adjusted" is that expectations for performance are very high and that it can be fraught with difficulties reconciling career and family life. There are too many who are affected by stress which has serious consequences both for the individual, for family and for society as a whole. The rapid and determined way through the educational system plus a subsequent job with huge responsibility may create too small a platform to meet complex requirements and setbacks in life???

Another part of the young generation is unfortunately experiencing difficulties in following the prescribed curricula with highly emphasized focus on own learning goals and marks. These young people often feel left out, they have learning and social problems and some develops even psychological imbalances. In other words it is difficult to categorize an entire youth cohort in one single image and in particular there is a need to have a wide palette of services to those young people who do not get on the train for further education. When the mantra in our society is that everyone should educate and preferably as quickly as possible it will leave some behind. The difference between those who are hitting the wave and those who are lagging behind shows a huge gap and there is no doubt about who has the biggest hype! There is a distinct resistance from a political point grasping the nettle and customize the systems to how young people are living at the best instead of putting (too) ambitious spreadsheet" goals on what can be forced out of the youngsters in relation to make them tax payers in a hurry! The challenge for this group is that they become scapegoats in the public debate and thus live with a stigma which makes it very difficult for the individual to show her/ his worth and in a different way than by intellectual means to claim her/his equally worthy belonging to society.

# How do folk high schools implement learning about democratic processes?

Folk high schools in Denmark has more than 170 years of tradition to grant possibilities for young people in particular to participate in a non-formal school in which the core is to let the type of school mold the pupil to be a reflecting human being in society. A rewrite of the main objective described in Law of Folk High Schools can be put that the folk high schools in its practices must stress life enlightenment, folk enlightenment and democratic formation.

The folk high schools are putting this into practice with different sets of principles and different subjects. Nevertheless each and every student at the Danish folk high schools has a unique opportunity to allow themselves to be enriched by the academic content, the intense interaction with other students and teachers as well as to become a more whole human being, precisely because the life of a folk high school embraces most aspects of life: listening, debating, laughing, reflecting, loving, crying – in other words – here is living.

The intense atmosphere of a stay at a folk high school is like being at "home away from home". When combined with the instructors' commitment to challenge students in a loving and safe environment it will be a place for development and reflection which not only focuses on the student's own life situation but to a higher degree serves as a platform where students can find themselves in interaction with the rest of society. In this way a folk high school stay becomes an impetus to be an active player in the contexts the youngster subsequently will be in and the obtained insights creates a stable basis for life's ups and downs.

Talking about democratic processes a folk high school stay provides options for the student in several ways. First it provides in close interaction with the other students a "hands-on"

democratic basis of experience having a lot of different people living together under the same roof. Quite naturally situations arise where there must be guidelines (laws) for the community to make it function well and in particular when agreed guidelines are not ob-

A FOLK HIGH SCHOOL STAY BECOMES AN IMPETUS TO BE AN ACTIVE PLAYER IN THE CONTEXTS THE YOUNGSTER SUBSEQUENTLY WILL BE IN AND THE OBTAINED INSIGHTS CREATES A STABLE BASIS FOR LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS.

served there will be a need to work with the democratic tools to adjust the agreements. There will be an immediate testing of this work because everybody involved continues their lives in "the lab" and therefore will feel if the decisions have the desired effect. These very down-to-earth experiences can easily be taken to classes and thus be subject to a more theoretical and philosophical debate where the historical/social/political conditions can be put into perspective and tried against the student's own points of view. It means that the folk high school stay is a maturing of the student and creates a readiness to use what is learned afterwards. A school should not necessarily produce future ministers but awake young people to take part in the life of democratic challenges with a fundamental understanding and respect for opinions differing from one's own and for democracy as a cornerstone of a free society. With this inspiration the school highlights one of its 3 goals as a valuable foundation for participation in a society's many different democratic processes.

Civil society groups mostly have a size that allows each person an overview and a sense of belonging to the work of the group. Interest and commitment provide fertile ground for new ideas which is beneficial for a larger number of people than just those who pull the strings. By far most of the work of civil society groups is done voluntarily and attracts people who don't want to spend time on administration and bureaucratic constraints. "Volunteerism thrives in delight and dies through administration" (said by a participant in a Odense citizens' panel). When public bodies recognise the efforts made by civil society groups (perhaps through grants or administrative assisstance) there is a willingness to cooperate and the results can be even better. It is essential to keep the balance between self organisation and government interference not to kill the sense of initiative.

Considering the development of non-formal school initiatives which is connected to the philosophy of civil society groups it is of course commendable that someone initiates projects which require full self-payment by the participants. Experience shows that it costs an incredible amount of work to obtain sufficient participants for the courses and for the teachers involved it is often with a very small salary. A public recognition and financial support will make life easier for those who exert themselves on offering courses which do not earn a final diploma. The recognition will also show participants that the service has validity and approval in an education sector which has a lot of other options. Folk high schools in Scandinavia are such examples of civil society groups which have become an ingrained part of informal education and for than 100 years have received financial support from the state. A stay at a folk high school is a valued life experience and really good ballast for the rest of the life.

#### Stanisław Jaromi OFMConv

Saint Francis of Assisi Environmental Movement – REFA, Poland

# ECO-TASKS FOR FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS 2017 IN THE FACE OF THREATS OF CONTEMPORARY CIVILISATION



"Before our very eyes, a new civilization is being born, and the blind are trying to kill it," write Alvin and Heidi Toffler. "This new civilization brings a new way of family life, a change in the way we work, relate to one another and live, new shape of economic life, new political conflicts and above all new awareness. Humanity, which has faced the deepest social upheaval and boldly creative reconstruction in its history, is now expecting a quantum leap. "American researchers prove their theses in their bestselling books, provoking a critical look at our accomplishments, existing institutions and the whole modern civilization. Can these big issues and challenges of the future also become tasks for folk high schools? My answer to this question will result from triple experience: of an environmentalist who has been involved in the activity of Saint Francis of Assisi Environmental Movement for many years, academic lecturer studying changes in human-nature relations, the dialogue between science and faith, culture and spirituality, the Christian vision of the world and various streams of eco-philosophy, and a clergyman putting the Church's social doctrine into practice of Christian life.

# 1. Signs of the time – our successes and failures

Evaluation of the so-called signs of the time, or the analysis of the present situation in the world, are often present in the social documents of the Church. The authors usually employ the method used by Jeunesse Ouvriére Chrétienne (JOC, Young Christian Workers), and adopted for the use of the Catholic social doctrine by John XXIII in the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*. It consists of three stages: "to look, judge, act"<sup>2</sup>. At the first stage – diagnosis of the situation – we juxtapose pros and cons related to the achievements of civilization.

It seems that humankind can feel justified pride in being able to master the forces of nature, which enables understanding and directing complex processes on Earth and even in space. Highly developed societies have the capacity to live comfortably and prosperously because of science and technology. These achievements cannot be questioned, but being aware of the possibilities of a man, one must remember at the same time about everything that seems to be counterproductive to – as John Paul II put it – "human life becoming more and more human<sup>3</sup>." Using the language of the Polish pope, it can be said that the modern man often turns out to be "intoxicated with the vortex of his own discoveries" and "convinced that technical progress knows no boundaries" in a prosperous world, and he sometimes follows apparent imperatives justified by the law of development and progress. For example, instead

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A. and H. Toffler, Budowa nowej cywilizacji. Polityka trzeciej fali, Poznań [no publishing date], p. 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> MM 236. (The article uses the following abbreviations for Church documents: MM – Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*; EV – Encyclical *Evangelium vitae*; RH – Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*; SrS – Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*; LS – Encyclical *Laudato si*).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> RH 14.

of respecting life, man accepts the imperative of getting rid of and destroying one's life<sup>4</sup>. But most often, living in a world filled with goods that serve and facilitate life, the modern man in the most developed societies is anxious, consciously or subconsciously afraid, threatened<sup>5</sup>.

Even more dramatic is the state of the poor countries, where countless people live in extreme poverty. In addition, "there are many millions of people who have lost hope" as the situation is only getting worse. Unfortunately, already in 1987, John Paul II wrote in the Encyclical Sollicitudo rei socialis – the current world situation from the point of view of develop-

ment seems rather negative<sup>6</sup>. A few years later his assessment of the situation was similar. In 1993, John Paul II told the diplomats, "Never before has the land produced so abundantly and there have been so many hungry. The fruits of development are still not distributed fairly.<sup>7</sup>"

Directly addressing the audience, John Paul II often asked them specific questions. When analyzing the human situation nowadays, these questions are particularly dramat-

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ic, striking the most vulnerable points of human sensitivity. "How did it happen that man in this gigantic progress has discovered a source of danger for himself?" – asked the pope. "How and where did it come from in the heart of the modern science and technology that there has emerged the possibility of giant self-destruction of man? That everyday life gives so much evidence of using this against man what was supposed to be for man and what was to serve man?8". "Does this progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on Earth "more human" in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more "worthy of man"? (...) Is man as man (...) also developing and progressing, or is he regressing and being degraded in his humanity?" 9. So" is modern development and progress (...) the result of the covenant with Wisdom?," or are we observing its ever bigger disintegration in man and around him? This covenant was to serve the development and growth of man through all the works of his hands and his genius. But it does not. Hence the conclusion that man, following the route of his greatness, made a mistake and entered a path full of dangers.

Despite fascination with our greatness and greatness of our works, we are becoming increasingly aware of the tragedy of the situation – it has come to an imbalance in ourselves, and between us and the surrounding nature.

In spite of the many benefits we have, we must realize that we, "heirs of God's creation," who participate in the renewal of "the face of the Earth," we can also distort and destroy the face, that we can harm man and destroy the natural environment of life on

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Earth. For we forget the moral law that Earth is *res omnium*, the inheritance of all mankind, present and future generations, and we plunder and exploit Earth. Hence the great gap be-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Contemporary civilization seeks to impose upon man a number of apparent imperatives which its advocates justify by the law of development and progress. For example, the place of respect for life takes the 'imperative' of getting rid of and destroying life... "John Paul II, address at the UNESCO headquarters, 2.06.1980.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> RH15

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> SrS 13. In the early years of John Paul II's pontificate, the situation of the poor in the world was assessed as follows: "Half the world population, almost two and a half billion, live in countries where income per capita is no more than \$ 400. At least 800 million people in these countries live in total poverty, below any rational definition of a decent human life. Nearly half a billion people chronically suffer from hunger despite abundant harvest throughout the world. For every 100 children born in these countries, fifteen die before they turn 5, and millions of those who survive suffer physical or mental retardation. Sprawiedliwość gospodarcza dla wszystkich. Katolicka nauka społeczna a gospodarka USA. *List pasterski biskupów amerykańskich*, Życie katolickie1980, No. 5, p. 87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> John Paul II, Address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on 16.01.1993.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> John Paul II, Homily in Le Bourget 1.06.1980.

<sup>9</sup> RH15

tween the underdevelopment and the overgrowth in the world; "the paradox of abundance" is a scandal when, despite the excess of food, so many are starving.

It is also worth noting the consequences of this situation for the excluded people. Although they appear in international political and economic debates, yet usually in a marginal way, although they constitute the majority of the planet's population – there are billions of them. Seeing this, the Church unambiguously declares that "true ecological approach always becomes a social approach that must include justice in environmental discussions to hear both the cry of Earth and the scream of the poor. <sup>10</sup>"

# 2. Eco-perspectives, or ecological SOS as a testimony of common sense

One of the reasons for deepening the dramatic situation of the world is civilization that destroys our natural environment. The natural bond between man and nature has been broken, new products of human ingenuity and entrepreneurship turned against man. The Encyclical Laudato si describes the situation as follows: "We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the Earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. ""

The interest in the natural environment broke out in the second half of the 1960s. It turned out that its condition began to raise fears for the future of humankind. And although we often do not allow such thoughts, it is true that we cannot live without a suitable environment. In the nineteenth century, a special science dealing with organisms and their environment was developed in the field of biology. Ernst Haeckel called it ecology in 1866. Today it is one of the most trending words used in all possible ways. However, the ecological SOS is a testimony to the common sense and the self-preservation instinct among people. It also points to the existence of pure intentions greater than egotism and selfishness. The conscience of the world seems to be waking up. Mass media no longer pretend to be ignorant. Knowledge and technology seek alternative technologies, or at least the possibility to repair the damage. The biggest problem remains the economy and its free market dogma and steady profit. But, it seems, the decisive word in this case will belong to millions of consumers and voters.

The simple definition of ecology goes in two directions. The first shows the Greek source: oikos is a house, environment, logos is science, so ecology is the science of our home, of the world we live in. On the other hand, textbooks say that ecology is the science of relations between various elements of the environment, the ecosystem. Accent is put not on the individual elements, but on the "in between". Different sciences choose certain relationships and study them. The Christian perspective tries to be the most universal and all-encompassing, speaking of the world as God's creation, that is God's relation to man, and then the bonds

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between people and other elements of nature. Such ecology is a concern for life – for the life of nature, the land and its all inhabitants.

John Paul II integrates the concept of sustainable and ecologically fair development with the personalist perspective and the ideas of solidarity, human dignity and responsibility. For Catholic teaching, man is "the great-

est resource of Earth" and the central point of reference for any ecological program. Hence, frequent emphasis on the fundamental right to live, including the unborn, from conception to natural death. And the pope's encouragement to pursue dialogue between theology, phi-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. LS 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> LS 2.

losophy and natural sciences to overcome the fragmentary pieces of individual disciplines, to the "solidarity of minds", to take on courageously the great issues eternally bothering man and the concrete problems of today's world, including the protection of life and the natural environment. However, the question arises as to what extent Christian proposals can play a significant role among many modern systems, currents which often speak quite differently about God, man and nature.

The question seems to be easier for us to answer than ever before. We are fortunate to live in the times of great popes who are deeply committed to the ecology of the world. Pope John Paul II proclaimed the civilization of love based on the primacy of person over thing, the ethics over technique, the option to "be more" before "have more". He was deeply involved in teaching on the moral dimension of the world's crises, including the ecological crisis, and together with the Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople he signed the historic common declaration *On Environmental Ethics for the Safeguard of Creation*. He proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi the patron of ecologists, and while traveling the world, he worshiped Mother Earth with veneration. In Zamość, he cried with passion to the Poles: "The beauty of this land prompts me to call for its conservation for future generations. If you love this homeland, let this cry not remain unanswered!" 12.

Benedict XVI recognized the environmental movement as a "cry for fresh air" and asked for "the contemporary arks of Noah," or some kind of islands, oasis, to which man would be able to escape, "in which, in contrast to all destruction around us, beauty of the world and beauty of life becomes visible." He was not afraid to talk about serious environmental issues, the use of planetary energy resources, climate change, pollution of rivers and aquifers, disappearance of biodiversity, deforestation. He proclaimed the need for "generational and intergenerational solidarity" and called: "If you want to keep peace, watch over the work of creation." The message of January 1, 2010 made experts of the Church call him the most "green" pope ever. After his pontificate there are also 2,400 photovoltaic cells left on the roof of Paul VI Hall providing cheap, clean electricity for the Vatican 13.

We now have the teaching of Pope Francis, who at the inauguration of his pontificate proclaimed a papal program of concern for creation, the environment, our neighbor and ourselves. This program is fully illustrated by the Encyclical *Laudato si* signed on May 24, 2015. The task of "vocation of guarding creation," which Francis discussed, is difficult and demanding, since it includes the ecology of man, especially the poorest. Its base is spiritual ecology, caring for our hearts, so that hate, jealousy, pride do not pollute our lives! The project of integral ecology wants to combine the tasks and accomplishments of natural ecology, human ecology and spiritual ecology. Can implementation of such a holistic concept become a task for folk high school?!

# 3. Activities, or common concern for oikos, polis and oikumene

We see that the image of the contemporary world is ambivalent, it is full of lights and shadows. The image of ecological actions in the modern world is often the result of contradictory interests of various entities present in the socio-political and economic market. The report for the Club of Rome entitled "Factor Four" attempted to reconcile these contradictions. It presented a concept that doubled prosperity and halved the consumption of natural resources by increasing material productivity, thus bringing a fourfold increase in resource productivity. But success depends on the human factor: "The direction of progress cannot be changed by one book," write the authors. "It must be done by people, women, men and children as consumers and voters, workers, managers and engineers, politicians and journalists, teachers, students, holidaymakers and people living their everyday life." Although over 250 websites present their concept of efficiency revolution, the authors know that it is not enough, because for the most sustainable ecological development, the lifestyle of people, their habits and mo-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Homily during the Liturgy of the Word, Zamość, 12.06.1999.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Broad presentation of Benedict XVI's teaching on ecological issues can be found at http://www.swietostworze-nia.pl/czytelnia/22-spitu-kosciola/ecologia-benedykta-xvi (access 11.03.2017).

tives for choices is the most important. "As long as selfishness and insatiability will govern – the professors honestly claim – we will not be saved by even the most beautiful revolution of efficiency."

Contemporary ecological perspective shows us life as a new quality. The world of nature (i.e. organisms, species and their populations), which is well organized, creates a complex

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system of great diversity. All the innumerable forms which the living matter has taken in individual existence are not a collection of random elements, but they form some compact systems characterized by the flow of energy, the circulation of matter and the exchange of information. This abundance of organisms in the environment, or biodiversi-

ty, is not a simple catalog of different life forms, but a new quality that determines the order of nature and influences the spatial and temporal expansion of life. It has the characteristics of a community that creates the best living and growing environment for man, and the ethical implication that every human generation receives Earth in a lease from its ancestors and is morally obliged to hand it over to future generations in no worse condition. So the quality of human life depends on biodiversity. Trying to build an integral Christian vision of creation, one cannot overlook the present context: our current knowledge of nature, ecological crisis, or reflection on social, cultural and economic phenomena.

We note, for example, that where people are oppressed, nature is generally exploited mind-lessly, and war is one of the greatest ecological catastrophes. And conversely: the destruction of nature brings the destruction of human community. The exploitation of nature often involves overconsumption, unjust distribution of wealth, oppression of the poor, racism, sexism, degrading treatment of women, children or some social groups. Whereas in a society that seeks to renew Earth, one speaks of mutual respect, peace, justice, or the sanctity of life more often. In this perspective, ecological activities are linked to humanistic, social ecology, ecology of culture, or ecological spirit. Perhaps it is merely the use of the term "ecology", but it can also be an expression of a desire for a universal ecology, where concern for nature and the environment would also be a concern for creation. It would be integrated with the protection of social, cultural, spiritual space with values where sense, truth, goodness, beauty will determine the environment of authentic development. It would be common concern for *oikos*, *polis* and *oikumene*, where man would live in harmony with nature, another man, herself/himself and with God.

It seems that the right intellectual climate is particularly important for such a vision. Pollution of the intellectual environment by ignoring the truth and moral responsibility and re-

It seems that the right intellectual climate is particularly important for such a vision. Pollution of the intellectual environment by ignoring the truth and moral responsibility and reducing human life to the level of tv series or comic-strip characters, through advertising slogans and pop culture kitsch, through nihilism, relativism and the choice of post-truth create a climate in which pathologies can grow.

ducing human life to the level of TV series or comic-strip characters, through advertising slogans and pop culture kitsch, through nihilism, relativism and the choice of post-truth create a climate in which pathologies can grow.

We therefore need "ecological man". For ecologists this ideal is Saint Francis of Assisi. John Paul II proclaimed him the patron of environmentalists on November 29, 1979, and considered him to be "the most beautiful

proof" of the legitimacy of the Christian concept of creature and element protection against unreasonable and unjust destruction; the concept of the biblical relationship of creation and redemption. New reading of the old ideas of Saint Francis in the contemporary context also invokes the revolutionary idea of universal brotherhood – the Franciscan character of fraternal openness to nature, expressed in the open approach to the non-human world, and in dialogue with the whole creation. It is also a new way of looking at another human being:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> E.U. Weizsacker, A.B. Lovins, L.H. Lovins, *Mnożnik cztery. Podwojony dobrobyt – dwukrotnie mniejsze zużycie zasobów naturalnych. Nowy raport dla Klubu Rzymskiego*, Wydawnictwo Rolewski, Toruń 1999, p. 16.

bringing up solidarity and identifying with the poor. The pontificate of Pope Francis puts the Franciscan phenomenon at the forefront of the integral ecology project, which wants to redefine the ecological horizons of Catholicism today.

# 4. Franciscan inspirations, or the 13th-century Saint as the ideal of "ecological man"

"Who could describe his extraordinary love for all the creatures of God? Who would be able to express with how much joy he saw the wisdom of God, power and goodness in the creatures?" 15, asked the first biographer of Francis of Assisi, Thomas of Celano O.F.M. The fullest answer to such questions is found in the readings of *Canticle of the Sun* where the following creatures are invited to praise God as sisters and brothers: sun, stars, water, air and fire, and "our mother, the Earth that feeds and hides us, and bears various fruits, colorful flowers and herbs. 16" Commenting on this text, Pope Francis wrote: "Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them "to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason". His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists." 17

Friar Francis, full of optimism and affirmation of the material world, recognizes the inner dignity of nature and proclaims the need for peace and reconciliation between people and between man and nature. This is beautifully illustrated by the story of Gubbio, where one managed to bring reconciliation between the inhabitants and the hated wolf. The phenomenon of saint Francis made the attitude of both sides change, and we are convinced that a man of pure heart, a truly God's man can genuinely communicate with animals. Carlo Carretto remarked, "What is unusual about the Gubbio wolf's adventure is not the fact that he became tamed, but that the inhabitants of Gubbio, they became tamed, they did not run with fork and ax to meet the wolf, who was approaching them trembling with cold and starving, but with food and warm drink. This is the miracle of love: the discovery that the whole creation is one being planned by God who is the Father; so when you appear, like Him, without arms and full of peace, the creature recognizes you and smiles at you. 18"

St. Francis of Assisi is not a philosopher or a theologian, but a mystic whom everything testified that God was present. So reading his texts, analyzing his attitude to nature, we must re-

member that we deal with a man whose love for creatures, non-utilitarian nature vision, cosmic brotherhood or humility are understood only in the light of his faith and uncompromising way of experiencing it. He discovered that in order to fully see God's creature, it is necessary to have a transformed, pure heart; and pollution in the world begins with the contamination of heart and mind. And when he saw reality, he had no doubt that

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there were no pests and weeds in nature (what environmentalists are discovering today), because God created everything very well<sup>19</sup>. And in the endeavor for new national parks and na-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Thomas of Celano, Życiorys pierwszy Świętego Franciszka z Asyżu, ch. XXIX, p. 80, [in:] Wczesne źródła franciszkańskie. Ed. S. Kafel, ATK, Vol. 1, Warsaw 1981, p. 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Pisma św. Franciszka i św. Klary, Warszawa 1992, p. 125.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> LS 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> C. Carretto, Ja, Franciszek, Niepokalanów 1987, p. 85.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Z. Świerczek, *Ekologia – Kościół i św. Franciszek*, WSD OO. Franciszkanów, Kraków 1990; N. Doubinin, *Świętego Franciszka z Asyżu braterstwo z przyrodą*, Mała Biblioteka Instytutu Franciszkańskiego, Łódź-Lublin-Moskwa 2000.

ture reserves, it is worth remembering that Francis "forbade the brothers lumbermen to cut the whole tree with a hope for it to grow anew. He ordered the gardener to leave the rim around the garden so that the green herbs and the beauty of the flowers would proclaim the Father of all the beautiful things every season. In the garden he ordered to section out the plot for fragrant herbs and flowers, so that the observers would remember eternal bliss.<sup>20</sup>"

Pope Francis writes in his Encyclical *Laudato si*: "I do not want to write this Encyclical without turning to that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as my guide and

- 1. BE A MAN AMONG THE CREATURES, HIS BROTHER AMONG BROTHERS.
- 2. Treat all things created with love and reverence.
- 3. You have been entrusted to the Earth like a garden, conquer it with wisdom.
- 4. Take care of man, animal, the Herb, the air and water to their land has not been completely deprived.
- 5. Use things in moderation, because extravagance is not the future.
- 6. You have been given a mission to discover the mystery of the meal: that life is filled with life.
- 7. Stop node violence, to understand what's right to exist.
- 8. Remember that the world is not only a reflection of your image, but carries in itself the image of God Almighty.
- 9. When the tree cut down, leave at least one momentum that his life was not interrupted.
- 10. Tread with respect to the stones, because each thing has its value.

inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome. I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.21"

Encyclical *Laudato si*, presenting this project, is a letter of the pope to the world, to people of good will and is an invitation to talk about the world as our common and unique home. It proclaims that nothing in this world is indifferent to us that "the ex-

ploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty" and "environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked." It builds a picture of a world that is dynamic, open, systemic, evolutionary, and affirmative. It is created in dialogue with contemporary science and culture, it sees global problems, but also strongly stresses the problems of local communities. It remains to be seen whether this image of man-nature relations in times of ecological and climatic crisis will help motivate Christians to make their lifestyle choices more ecologically-oriented and help them make good consumer, spiritual and life choices.

As an inspiration, let me quote the contemporarily formulated so-called Decalogue of St. Francis, based on his writings and early Franciscan sources:

- 1. Be a man among the creatures, his brother among brothers.
- 2. Treat all things created with love and reverence.
- 3. You have been entrusted to the Earth like a garden, conquer it with wisdom.

Thomas of Celano, Życiorys drugi Świętego Franciszka z Asyżu, chapter CXXIV, p. 165, [in:] Wczesne źródła franciszkańskie, Volume. 1, p. 167. The Encyclical Laudato si comments: "Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. "Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker" (Wis 13:5); indeed, "his eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world" (Rom 1:20). For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise." (LS 12)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> LS 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> LS 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> LS 56.

- 4. Take care of man, animal, the herb, the air and water to their land has not been completely deprived.
- 5. Use things in moderation, because extravagance is not the future.
- 6. You have been given a mission to discover the mystery of the meal: that life is filled with life.
- 7. Stop node violence, to understand what's right to exist.
- 8. Remember that the world is not only a reflection of your image, but carries in itself the image of God Almighty.
- 9. When the tree cut down, leave at least one momentum that his life was not interrupted.
- 10. Tread with respect to the stones, because each thing has its value.

And the spiritual power can bring the prayer at the end of the eco-encyclical *A prayer for our Earth:* 

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this Earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the Earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

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### UNIVERSITY IN DESTITUTE TIME



The concept of "destitute time" was introduced into modern culture by the great German poet Friedrich Hölderlin. Time is destitute, he wrote. One of its expressions is forgetting about the difference between good and evil, the loss of order, spiritual confusion. "Destitute time" is a time of particular caesura, the time of pressure on the borders of Europe by refugees fleeing conflicts and weapons which are a product of the Western technical civilization. This is the time when young people marching in Gdańsk against immigrants shout, "We will do the same thing as Hitler did with the Jews", and someone on the Internet forum posts: "You're welcome, we have good base - concentration camps." "Destitute time" is the time of small-minded people whose life, as Dubravka Ugrešić incisively writes, has turned into a permanent carnival due to the new media. The medieval carnival, overturning the existing order and criticizing the existing hierarchies of norms and values, lasted several days. The online carnival of life is permanent. The medieval carnival used a mask. Today, as Dubravka Ugrešić writes, "small-minded people rushed to leave their traces behind, developing an unusual appetite: some get naked and show bums, others show genitals; some sing, others write; some dance, others paint; some, kind of multiplexes in the human edition, do everything at once. The small-minded man has finally won the media power, delivers speeches"1."Destitute time" is the time when teachers do not have enough empathy and cultural competence to notice that their pupil was bullied on the Internet to death – by their fellow pupils. "Destitute time" is the time when we turn evil into a performance, and criminals and murderers reach the status of

THE MEDIEVAL CARNIVAL, OVERTURNING THE EXISTING ORDER AND CRITICIZING THE EXISTING HIERARCHIES OF NORMS AND VALUES, LASTED SEVERAL DAYS. THE ONLINE CARNIVAL OF LIFE IS PERMANENT.

heroes and celebs, earning millions of royalties for diaries and memoirs that become movie scripts. "Destitute time" is the time when there is no sense of shame, decency and honor. "Destitute time" is the time when by means of language euphemisms we try to for-

get that we live in a structural lie. There are no murders, only ethnic cleansing. There are no wars, but, as Angela Merkel said: "Intensifying presence of a hostile army on the border", there is no exploitation, but only economics and outsourcing. "Destitute time" is the time when a professor cannot tell a student that "something is his Achilles heel" not to offend his mind, it is the time when, while asking "Who is the creator of Iliad," he hears: "Horace," he expresses joy that it rings a bell. With all this in mind, it is necessary to add: "destitute time" is the time in which it is increasingly difficult not to be ashamed to be human.

What has happened since the renaissance humanism of "Oratio de hominis dignitate" (Speaking on human dignity) by Giovanni Pico della Mirandoli and the slogan "Man it sounds proudly."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> D. Ugrešić, *Karnawał małego człowieka*, transl. into Polish D.J. Ćirlić, "Gazeta Wyborcza", Warszawa 2015 01.10.

The crisis of a modern university is a result of the crisis of European man<sup>2</sup>. One of its causes is the imbalance between the material and the spiritual dimensions of life. The development of natural sciences at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, which contributed to the faster development of technical applications, also brought negative effects. It contributed to the development of new forms of positivism, the belief that the only criterion for knowledge are empirically validated positive facts. Wilhelm Dilthey, German philosopher, noted the imbalance between natural sciences, scientist mentality and humanities. While natural sciences deal with the material, external world of nature, humanities relate to the inner spiritual world of man. He called humanities *Geisteswissenschfaten*, the teaching of the spiritual experiences of man.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the notion of spirit was one of the most important concepts. In France, a philosophical current called the philosophy of the

spirit was born. Emmanuel Mounier, French personalist, founded one of France's most important cultural magazines, "L'Espri" ("Spirit"). German philosopher Rudolf Eucken, almost completely forgotten, became the first philosopher in 1908 to receive the Nobel Prize for spiritual philosophy. Speaking of spiritual experience, these thinkers considered it the experience that gave birth to great culture, art, experience of values,

Natural sciences which are based only on objective facts do not reveal to humans any supportive life bonds, ideals or norms that could give them some orientation. Instrumental reason is not enough. Although it knows what it does and how to achieve technical goals, it cannot point sense to man or give him any existential support. Science forgot about the world of spirit.

meanings, and goals. Nevertheless, already at that time, the threat of displacement of the spiritual life was visible. The creator of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, delivered a famous lecture *Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man* in Vienna on May 7, 1935. He stated that natural sciences which are based only on objective facts do not reveal to humans any supportive life bonds, ideals or norms that could give them some orientation. Instrumental reason is not enough. Although it knows what it does and how to achieve technical goals, it cannot point sense to man or give him any existential support. Science forgot about the world of spirit. Husserl was convinced that overcoming the crisis was possible only by returning to spiritual experience. He wrote:

"The crisis of European existence can end in only one of two ways: in the ruin of a Europe alienated from its rational sense of life, fallen into a barbarian hatred of spirit; or in the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy, through a heroism of reason that will definitely overcome naturalism. Europe's greatest danger is weariness. Let us as "good Europeans" do battle with this danger of dangers with the sort of courage that does not shirk even the endless battle. If we do, then from the annihilating conflagration of disbelief, from the fiery torrent of despair regarding the West's mission to humanity, from the ashes of the great weariness, the phoenix of a new inner life of the spirit will arise as the underpinning of a great and distant human future, for the spirit alone is immortal.<sup>3</sup>"

World War II events questioned Husserl's optimism, and his diagnosis turned out to be too late.

After the war, in 1952, Max Horkheimer, a co-founder of the Frankfurt School, delivered a lecture on *Responsibility and Studies* at the University of Frankfurt after he returned from the American immigration to Germany, facing both the problem of the German guilt and the state of education. He stated in it:

"Technology takes possession of not only human bodies but also souls. As in economic theory one sometimes speaks of the veil of money, today it is possible to talk about the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The term introduced by Edmund Husserl. In this part I base on the redrafted fragments of my publication *Kryzys człowieczeństwa europejskiego*, "Charaktery" 2012, no. 3, pp. 108–113.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> E. Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, transl. Quentin Lauer, New York 1965, p. 192.

technical veil. The dream of the civilized is no longer a saved world, not even a fairytale land of milk and honey (...) but another car or TV set.<sup>4</sup>"

If despite the signs of crisis, the concept of spirit was still dominant in the first decades of the twentieth century, it has now vanished completely from our thinking and language. We no longer talk about spirituality or spiritual experience. With the disappearance of inner spiritual reflection, previous important concepts have started to vanish: happiness has been replaced with success; wisdom displaced with the civilization of knowledge; theory, in the Greek sense, as contemplation and delight over truth, goodness and beauty was removed by theory understood as a well-functioning hypothesis.

Let's take a closer look at how the concept of theory has changed. From the beginning of the modern development of science, theory is understood as a bold hypothesis that can be experimentally verified and has significant pragmatic consequences. Therefore, researchers who apply for grants to the National Science Center Poland must declare what patents, new technologies or at least solutions to social problems arise from their research. Whereas for Plato, *theoros* is a soul that, before it appeared in the flesh, lived in the ideal world, and, following divine souls, was heading the place of the true and beautiful being that was her food. And when she was fed, she fell in delight, or *theoria*. The theory is for Plato a delight over the view. In theoretic attitude is the one who, listening to the music of Pergolesi or Mozart, reading the poems of Celan or Herbert, contemplating Rembrandt's paintings, falls in delight. That is why humanists, when submitting grant applications to the National Science Center Poland, should rather answer the question: In what kind of delight are they going to fall during the research? How will it change their soul? But who will give them money, especially if they cannot demonstrate the pragmatic benefits of delight?

The concept of education has undergone similar changes. Nowadays, it means equipping people with knowledge, skills and competences necessary for flexible functioning in the labor market. Man, however, is not only an entity in the labor market. Therefore, the German language, in which the modern pedagogy has developed, has derived the notion of *Bildung* from the word *Bild*, which means a picture. To educate oneself and to be educated is to grow up to the picture of humanity. The famous Diogenes of Synopy, who was walking with the lantern in Athens at noon, knew it, and when asked what he was doing, he replied, "I'm looking for

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man." Today, a contemporary Diogenes, or rather a specialist in the so-called human resources, would answer: I'm looking for a specialist. It is impossible to educate without answering the question: who is man? It is, however, one of the least frequently asked questions today.

Immanuel Kant once asked four famous questions: What can I know? What should I do? What can I expect? Who is man? The first answer is provided with technical knowledge. Its aim is to dominate over nature and society. The answer to second question brings

metaphysical knowledge, ethics and axiology. Its purpose is to identify the sphere of truths and values that people should strive for. The third question relates to religious knowledge. Its task is to search for meaning and salvation through the relationship with the Supreme Being. The present crisis of university education is the absolutization of the first type of knowledge, the technical knowledge. We live in a state of radical imbalance. Old questions have been replaced by new ones: What is the purpose of knowledge? How to be efficient and effective? How to change the future? And with the disappearance of the question: Who is man?, the question concerning the good for man has also disappeared.

 $<sup>^4\,</sup>$  M. Horkheimer, Odpowiedzialność i studia, collective transl. into Polish led by H. Walentynowicz, "Kronos" 2011, no. 2, p. 241.

The crisis of the spirit has now been strengthened by the primacy of material (hedonistic, utilitarian) and vital values over higher ethical, intellectual and aesthetic values. The primacy

of the former is related to the development of civilization. It triggers creative energies necessary for its faster and more efficient development in the form of pursuit of pleasure, desire for gain and possession, promotion, convenience, long and efficient life. But if

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these aspirations are not subordinated to higher, aesthetic, intellectual, and above all moral values, tendencies to hold only to lower values can lead to radical individual and social egoism, as well as to the end of the full development of man. The modern face of "destitute time" consists in clouding higher values by lower values, as if human life was reduced to the sphere of pleasure, utility and vitality.

University has always been a place of education. Education, however, has now taken a technological turn. It has been reduced to acquiring measurable competences, skills and qualifications. It is difficult to question the importance of these skills, competences and qualifications necessary to live in the modern technical civilization. Such education, however, must be balanced by the existential dimension, human, as still understood by old teachers. The purpose of education cannot be a mere preparation of entities for the labor market. Therefore Horkheimer stated in his lecture: "Education should be a cognition of what we care about as human beings, not just as members of the industrial society.5" Education must be based on knowledge, but also on moral values, existential meanings as points of support, aesthetic experiences that are to last a lifetime. Hence, it is harmonious and comprehensive. It cannot be limited to communicating in English and using computers or tablets. It must be done through cultural transmission since great works of European culture, great moral patterns reveal the meaning of humanity and sense of life. Therefore L.A. Seneca wrote once to his pupil, prosecutor Lucius: "You know what is needed to be a good prosecutor because you studied with me: littere" (literature, art, philosophy). Without them you cannot be a cultural man, and without culture you cannot be a good prosecutor. Education is therefore inner formation, the shaping of humanitarianism. Horkheimer drew attention especially to the latter, referring to the horror of war:

"After the horror that has just happened, and in spite of it, I cannot give up hope that not only in the first period after the catastrophe, but also in the upcoming decades, this forgotten attitude will again be the purpose of university education. Restricting studies to acquiring skills [...] is not enough. A judge without empathy means death of justice.<sup>6</sup>"

Education is therefore a state of mind that remains even when one forgets all acquired skills and competences, even when all forms of social life fall apart. Man will maintain dignity and decency in the most extreme conditions.

University, not betraying its mission, cannot be only the place to prepare specialists for the labor market. It must return to full and universal education, with a focus not only on intellect but above all on reason. University is redundant if it is there only to gain professional skills and adapt to the labor market. It is necessary, however, for education, for achievement of human competence. Their lack is particularly evident in the National Qualification Framework.

Two obstacles, however, are in the way to such learning. Education, as it has been said, is the process of acquiring, of internalizing. I believe former teachers understood education this way and they urged us to memorize poems. Not because there was no hard disk drive yet. One of my students during the exam in history of philosophy asked me, full of indignation: Why do you demand this knowledge from me? I have it, after all, available in my hard disk drive? Knowledge in hard disk drive, however, is not my knowledge, knowledge I thought through, acquired, it is not a part of me. It is not computers that are to be equipped with knowledge, but we, as human beings, are to be educated. I have an older friend who graduated from a prewar classical class at Nowodworski High School. To this day he recites Homer's fragments

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 240.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 245.

in the original language. When asked why he does it, he responds by shrugging his shoulders and saying it improves his mood and gives him a sense of dignity.

The second difficulty results from the fact that it is still difficult to believe that human beings are more than just a set of skills. This difficulty results also from the ever stronger ten-

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sion between the spirit world, which requires work and effort, and the world of technology, which exempts us from work and effort. Modern technical civilization, which is a civilization of facilitation, also contributes to spiritual laziness. In the world of technology everything is efficient. Just move your right thumb quickly. We press something and everything works. In the sphere of the spirit nothing works this way. Reading books, thinking, acquiring knowledge, reflection require a lot of effort and amount of work.

Even in the interwar period, 16-year-olds read Plato in Greek in Polish high schools. Today it is unimaginable even for 20-year-olds, although we have such great technical achievements. Or perhaps that is why it is unimaginable.

As we have suppressed the source concept of the theory, we likewise wiped out the origin of the concept of education. For the Greeks it was "caring for yourself" and not, as we now think, acquiring knowledge and competence. To educate oneself is to take care of oneself and at the same time of others. Only the ones, who taking care of themselves, can give students the ability to take care of themselves, can and should become teachers, educators, and professors. We are more familiar with a different formula written on the front of the Oracle of Delphi: "Know thyself." Knowing oneself, as all cognition and knowledge, is important inso-

Educare is now understood as the transmission of knowledge, unlike by the ancient greeks who derived it from the word educere, which means to give a hand. The teacher is not the one who only is to pass on the knowledge, but the one who is supposed to give a hand and let the learner-student change.

far as it serves to care for oneself. Modernity, especially Descartes, co-author of modern science, and Francis Bacon ("We can as much as we know"), who discovered the source of power in knowledge, are responsible for the dominance of the latter formula. This is how the ancient tradition of education, still present in the Middle Ages and echoing here and

there in later centuries, has been displaced by modern tradition. Therefore *educare* is now understood as the transmission of knowledge, unlike by the ancient Greeks who derived it from the word *educere*, which means to give a hand. The teacher is not the one who only is to pass on the knowledge, but the one who is supposed to give a hand and let the learner-student change. At the beginning of the first lectures, we tell students what they should learn and how to gain competence while studying. Returning to the original idea of education, however, we should tell them how to change their lives, how they should care for themselves and what kind of people they should become.

Dominance of the second type of education leads to dominance of intellect at the expense of reason in education. Intellect and reason are often considered synonymous. It is worth to separate them, however, as Otto Friedrich Bollnow does. Intellect is neutral in relation to moral values and principles, including responsibility, the power of cognition. Intellect allows us to become acquainted with the principles of mathematical rationality, to release nuclear energy, to decode the human genome. But whether the knowledge of the human genome will be used to discover new procedures and medications treating the most difficult diseases of civilization or eugenics, it will not be settled by intellect. Here we need reason, which is open to values, sensitive to good and evil. Intellect without reason has a tendency to connect with passions. Bollnow wrote: "Intellect conceals an authentic danger of producing extreme fanaticism together with passion.<sup>7</sup>" The word "reason" is derived from the word "reasoning".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> O.F. Bollnow, *Rozum a siły irracjonalne*, transl.into Polish E. Paczkowska-Ładowska, "Znak" 1979, no. 11 (305), p. 1203.

To be a reasonable person means to use reason to understand others and oneself. Reason is close to the word wisdom, and as we know, reason and wisdom do not go hand in hand. The ideologies of the twentieth century were intelligently introduced and managed. Adolf Eichmann, if he lived in contemporary times, would certainly be used by some great corporation as an outstanding logistics specialist, since the transports of Jews to Auschwitz were very efficient. But what he lacked was reason, the thinking ability from the perspective of the other. The German education at that time lost that fundamental dimension. The training of reason, its sensitization to empathy, is important, because we now have more and more unbelievable

intellectual possibilities. At the same time, however, we are getting rid of humanities and social sciences from education.

Paradoxically, the development of technology does not support our responsibility, and even exempts us from it. In the Middle Ages, when handwritten books were written

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for years on expensive parchment, only masterpieces were preserved. Since the Gutenberg's invention of the font it has been getting worse. Everyone who wrote on typewriter still felt responsible for the word on their fingers. People knew what was going to happen when they formulated the thought badly. Today, when we write on computers using the method of "cut", "paste," the level of our thinking dropped radically, and library shelves and the Internet are filled with rubbish. The entry on Facebook: "Today at 7.00 I drank coffee" happens to be considered a Copernicus discovery.

To educate means to "give a hand", to take out. Where from? The Greeks said: from *stultitia*. A word as forgotten today as wisdom. *Stultitia* is stupidity. The last who dedicated a treaty to stupidity was Erasmus of Rotterdam. The modern manifestation of stupidity is mediocrity. Spanish philosopher and writer J. Ortega y Gasset diagnosed it. He wrote in "The Revolt of the Masses":

"I may be mistaken, but the present-day writer, when he takes his pen in hand to treat a subject which he has studied deeply, has to bear in mind that the average reader, who has never concerned himself with this subject, if he reads does so with the view, not of learning something from the writer, but rather, of pronouncing judgment on him when he is not in agreement with the commonplaces that the said reader carries in his head. If the individuals who make up the mass believed themselves specially qualified, it would be a case merely of personal error, not a sociological subversion. The characteristic of the hour is that the commonplace mind, knowing itself to be commonplace, has the assurance to proclaim the rights of the commonplace and to impose them wherever it will. As they say in the United States: "to be different is to be indecent." The mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select. Anybody who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated. And it is clear, of course, that this "everybody." is not "everybody." "Everybody" was normally the complex unity of the mass and the divergent, specialised minorities. Nowadays, "everybody" is the mass alone. ""

"This is what (...) I laid down as the characteristic of our time; not that the vulgar believes itself super-excellent and not vulgar, but that the vulgar proclaims and imposes the rights of vulgarity, or vulgarity as a right.9"

How do you pursue such an education task when universities that had always been the place of independent thinking and search for truth have become a part of global entrepreneurship? Husserl's student, Hans Georg Gadamer, anticipated it:

"Institutionalizing science and bringing it to the form of a production venture (*Betrieb*) belongs to the union of economic and social life in the era of industrialization. Science is not only a production venture, but also all the elements of modern life are organized as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> J. Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, transl. by an anonymous author, New York 1932, p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 70.

a production enterprise. An entity with its specified efficiency is fitted into a larger entourage, which, in turn, has a highly specialized function in a highly specialized organization of the modern work, but without any personal interest in the whole.<sup>10</sup>"

These diagnoses have been far-sighted.

Before our very eyes university is transforming into a well-functioning corporation, not only modernly managed and subordinated to economic accounting, but fully adapted to the needs of global business. University-corporation is becoming Panopticon of Bentham, a place of permanent bureaucratic supervision, which diverts trust on which the academic community has so far relied. "University-Panopticon" is based on the assumption that it is possible to measure the effects of thinking and plan what will be thought in the near future, as if it was possible to determine in advance what will come to mind and what will be worth thinking. "University-Panopticon" fulfills the dreams of bureaucrats, which have never been achieved before: how to put thinkers and writers at desks and make them account for every line of text? Recently not only the Bologna system but also new procedures have been introduced:

BEFORE OUR VERY EYES UNIVERSITY IS TRANSFORMING INTO A WELL-FUNCTIONING CORPORATION, NOT ONLY MODERNLY MANAGED AND SUBORDINATED TO ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING, BUT FULLY ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF GLOBAL BUSINESS. UNIVERSITY-CORPORATION IS BECOMING PANOPTICON OF BENTHAM, A PLACE OF PERMANENT BUREAUCRATIC SUPERVISION, WHICH DIVERTS TRUST ON WHICH THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY HAS SO FAR RELIED.

grants, national qualification frameworks, recruitment, quality of education, career analysis of the graduates, personal data protection, etc. etc. It results in an increasingly narrow gap between continual planning and reporting. Not only are we ceaselessly planning and reporting, but we are planning reports and reporting plans. I remember years ago, as Fr. Prof. Józef Tischner came with a book during the martial law in early Octo-

ber for the first seminar. He opened it and stated that it was Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit" and that semester that work would be read and interpreted. The discussion was profound and lively. Today he would not run this seminar. First, he would have to determine whether it would be in the form of seminar, exercises, in a classroom or online. He would have to write an hour-by-hour plan of each classes, specifying which chapters would be read in a given week. He would have to specify the student's knowledge, competencies and skills, describe the graduate's profile, assign ECTS points. He would have to get the approval of the Quality Commission of the Institute, Quality Commission of the Faculty, Scientific Council of the Institute, Scientific Council of the Faculty, and attract a group of 25 students. Was education less effective then? I do not think so. There was more time to think, talk and teach. "University-Panopticon" effectively displaces a university based on academic community and trust. At University-Panoptikon, there is less and less room for authentic and free thinking, direct relationship between master and student, and the most creative and interesting initiatives are being directed to non-university foundations and non-governmental organizations.

University-Corporation has become the subject of market play, of demand and supply law. The tyranny of mediocrity puts us in front of a dramatic question: Should humanities and culture be removed from university simply because they do not find mature recipients? So should university serve the truth or the society? Is the alternative false? What should this service depend on? Should it succumb to the lowest tastes, direct democracy imposing its beliefs and principles in online forums and on the streets, or should it serve the upbringing of society? Is university supposed to be an authority, or is it to accept the continuously lowering education requirements to fulfill the ideal of equality? Is it supposed to defend masters, canons of language culture, or succumb to social pressure. The answer to this alternative is related to the response to the question who is man and what his good depends on. Is it to be determined by social and cultural fashion, labor market demand, economic opportunities, politics? Or should its definition require reflection on the European tradition of culture and thought? The fact is that university is increasingly less prone to ask and try to respond to such questions at present.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Teoria, etyka, edukacja. Eseje wybrane*, collective transl. into Polish, Warszawa 2008, p. 55.

"University-Corporation" also ceased to be a "university-temple," a place of withdrawal, reflection. It became a "University-Passage," a place one passes while hastily moving from home to work, and from work back home, from home or work to another college or university, to course and from course, to volunteering and from volunteering. "University-Passage" is no longer a place of education, and it is becoming the place to gather points necessary to obtain a diploma and build a CV that will be useful in the labor market. This passage is full only during the recruitment period and the examination session. "University-Passage" is float-

ing in "liquid modernity". Everything is temporary, variable and shallow: laws, regulations, rating systems, authorities, and even student notes circulating on the Internet.

Lastly, I would like to raise a question: to what extent are folk high schools in Poland currently subject to the processes described above? Certainly, as social institutions with a different status, they are not under strong market pressure and bureaucracy. Therefore they are much more faithful to their teaching ideals. Their purpose of education was never to prepare candidates for the labor market

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only, but full lifelong education. Folk high school initiated by M.F.S. Grundtvig, also called *the school for life*, has always sought to show the universal living conditions of man. Folk high schools were not confined solely to training of intellect, but they also educated the sphere of reason by shaping sensitivity to beauty and truth. The most striking thing in the education program of folk high schools has always been the pursuit of balance between the development of intellect and feelings, humanities and nature, between human respect and respect for Earth, between personal development and social activation, between aspirations for independence, freedom and critical thinking, ability to cooperate and dialogue with others, between shaping local, regional, national identity and universal openness to different localities, regionalisms and cultures.

In difficult times, which I described quoting poet as "destitute time", in the time of specialization, pragmatism and technology of education, the education program of folk high schools, aimed at development of widely understood humanity, can become a model of education for the whole academic community in Poland.

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#### Peter Stratenwerth

Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów, Poland

## COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING – THE KEY TO DEVELOPMENT



#### Folk High Schools and Today's Challenges

I am happy to have been also given the opportunity to share my experiences of Grundtvig's pedagogy and folk high schools in this publication. I would like to address some issues which I consider specifically important in this form of education.

Three times in my life have I come across the folk high school. For the first time, in 1980s when as a young man I participated in a four-year course of biodynamic agriculture in Switzerland. For the second time, at the beginning of this century when my wife – Ewa, was coordinating an international project within the Grundtvig programme directed mainly to women from the countryside. For the third time, now when we have initiated the Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów. Before pondering on my experiences from the above-mentioned course in Switzerland and from Grzybów, I would like to refer to some aspects of the present time which make Folk High Schools especially needed nowadays.

That we live in a period of destabilization, of an increasing feeling of uncertainty is not a new discovery. The majority of us know well how the speed and the pressure of our life are rising. Today, a young man comes of age in a stream of an infinite amount of information, and simultaneously of an only slightly less unlimited freedom. The agglomerations of the cities are growing. The fight for work and prestige becomes increasingly more competitive. Unevenness and financial pressure are deepening. When I was a pupil in a gymnasium in the peaceful Switzerland, I was often told: 'Don't stare! Focus and learn, because you will miss your train!' And today? Far more greater is this pressure! No wonder then that growing up under such pressure,

Participation in a course of Folk High School should be an important stop in one's life. Here the pace of events slows down, we learn without pressure in a non-competitive environment, we live and cooperate with other people who have also matured to come to a halt on this stop and take a breath. As students of the Folk High School, we do not look for a trained instructor who will "sell" the product to us, but we meet people who share with us their work and life.

we start to take "shortcuts": we learn – but only for exams, we work – but only for money, we consume – but only to get prestige.

The race for success and prestige makes it harder for us to listen to other people, to find an agreement, to cooperate, to solve conflicts, to discover our skills and develop non-profitable passions.

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learn without pressure in a non-competitive environment, we live and cooperate with other people who have also matured to come to a halt on this stop and take a breath. As students of the folk high school, we do not look for a trained instructor who will "sell" the product to us, but we meet people who share with us their work and life.

Taking part in a course of folk high school makes it easier for the people to open themselves to listen to the others and to understand them; here we can find – discover in ourselves – unknown passions, skills; see ourselves in a group of others, practice solving conflicts in a peaceful way and dealing with aggression.

Skills that we will acquire in a folk high school, may not be useful in an everyday fight in the contemporary world, but they can make us a bit more happier people.

#### **Swiss Memories**

Emil and Alicja Meier, running a biodynamic farm (organic farm based on Rudolf Steiner's principles) in a small Swiss village of Hombrechtikon, received many rewards from local authorities for their culture-forming activity. In their orchards, barn and on their backyard regularly – for decades – workshops with masters of woodcutting, of painting as well as exhibitions and concerts had been taking place. For several decades, Emil Meier had been editing a monthly magazine spreading the idea of biodynamical agriculture, all this time showing the farmer as a philosopher consciously fulfilling his destiny and profession.

With no doubt, Emil Meier in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century united all the biodynamic agriculture movement in Switzerland and through this was also instrumental in starting in 1980 the first four-year course of biodynamic agriculture. I think that this course contained all the main elements characteristic for the folk high schools.

A small community of organic farmers created a four-year course that on the one hand addressed the issues of universe, soil, plants, animals, human beings, and on the other hand provided the opportunity to gain new experience during many years of practice, as well as gave preparation for the profession of a farmer.

The course led to a better cooperation and communication between farmers, made for the growth of organic farms in Switzerland and for the improvement of their situation, resulted in knowledge transfer between farmers and other people, thanks to which farmers could find successors to work on their farms when their age or destiny forced them to give up their work in the profession. So the courses served and have been serving not only the participants of them, but they also have many "side effects". For many years, the courses had been organised only thanks to private sponsors, but eventually they got recognition and support from the state authorities.

We, the students, met regularly for few days' sessions. Together we decided which of the topics, in which direction and how deep we would like to develop. We lived together and

cooperated. Simultaneously, own struggles as well as own studying of the knowledge in order to be able to understand it and pass it to others, were often more valuable than even great amount of ready available information... We learnt to share our opinions and respect different points of view. Often persons who taught us were not professional

Own struggles as well as own studying of the knowledge in order to be able to understand it and pass it to others, were often more valuable than even great amount of ready available information... We learnt to share our opinions and respect different points of view.

pedagogues, but were people showing us their passion and telling us about their profession. Much could still be said... The fact that the teacher often is not a self-confident instructor but rather a person maybe not used to teach, is a big value, appreciated however only over time. This participating in a folk high school does not protect us however from moments of boredom, tiredness or total confusion.

Coming back to Emil Meier, I would like to mention that during the apprenticeship that I made at his farm, he told me that before he took over the farm from his parents in 1950s, he had been a student of the Danish Folk High School. In the childhood, for that matter, he had been discovering folk tradition and culture, for instance by visiting many times a castle in nearby Homtrechtikon Rapperswil. Since the time of the Polish January Uprising, the castle has been used as an important Polish historical museum.

#### Folk High School for Women from the Countryside

Folk High School courses for women from the countryside which we organised in the period between 2001 and 2011, partly in Grzybów, were a very good experience for us. Realisation

of the classes for women from our countryside commune, in our centre in Grzybów, and participation in them, helped us significantly to integrate with the local society. We had been living in Grzybów for many years at that time already, but despite this we were still strangers to the locals, Ewa being a person from Warsaw and me being a foreigner. As part of the course, Ewa took ladies to Warsaw and introduced them to women who achieved success, taught them English. Furthermore, in a school's computer lab participants learnt how to write cv and use email. A lot of lipstick had been used during cosmetics workshops and of vegetables from organic farms during healthy cooking classes. My participation in the courses for women was restricted to conducting carpentry workshops and being the main stage director during our performance of shadow theatre entitled "Peter and the Wolf".

I think that men when they are by themselves, can never create such a merry, casual and inspiring atmosphere, as it is when there are only women in the group. During Folk High

In the Folk High School there is a place for everybody — as long as they are willing to learn something New.

School classes you could feel the atmosphere of revolution when women leaving their children with helpless husbands at homes, drove to the course on tractors to have the time for themselves and for their development only.

We were put into astonishment and amazement by the picture painted by an elderly woman worn out by working on a field. She made a following comment on it: 'Yes, yes, when I was a young girl, I painted and I had talent...' Young girls gave more self-confidence to the older ones by smiling. In the Folk High School there is a place for everybody – as long as they are willing to learn something new.

#### **Ecological Folk High School**

Running two-year courses in organic agriculture in our new Folk High School in Grzybów is for us an especially difficult and big challenge. We try to satisfy expectations of nearly thirty

MOTIVATIONS OF OUR STUDENT ARE AS DIFFERENT AS THEIR BACKGROUNDS. SOME OF THEM BECOME SETTLED AGAIN AFTER MANY YEARS OF NOMADIC LIFE. OTHERS FOR THAT MATTER, WANT TO CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY ACROSS POLAND OR ACROSS THE WORLD AND START THEIR NEW LIFE SOMEWHERE ELSE. SOME OF THEM HAVE ALREADY SPECIFIC GOALS AND PLANS AHEAD — THEY HAVE LAND, AND THEY ONLY NEED THE "KNOW-HOW." OTHERS ARE IN CRISIS, BECAUSE THEY DISCOVER EVERY DAY THAT THE WIND HAS BLOWN THEIR DREAMS AWAY AND THEY NEED TO MOVE ON.

students in different age who devote two years of their lives to non-remunerated apprenticeship involving physical work on organic farms and to education in a school with no exams and no recognized status.

At the same time we want to meet our own expectations and stick to the principles of Grundtvig's pedagogy. Motivations of our student are as different as their backgrounds. Some of them become settled again after many years of nomadic life. Others for that matter, want to continue their journey across

Poland or across the world and start their new life somewhere else. Some of them have already specific goals and plans ahead – they have land, and they only need the "know-how." Others are in crisis, because they discover every day that the wind has blown their dreams away and they need to move on.

The model for our two-year course in organic farming was the four-year course from Switzerland to which I referred earlier. Each long session, no matter if it concerns soil, plants, animals or human beings, requires many weeks of preparation. Students quickly notice, whether the teacher knows what he/she is talking about. Resorting to "interactive" classes like: here is the website, there is a table, here is a book, let's make three groups and meet up later, is not a solution. We have managed so far to fulfil our task because students can see our desires and see that we are passionate about what we do. Thanks to the funding from Velux Foundation, we can invite some additional interesting lecturers and speakers as well as afford a team of few people operating the project (there are 2–3 people constantly watching over the correct flow of the apprenticeships and sessions; at least one of them takes part in each class).

Bold enough as it may sound, we have achieved success. At the same time, I am fully conscious that we are still in the beginning of our adventure with Grundtvig's pedagogy.



Peter with students during classes on identification of different grass species.

(Phot. Patryk Bugajski)

Sometimes running the course "gives us a hard time", because we do not always know how to ask correct questions, awake interest, light the fire of passion. On the other hand, some of the students have helped us recently a lot by developing some of the topics, by planning and preparing of the vegetable garden.

I am happy that the interest in the folk high schools is on the rise in Poland and that the chances for the cooperation between them as well as for their development are great. It will serve not only the high schools as such but will also influence other disciplines of life. Work in a folk high school and around it requires communication, agreement, mutual acceptance, and this is a condition for the right further development of all the disciplines of social life.

PETER STRATENWERTH – organic farmer, completed a 4-year School of Biodynamic Agriculture in Switzerland. In 1989 he settled down in Masovia region where he runs an organic farm with bio-bakery and bio-cheese factory. Co-founder of Ecological and Cultural Association Ziarno and Ecological Folk High School in Grzybów.

#### Sulisława Borowska

Kashubian Folk High School, Poland

#### Tomasz Maliszewski

Pomeranian Academy in Słupsk, Kashubian Folk High School Foundation Council, Poland

#### FUTURE OF THE FOLK HIGH SCHOOL IDEA IN POMERANIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GRADUATES, CO-WORKERS AND PARTNERS OF KASHUBIAN FOLK HIGH SCHOOL

#### I. Introductory Remarks

Talking about the future of an educational institution, it is certainly worthwhile to address the issue in a multi-faceted way – using the opportunity to look at it from different perspectives. It is therefore worth letting activity organizers and educators as well as independent experts and researchers speak. Undoubtedly, it is also worth listening to the opinions of former, current and potential participants of classes. Such a methodical approach guarantees capturing a variety of voices, including those that are, perhaps, not always audible, and that contribute to the concepts of work and development of the relevant subject, allowing it to retain the opinion of a socially useful institution, important to a given local (regional) community. The same applies to folk high schools. It seems that in the creation of the current and future educational value of each of these the three-voice (teachers – participants/graduates – experts /researchers) should be taken into account.

Assuming this, also Kashubian Folk High School (KFHS) has for years been trying to listen to the voices of its social environment by analyzing its own organizational and educational experiences, or outsourcing the research to independent experts. This kind of openness, "being on the way" – as Marek Byczkowski defines the searches conducted within KFHS – is a permanent state:

"following "the way of search" all the time: both individual – important for the personal fulfillment and self-fulfillment of each member of the KFHS staff, as well as team-oriented, constantly inquiring what Kashubian Folk High School was in our Pomeranian and Kashubian editions over the years of its educational work, what it is now and what it is to be in the near future?"

Questions about the future, directions for further cultural and educational work have been for years formulated on a regular basis<sup>2</sup>. In the winter of 2016/2017, the leaders of Kashubian FHS questioned their partners, co-workers, graduates and potential participants once again.

In the following part of the draft, readers will be provided with feedback from 17 respondents. They are grouped into several distinct categories, which also designate different areas of cultural and educational activity which, according to the survey participants, should be continued or undertaken in the future activities of Kashubian Folk High School.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> M. Byczkowski, Posłowie: kilka refleksji o (Kaszubskim) Uniwersytecie Ludowym z perspektywy ponad trzech dekad osobistych doświadczeń, [in:] T. Maliszewski, M. Rosalska (ed.), Uniwersytety ludowe – pomiędzy starymi a nowymi wyzwaniami, Warszawa 2016, p. 398.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g.: M. Byczkowski, T. Maliszewski, E. Przybylska (ed.), *Uniwersytet ludowy – szkoła dla życia*, Wieżyca 2003, pp. 162–193.

#### II. Evaluation of the Current Activity of KFHS

Although respondents were asked to comment on the future of Kashubian Folk High School, many of them considered it appropriate to include their assessment of their previous contacts with the institution. Here are some of their statements:

"[...] I am glad to see the activities of the *folk high school* in my area, that is, in Kashubia. Earlier, I received information about similar organizations from time to time [...]. These were, however, reports from distant places, from abroad, especially from the Scandinavian countries, [...] in Poland they were related to larger cities. It was very uncommon to hear about the existence of such organizations in rural areas. I do not know if the situation has changed for the better recently. I do not think so, as one hears more of the farmers' wives' associations (which I also approve) than of the folk high schools. I believe, however, that folk high schools similar to the Kashubian one will gradually emerge in Poland [...]. KFHS

in Wieżyca proves that the range of impact of such institutions should be much larger and there should be several dozen or even several hundred similar institutions due to the size of our country and the scale of needs. [Sabina Lejk]

"For several years [...] I have been able to co-create or observe the KFHS projects from many different areas. Initially, these

I believe, however, that folk high schools similar to the Kashubian one will gradually emerge in poland [...]. Kfhs in wieżyca proves that the range of impact of such institutions should be much larger and there should be several dozen or even several hundred similar institutions due to the size of our country and the scale of needs. [Sabina Lejk]

were training courses enriching the workshops of the Pomeranian teachers, a series of trainings presenting the possibility of diversifying the sources of income for farmers and their families, as well as Traveling Folk High Schools socially activating Kashubian women and seniors. Then – with the "discovery" of the problem of vocational development, we focused very much on these training tasks. In the meantime, such niche activities like "Cerulean School" ("Modra Szkoła") – workshops for handicraft (including Kashubian handicraft) enthusiasts emerged. For years, we have co-created the beauty of the landscape – through meetings of people concerned about their own environment or meetings of local community leaders – such as the «Bytów Fora» or the Council of Non-Governmental Organizations in Kartuzy. And those "flavours" – which did not attract crowds but people passionate about a particular field – were, in my opinion, distinguishing KFHS from other foundations and associations working within the Pomeranian NGO sector." [Judyta Kroskowska]

"KFHS seeks to reach out to different groups with a variety of methods and tools [...] working on-the-spot with local groups/communities in the countryside – including the "new inhabitants" of Kashubia. It is also looking for new friends and opportunities for development in researcher and expert circles." [Mariusz Mówka]

"Before I talk about the vision, I would like to point out why I got fascinated by KFHS. The most important are people: nice, cordial, full of passion, cosmic energy and convinced that what they do is right and good for Kashubians and Kashubia but also for others who for various reasons have found their place on earth here [in Kashubia – note by S.B. and T.M.]. The second thing is the climate that you can create: family-like, uniquely warm and creative. The third thing is the cuisine: since I remember, KFHS has always been famous for its good home-made food." [Dariusz Narloch]

"I will always repeat that KFHS has enchanted me since the first meeting. But KFHS – what is it? Conditions? Atrium? Yes, all this, but most of all I remember that atmosphere! And the atmosphere is – people. Here something happens, we work, we learn, we wander; [...] Everyone is here to make us feel good. [...] It was magic! [...]. What did these meetings give me? They gave me a "damn" lot. I do not write here about specific knowledge ... Or else: apart from concrete and measurable knowledge, they gave me self-esteem. They gave me self confidence and that has translated into my life." [Marlena Stefańska]

"From my experience [...] I think it is a great place for anyone who wants to develop their own personality, acquire new social, civic and professional skills." [Cecylia, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]

"The proof that KFHS fulfills its task [...] are opinions of people who have taken part in its activities. They are the most credible. My observation is that the institution is open to the needs of the region's residents. It happens also because of the staff. In the folk high school in Wieżyca, the right people have taken the right positions at the right time [...]. They stand out because of their personality, competence and diligent preparation, the ability to read human needs properly and their ability to satisfy them, and also a sense of humor [and] flexibility. "[Sabina Lejk]

"Kashubian folk high school – warm, bustling, always open to people, to the world, to otherness, to different cultures – this is how it is and hopefully will always be!" [Katarzyna Byczkowska]

In the light of these opinions, it is clear that the authors of the individual voices, regardless of whether they perceive KFHS from the perspective of the student or from the perspective of a member of the staff team or occasional associate, they see such features and aspects in the activities of Kashubian Folk High School that make it an educational institution of a unique character. There are a number of elements that we could classify as following the premises of Grundtvigian pedagogy.

#### III. General Guidelines for the Future of the Institution

A continuation of the assessments of the Kashubian Folk High School current activity are comments and questions from respondents referring to the general "properties" of the institution in the forthcoming future.

One of the authors – referring to the vision of the folk high school presented by Karl Kristian Ægidius in 2016<sup>3</sup> – emphasized the need for KFSH to maintain its independence:

"Independence. It is the main feature of the modern folk high school [...], which must resist the aspirations of politicians seeking to subordinate such institutions. This subordination has many dimensions, the most important and the most threatening is the ideological dimension. It is expressed by trying to impose a certain template of expected values and ways of their implementation. In this way, the struggle for "rule over people's hearts and minds"

Independence. It is the main feature of the modern folk high school [...], which must resist the aspirations of politicians seeking to subordinate such institutions. This subordination has many dimensions, the most important and the most threatening is the ideological dimension. It is expressed by trying to impose a certain template of expected values and ways of their implementation. In this way, the struggle for "rule over people's hearts and minds" at folk high schools is endless. The existence of folk high schools is from this point of view a heroic and ceaseless struggle for the right to education that creates conditions for the participants to freely seek and understand themselves as human beings and to understand their role in society.

at folk high schools is endless. The existence of folk high schools is from this point of view a heroic and ceaseless struggle for the right to education that creates conditions for the participants to freely seek and understand themselves as human beings and to understand their role in society. It would be worthwhile for Kashubian Folk High School to develop its manifesto/declaration including its key values, which in turn will determine its identity and distinguish it from other educational institutions. [Mariusz Mówka]

Another author, speaking from the perspective of the staff, focused on equally important issues concerning the future:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> K.K. Æegidius, Szkic o grundtvigiańskich ideach "szkoły dla życia" we współczesnych czasach, [in:] T. Maliszewski (ed.), Szkoła dla życia – przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych, Wieżyca–Grzybów 2016, pp. 19–24.

"I think what can best highlight our character while influencing what surrounds us in the long run [...] are high-level projects focused on topics relevant to local community – including the ones developing broadly understood culture of Kashubia and Pomerania. Who would respond to such an offer? People who "want to do something" [...] I would like to reach them, and they would inspire others as in the snowball effect. Where will be the FHS ideas in this case? In the meeting! I mainly see the role of KFHS in creating space for meetings, discussions, self-development, precisely for those "who want to do something". [Judyta Kroskowska]

The motif of the folk high school as a meeting place also appeared in other people's statements. One of them suggested the course of a typical FHS meeting:

"For me, KFHS is primarily a meeting place. Meetings bring insights, inspiration, motivation and mobilization to action. Meetings combine the potentials of energy, creativity and other individual characteristics of the people involved. Meetings are particularly important in areas with low population density, characteristic for the places of folk high school activity. These talents of creative people, living far apart, are dispersed here. [...] The idea [...] concerning the organization of monthly meetings [would be] one of the great responses to the needs I have described. I think that an interesting course of such meetings could be: the first hour filled with suggestions of the participants, then discussions in the forum or in loose groups. The moderator of the meeting would wait for the participants' suggestions and give them time in the first hour [...]. We should take care of the right space for future talks to support the creation of spontaneous thematic groups." [Piotr Zatoń]

Folk High School – including Kashubian FHS – should reach "the circles […] which do not know [ways of – *note by S.B. and T.M.*] proper leisure management" and give their students "motivation to act, beautiful memories and a feeling of "fulfillment"". One should expect "creative forms of spending time, broadening knowledge and horizons, stimulating dormient interests", etc. [Katarzyna, Ewa P.].

In a similar way, the work of KFHS is seen by another person who said:

"Staying at a folk high school should give its participants:

- Internal power to act.
- Positive energy.
- Inspiration for action, introducing life changes.
- Ability to develop personally, acquire the necessary knowledge and new social and civic skills, enabling active and creative life in society.
- "Sense of belonging to the community". [Cecylia, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]

Therefore, the most important direction of FHS educational activity should be "teaching values, "natural" self-discovery, building various personal and social ties", as its role is "to complement formal education rather than replace it". It should focus more on upbringing rather than on education, and stress the need to build social capital in their work. [Jacek Fopke]

#### IV. Specific Tips for Future KFHS Activities

#### I Category: Preservation of Kashubian Heritage

Since Kashubian Folk High School is active in the Kashubian and Pomeranian environment and has for years been involved in regional education and protection of the region's cultural heritage, a number of respondents have considered it essential to confirm the importance of such activities in the future. Let us illustrate the opinion of one of the important activists of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association:

"For me, KFHS should primarily deal with the preservation of the Kashubian heritage. The most important element of the heritage is the Kashubian language, and therefore the ac-

tivities that support the preservation and development of our language should be dominant. KFHS could take on a leading role in educating adults, especially teachers of this language. It must be thoughtful and very honest business. Such trainings cannot become

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- as it is the case with many other entities - an easy way to make money without evaluating their actual results and, above all, their effectiveness. Training costs should be as low as possible." [Eugeniusz Pryczkowski]

Another respondent's reflections went in a slightly different direction. He tried to answer the question of the place of Kashubian issues in the context of citizenship in the future activities of KFHS:

"Kashubia defines KFSH, so it was and it will be a carrier of traditional ideas that consolidate order based on a conservative, hierarchical vision of social order. [...] The question therefore arises as to the role of the institution in building "inclusive" Kashubia and in supporting the development of local communities on the basis of individual activity, equality, dialogue and partnership in local policy [...]. In a society as distrustful and divided as ours, *free folk high school* is and will be "a train going out of schedule". It can be a serious problem and a burden, especially for the local government and the Kashubian conservatives. «Inclusive Kashubia» can, however, by summing up the potentials of individuals and environments, become a chance for development and, in the longer run, give the «snowball» effect. Hence the importance of the activities of "friends of Kashubia" around open debates and activities in social media." [Mariusz Mówka]

Also other respondents saw the need for protection of the Pomeranian heritage by KFSH through future actions – approaching it either in a more "avant-garde" manner – as one of the respondents who submitted the following proposals:

"Folksiness as a therapy/return to the balance of life (cooperation with medical – psychological industry).

A series of painting / photo outdoor workshops on the route of the Metropolitan Bypass construction [Tri-City, Poland – *note by S.B. and T.M.]*. These expressways will irreversibly change the landscape of many villages, so it is worth "remembering" the still untouched landscape." [Jacek Fopke],

#### or more traditionally:

"Artistic classes and (music, dance and theater) workshops for Farmers' Wives' Associations would be needed" [Maria Birr],

"I will insist on handicrafts. Everything handmade has become trendy. What are the benefits? It is obvious – such objects are not only decorative, but above all they develop personally, do not allow to grow in years too quickly, not to mention the rehabilitation for the hand and brain." [Marlena Stefańska].

Summing up this (present and future) direction of the Kashubian institution, let's quote one more statement:

"In a way, KFHS brings back to life the old customs and traditions that prevailed in our area. People, in spite of hard work, difficult living, existential, state conditions, would meet in their homes. They would talk, sing, play cards, joke ... But they also helped each other when it was needed. They were sharing knowledge, they were telling stories that were real, made-up... They were not anonymous, as today, closed in their four walls, staring at television sets." [Sabina Lejk].

#### II Category: Development of Civil Society

Although Grundtvigian pedagogy theorists and activity organizers of individual folk high schools indicate civic education as one of the most important tasks of these institutions, only few of the respondents referred directly to this topic. It appeared, e.g., in the aforementioned opinion on the "inclusive Kashubia" [Mariusz Mówka], or in the postulates of participation in the development of volunteering and "dissemination of the idea of such activity" in the social community of Kashubian FHS [Karolina, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]. Another respondent pointed out three other possible directions of the institution's efforts to build a civic community:

"Schools for village leaders, village heads, councilors, commune councilors.

School of local civic journalism.

Incubator for civic initiatives, or mini-granting system for social initiatives in small communities (street, housing development, village)." [Jacek Fopke]

It is also worth pointing out that no institution, no social entity is able to undertake civic initiatives alone, and that it should be open to all people, groups and circles of its own social environment:

"Surely the idea will be more appealing and will win many supporters when our Kashubian Folk *High School* will start working with schools, culture centers, or even social welfare centers. A potential student can be found almost everywhere [...]. Therefore, the work of a FHS should not be [...] addressed only to a specific group of recipients." [Sabina Lejk]

#### III Category: Promoting Social Integration

Building civil society is integrally linked to activities against social exclusion and work for social inclusion. It is an important aspect also for future educational activities of folk high schools – including KFHS, as pointed out by respondents from one of the municipal social

welfare centers located in the social environment of the institution in Wieżyca. They pointed out, e.g., that in a local environment:

"apart from people who [...] have clearly defined life goals, there are people who, without help, find no goal which they want to pursue in their life." This group

Building civil society is integrally linked to activities against social exclusion and work for social inclusion. It is an important aspect also for future educational activities of folk high schools—including KFHS.

of people usually consists of inhabitants of the commune who have been in the social assistance system for a long time, and who have been socially and professionally inactive for various reasons [...]. [Thus] the activities of KFHS should involve the unemployed, the elderly, families struggling with caring and education issues, children and young people from problem families and carers of the dependents.

A serious recipient of [...] educational activities should be also social workers and other workers responsible for implementation of active inclusion instruments. [...] Practical experience [of KFHS] would have a huge impact on improving the competence of the staff of the institution mentioned above". [Cecylia, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]

They also mentioned a comprehensive catalog of concrete actions that could be undertaken by KFHS in the future within active inclusion programs – in particular those based on using various instruments.

"In addition to imparting knowledge mainly through practice and teamwork (workshops) and conducting social and cultural animation of the local environment, it is worth to run [KFHS integrating activities – *note by S.B. and T.M.]* within:

1. social instruments for active inclusion: social competence training sessions, clubhouses and/or clubs for children and young people, local animation centers or selfhelp clubs;

- 2. educational instruments for active inclusion: conferences, trainings, seminars, various types of courses including professional courses as a result of which participants obtain qualifications (certificates) recognized in the labor market; computer trainings to help future employees including those with disabilities use new technologies;
- 3. \health-related instruments for active integration: psychological counseling, family or psychosocial therapy for individuals and/or families, lectures, presentations, social campaigns including health promotion and health education;
- 4. professional instruments of active integration: running a social cooperative which is a specific organizational form that combines the idea of entrepreneurship with the activation of social groups at the risk of exclusion.
- [...] KFHS as a non-governmental organization can fill many areas and niches where self-government institutions do not enter and do not perceive any problems. Your professional staff can relieve the social welfare institutions of their responsibilities in implementing active inclusion." [Cecylia, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]

#### **IV** Category: Vocational development

Vocational education was also highlighted among activities for social inclusion. However, it should be <u>underlined</u> that the place, scope and directions of education activating the participants of classes in folk high schools have been discussed for years in many countries where they are present. Also in Scandinavia – the FHS homeland – approaches to this issue are different. While Danish solutions, for example, significantly limit the opportunities for social use of *folkehøjskole* in vocational education, in the neighboring Sweden, *folkhögskola*, it became one of the essential instruments of the national vocational training system decades ago.

Solutions developed in the Kashubian FHS seem to be closer to the Swedish approach. Respondents point both at the need to take on tasks related to building skills/competences useful in the labor market, as well as competences suitable for work in specific professions.

"Both from observation as well as my own experience as a small entrepreneur who learns many things from scratch, in KFHS I would particularly like to see an offer of training on my own working time, management, prioritization as well as delegation and sharing responsibilities, dealing with a difficult client, working on myself with trainers and psychologists. These topics would be of personal interest to me [...]. Knowing that it was a folk high school, I would see it as weekend meetings of people interested in the topic, combined with singing, sleigh rides, going out for sticks to the forest or painting a mug, evening bonfires and long talks and exchange of experiences." [Katarzyna Byczkowska]

Another respondent proposes to "focus on (social, economic, local government, political) leaders", as their example will draw others [Jacek Fopke]. Yet another postulates a significant extension of the category of KFHS activity recipients related to vocational development:

"It would be worthwhile to consider activities aimed at [...] activating rural inhabitants to establish non-agricultural business or social economy entities.

The problem is [also] the people – including women who, for various reasons, may encounter a barrier to take up full-time employment, and the planned activities should be addressed to them. The aim of the activities should be to develop such opportunities that [...] self-employment [gives].

Another group could be people who want to change something in their lives. They already have some professional experience and qualifications, but it is not enough for them to achieve professional satisfaction. For example, an experienced salesman educated in this field wants to retrain and do something completely different. Activation and vocational courses [...] could be adapted to [...] give opportunity for development.

KFHS activities could also reach people in local communities who [...] enjoy authority, [...] have something to show, to do, e.g. local creators, artists to help them reach more people with their work. You could think of help [...] for people and companies who pro-

mote our region in their activities, use local products, create local products, use local resources, provide services the area is famous for." [Agnieszka]

"Certificates confirming knowledge broadening" may be important in vocational development, which in some FHS circles may give rise to some ideological resistance. [Katarzyna, Ewa P.] KFHS ACTIVITIES COULD ALSO REACH PEOPLE IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES WHO [...] ENJOY AUTHORITY, [...] HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW, TO DO, E.G. LOCAL CREATORS, ARTISTS TO HELP THEM REACH MORE PEOPLE WITH THEIR WORK. YOU COULD THINK OF HELP [...] FOR PEOPLE AND COMPANIES WHO PROMOTE OUR REGION IN THEIR ACTIVITIES, USE LOCAL PRODUCTS, CREATE LOCAL PRODUCTS, USE LOCAL RESOURCES, PROVIDE SERVICES THE AREA IS FAMOUS FOR." [AGNIESZKA]

There are also – clearly audible – opinions that Kashubian FHS should not at all deal with vocational education of the unemployed, which is sometimes argued either in ideological terms:

"the thing with which we could highlight our character most, and at the same time, in the long-term perspective, influence what surrounds us, are not – generally very much needed – vocational development projects." [Judyta Kroskowska],

or pragmatic considerations and the need to support the institution for those people and environments in the first place that have little chance of accessing various forms of cultural and educational activity, which allows "not to deal with the unemployed because this group has a lot of [other] opportunities [Katarzyna, Ewa P.]

#### V Category: Cultural-Educational Work with Different Age Groups

A number of respondents pointed to the need to undertake activities for so far rather atypical age groups: children and adolescents – usually associated with "classical" school education, and seniors who have only recently become considered potential participants among activity organizers of individual – not only Polish – folk high schools.

#### A) children and adolescents

The arguments for the broader opening of Kashubian FHS to people under the age of 18 are diverse. Respondents pointed out, for example, that:

"KFHS could [...] focus e.g. on a large target group, i.e. children struggling with various problems (coming from helpless, careless, alcoholic, violent, etc. families). In my opinion, this help could be institutional, i.e. a day care centre, a clubhouse – something in a similar form. I think it would be positive if actions undertaken were permanent and were not a one-off project or a single course, as after the end of the course there is little change in the reality of the participants. Constant/systematic support is needed [...]. I would therefore recommend creation of a "place" within KFHS, where [children from the abovementioned environments – *note by S.B. and T.M.*] will find a part of themselves and will want to live better than their parents and grandparents." [Karolina, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]

"Young people, taking part in activities organized by Kashubian Folk High School, may have the opportunity to put away tablets, smartphones, and participate in trips, meet neighbors – those closer and further from home and those from abroad, learn to listen to each other and the others. So they have a chance to find a place in the world, identify their skills and needs, open themselves to people." [Sabina Lejk]

The need to promote the idea of lifelong learning among young people [Jacek Fopke] and the need to "bring up" future participants for courses for adults were emphasized:

"As for children, I would try to create something like a young-people or children-young people movement (something like scouting) – a kind of KFHS young-people group constantly connected with you." [Dariusz Narloch]

#### B) seniors

A number of people surveyed stressed the need to continue efforts undertaken by Kashubian FHS community for the benefit of Kashubian-Pomeranian seniors several years ago. The necessity was underlined with too low cultural and educational activity of older inhabitants of the countryside (much lower than the activity of seniors in urban areas), who due to "communication barriers or lack of knowledge do not benefit from help offered by various institutions" [Karolina, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice]; "care for the generation and "reintroduction" into the family" [Jacek Fopke] or the need to implement the directives of senior policy in rural areas [Ryszard, Social Welfare Center in Sierakowice].

As a desirable form of further work with older people, a computer workshop for seniors was proposed, aimed at counteracting "in a FHS-friendly way" the computer exclusion of seniors, as well as continuation of the Wandering Folk High School for Seniors in various rural areas – bringing KFHS educational offer directly to places of residence of its participants<sup>4</sup>. [Maria Birr]

#### C) intergenerational education

Several times proposals to prepare intergenerational educational projects were also made:

"To fulfill its plans, KFHS should be as close to local communities – i.e. to specific villages – as possible. I think it is worth promoting intergenerational integration. It is worth reminding the society of the values that generations once shared, of the resources of in-

generations once shared, of the resources of individual generations and benefits of building and strengthening local communities and in-

tergenerational dialogue." [Ewa G.]

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One of the authors pointed out that "there is a lack of time and space to creatively spend time together with children," and KFHS "has perfect conditions" to prepare "family workshops" as a whole family offer. "[Jacek Fopke]. The same respondent also presented an interesting proposal for the preparation

of activities that build ties between grandparents and grandchildren, using the resources of both generations and mutual "exchange" of experiences (e.g. wood toys – computer support, Kashubian language training – English language training, home-made preserves – the Internet).

#### Other Categories

In addition to the aforementioned categories of future tasks for Kashubian Folk High School, a number of other hints and suggestions have also been made for further work of this cultural and educational institution. Let's just point them out briefly.

#### a) intercultural education

While regional education has been visible in the activities of Kashubian FHS since the very beginning, the efforts to respect the multiculturalism of the region have spread in the work

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> S. Borowska, Wędrowny Uniwersytet Ludowy dla Seniorów jako przykład działalności Kaszubskiego Uniwersytetu Ludowego, [in:] T. Maliszewski (ed.), Szkoła dla życia – przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych, Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, pp. 71–76.

of the institution only in the last dozen or so years. In light of the opinion of some respondents, they should gradually become more important. "Getting to know other cultures – not necessarily only Kashubian" is becoming a necessity now [Maria Birr] and KFHS can be seen as a social laboratory of multiculturalism [Jacek Fopke]. For – as another respondent says -

"We are not alone in Kashubia. There are others around us. So we need to get to know the culture of the neighbors. In KFHS it is already happening, but I have the impression that there could be even more." [Marlena Stefańska]

#### b) ecological / health education

This topic slightly escaped the respondents formulating their opinions on the future of Kashubian Folk High School. It was mentioned only by three out of seventeen authors, and in fact, it was underlined only by one of them. He proposed several initiatives in this regard:

- preparing stays under the name of "Healthy Kashubia healthy food, recreation, sport" at the seat of Kashubian FHS;
- continuation of projects related to the concern for landscape, natural values and environmental protection of Kashubia and Pomerania ("Kashubian lakes", "Kashubian smog", etc.);
- organization of various forms of group physical activities (preparation for self-defense, reconstruction/paramilitary activities connected with the Pomeranian Gryf legend, etc.). [Jacek Fopke]

#### c) modern technology in education

Several respondents also commented briefly on the necessity to develop computer and IT education in the future work of Kashubian-Pomeranian Folk High School. Only one person developed these issues more broadly and his vision of the digital future of Kashubian FHS is outlined as follows:

"Traveling KFHS in a cloud focused on «digital locals» and using the growing access of rural areas to "high speed internet" (mobile or fixed lines), and the ability to use multimedia for communication, marketing and education. One of the key challenges for KFHS will be to use already existing services and tools available from mobile service providers. Ability to use mobile communication applications should be present in the KFHS educational offer (how to find us, how to communicate?). Perhaps the most important role for FHS in the future will be education "explaining" the world flooded with new technologies and less and less understandable language (jargon)."

#### And further:

"Mobile applications and data storage and access services (cloud) can be used to "support" the KFHS participants, and in the next step – to develop support networks. They will also help to consolidate WFHS/KFHS activities in an open library. They will provide access to on-line education, based on the Grundtvigian "living word" in the new form (webinars, tutorials, broadcasts, etc.), using existing on-line platforms for such services. *The WFHS in the cloud* and in its seat could meet various educational needs (e.g. in the scope of implemented qualification confirmation system) [Mariusz Mówka]

It may sound visionary – but is it really unreal? Time will tell...

#### V. Conclusion

The attempt to analyze statements about the direction of work of Kashubian Folk High School in the forthcoming future has enabled the co-ordinators and activity organizers to take account of the fact that many of the tasks already undertaken should continue in the years to come. There are also some suggestions and tips concerning both the content and the forms of

cultural and educational work that will probably be used to plan further development of the institution.

It is obvious that the results of the survey conducted on a relatively small group of respondents do not fully cover the future of Kashubian FSH as well as the place of Grundtvigian edu-

It is worthwhile, however, to listen to the voices of one's own regional community. Such an approach can guarantee that the "educational response" is rapidly prepared for the emerging needs in the social environment, and thus makes the environment treat the educational institution as socially useful and own — worthy of recognition and support.

cational ideas in the Polish Pomerania. It is worthwhile, however, to listen to the voices of one's own regional community. Such an approach can guarantee that the "educational response" is rapidly prepared for the emerging needs in the social environment, and thus makes the environment treat the educational institution as socially useful and own – worthy of recognition and support.

Finally, let's quote one of our respondents:

I had the pleasure of attending workshops [...] organized by KFHS in Wieżyca several times. Employees' engagement [...], the ability to get involved in a dialogue, cooperation, respect and fun, only convinced me that folk high schools should continue to work and broaden their territorial scope and thematic circles. They should attract different people, regardless of their place of residence, age [...], occupation, material situation [...] Folk high schools, above all, respond to the needs of modern Poles, who, in spite of their education, cannot find a job [...], who have "already done what they were supposed to do" in life and now do not know how to spend their free time [...], who have not found their value, potential which they might have had nowhere to show, and maybe they do not even know they have "something hidden deep inside," some talent, ability or skill.

Not only organizations like Kashubian FHS [...] but also the whole society will benefit from associating such people, using their resources, answering their needs [...]. It may sound like a positivist vision of the glass houses by the renown Polish novelist Zeromski, but you have to dream of something to happen.

If [...] we meet people's expectations, we will help them find their purpose in life, believe in themselves, open up to innovations, and convince that it is worthwhile to measure high, it will be easier for them to go through life [...].

It cannot be found in any school, in any book. KFHS knows how to do it and does it every time it teaches how to be communicative or assertive, when it invites a psychologist, a lawyer, a theater activity organizer, when it makes one familiar with a story – well known or little known, when it organizes a trip to the pool or a tasty dinner. It gives people a sense of their own worth – that they are needed, they mean a lot [...]. And, what is equally important, it is open for new issues, problems and challenges. [...] It knows and wants to adapt to the needs of its environment." [Sabina Lejk]

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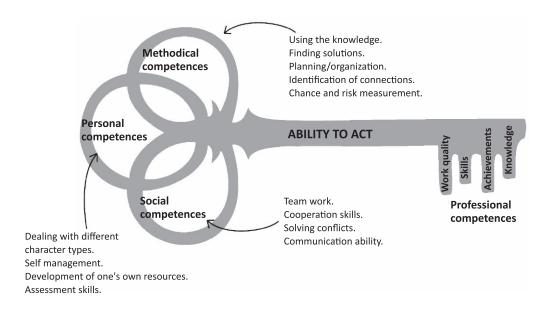
#### Monika Mielewczyk Kashubian Folk High School, Poland

# SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND METHODICALAL COMPETENCES VS PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES –

#### OR A FEW WORDS ON WHAT EMPLOYERS VALUE MOST IN THEIR EMPLOYEES



This draft is a continuation of the reflections on the competences in Part II (entitled "Key Competences – New/Old Challenges") of another study published in 2016 within the project "Building Key Competences and the Folk High School Pedagogy in Europe in the 21st Century" supported by the funds of European Commission Program ERASMUS +¹. It is based on the author's thoughts on the articles published by Sulisława Borowska – Monika Rolbiecka and Ewa Smuk-Stratenwerth, and also on interviews with several employers from the social environment of Kashubian Folk High School from Bulgaria. Therefore, it is worth to mention the "Key of Competence", which was published in the study, as it accurately shows the relationship between competences, ability to act and work.



#### Key of Competence

(Source: S. Borowska, M. Rolbiecka, Klucz kompetencji. Pytania o umiejętność kompetentnego działania, [in:] T. Maliszewski (ed.), Szkoła dla życia. Przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych, Kaszubski Uniwersytet Ludowy, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne "Ziarno", Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, p. 52 [based on: M. Siegrist – R. Wunderlin, 1995])

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> T. Maliszewski (ed.), *Szkoła dla życia. Przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych*, Kaszubski Uniwersytet Ludowy, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne "Ziarno", Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, pp. 49–59.

It is important to know the above relations and to remember that employers are more and more frequently choosing potential candidates for employees depending on a variety of fac-

Employers are more and more frequently choosing potential candidates for employees depending on a variety of factors. Today not only are certified qualifications or qualifications examined in practice during the recruitment procedure significant, but also a wide range of skills, personality traits

tors. Today not only are certified qualifications or qualifications examined in practice during the recruitment procedure significant, but also a wide range of skills, personality traits and demographic factors<sup>2</sup>. Many employers struggle to find suitable candidates for the job. As the main reason for recruiting difficulties, employers point out that their

potential employees do not fulfill their expectations. It is therefore worth listening to their requirements, to signals coming from the labor market:

"Nowadays, people talk a lot about teamwork – it is a skill often required by employers, but for me much more important is autonomy, taking the initiative by employees. In my opinion, it is much easier to integrate staff to work more effectively with one another than to motivate them to act independently, to take the initiative [...]. So I expect candidates to be self-reliant, to be able to act independently, to make decisions, to react when they see some threat, dissatisfaction of the client, etc. I also expect them not to wait passively for my instructions, but to notice the things that need to be done" [Jacek Puzdrowski – the owner of the company "Power of flower," Poland].

Based on this one and similar statements, one can risk saying that the employer points to particular personal, social and methodical competencies, specific personality traits and not only qualifications. The company "Power of flower" deals with the wholesale of flowers, but the employer does not mention qualified sellers or salesmen; personal or social competence seem to be much more important.

In addition to skills and knowledge, attitudes are the third characteristic feature of competencies. Attitudes are most closely related to personal competencies, such as the above mentioned: self-reliance, ability to take the initiative, make decisions, as well as cognitive curiosity, motivation, creativity, enthusiasm, responsibility, persistence, etc<sup>3</sup>.

The importance of personal, social and methodical competence is also emphasized by Mimi Najdenova (Bulgaria). She points out that:

"self-reliance is especially important within one's own competencies and responsibilities. Ability to solve problems arising from the work process. Not waiting every time someone from the management assigns a task." In her opinion, "teamwork, self-expression and risk-taking, entrepreneurship, creativity, learning and willingness to develop (lifelong learning)

CIVIC ATTITUDE IS LINKED TO [...] CONSCIOUS AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY TO WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL BELONGS. ACTIVE CIVIC ATTITUDES ALSO MEAN CONSTANT COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CAN THEREFORE BE RECOGNIZED AS A SIGN OF SOLIDARITY WITH FUTURE GENERATIONS.

to expand one's knowledge" also play an important role. [Mimi Najdenova – agronomist from Intermed, Bulgaria].

Social (interpersonal) competences and their role in the process of economic and social integration have been of interest to many pedagogues. Their significance for participation in society, especially in multicultural

and multilingual society, is unquestionable. In today's economy, based mainly on services, such skills are very helpful in finding employment. These competencies refer to establishment and maintenance of personal and professional relationships through proper communication, teamwork, language skills and respect for other cultures and traditions. The high level of social competence triggers an additional effect of reinforcing and exposing some personal competencies, such as self-esteem, motivation, perseverance, or initiative. Civic competencies

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> D. Turek, A. Wojtczuk-Turek, Kompetencje transferowalne. Przegląd definicji, modeli i stanowisk teoretycznych, [in:] S. Konarski, D. Turek (ed.), Kompetencje transferowalne. Diagnoza, kształtowanie, zarządzanie, Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, Warszawa 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A. Harvey, B. Frost-Smith, Kompetencje kluczowe, Europejskie Biuro Eurydice, Bruksela 2002.

deserve a separate distinction among numerous social competences – particularly when a person involved in the movement of folk high schools writes about them. Civic attitude is linked to individuals' conscious and active participation in the community to which they belong. Active civic attitudes also mean constant commitment to community development and can therefore be recognized as a sign of solidarity with future generations.

The following is a quote yet another employer. Ireneusz Koszałka, the owner of one of the Kashubian tourism and leisure companies, formulates a statement that resembles the previously quoted opinion:

"When I look for employees, it is important for me that the candidate is open. I understand openness as the ability to connect with others, to ask questions, seek information. I believe that openness is conducive to kindness towards other people. The tourism and hospitality industry needs people with highly developed interpersonal and language skills" [Ireneusz Koszałka – the owner of Centrum Aktywnego Wypoczynku Koszałkowo-Wieżyca, Poland].

The opinion is shared by the already quoted employer from Bulgaria. According to her, the key role in the market play:

knowledge of foreign languages and interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate with low educated people, e.g. from the national minority [Mimi Najdenova].

Social and personal competences are also important from the point of view of German employers. Social competences, i.e. commitment to work, sense of responsibility and communication skills are significant in the work environment. As key personal competences, employers in turn pointed to self-reliance, autonomy and self-management. Analytical skills, planning skills and the ability to make rational decisions play an important role within the methodological competences. It all has an impact on the ability to act, therefore, on professional competence. Unfortunately, job applicants quite often do not meet expectations of personal and social competencies set by German employers<sup>4</sup>.

So it is clear that both Polish employers and employers from other countries are paying more and more attention to the issues mentioned at the beginning of the draft in the "Key of Competence" by S. Borowska and M. Rolbiecka.

It is also well illustrated by the opinion of Ireneusz Koszałka who expects from his staff members:

"[...] creativity, understood as the ability to perceive various aspects of the problem and motivation to seek alternative solutions. Unfortunately, school does not influence the development of these skills. In general, we are all thrown into «a single sack», and each otherness in the sense of views, behavior, interests, abilities is treated as a non-desirable deviation from the norm."

#### And he adds -

"In the process of hiring employees [...] I focus on openness, creativity and availability for flexible working hours. Today a lot of young people who have chosen to work in tourism and catering cannot understand that they work when others rest. That is typical of work in tourism or gastronomy. I think we should be better prepared for the character of the chosen profession already in school, at the moment when we choose the direction of further education." [Ireneusz Koszałka]

The study work of the European Education Cooperation Agency "Eurydice" clearly shows that one of the most important tasks of educational systems in the European Union countries should be their (urgent!) opening to the environment and the world, and thus strengthening the links with the world of work, research and society. Such a priority of educational reform seems to be significant also in the context of the employers' statements presented above. There should definitely be more correlations between the world of education and the world

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Based on the opinion of VDL - Professional Association of Agriculture, Food, Environment e.V. (Germany)

of work<sup>5</sup>. It can be illustrated with another statement from one of the employers, saying that the efforts should be increased to bring the education system closer to the needs of the labor market:

"It is very important that people who decide to work in the catering industry are aware that it is not a job from Monday to Friday, from nine to five, but it requires a lot of flexibility. Unfortunately, school does not prepare its students for it. This industry requires sacrifice a number of times, because when others rest, or celebrate, there is a lot of work in gastronomy. Young people often cannot accept it and are not ready to keep it up. You must be passionate in the hotel or gastronomy industry, then work becomes pleasure and it is not disturbing anymore that "I am working when others rest". I want everyone to find passion in their work, industry, then it is simply easier ..." [Mirosław Socha – the owner of "Pod Orłem" restaurant, Poland].

This is another voice in favor of the reform in the above-mentioned direction, i.e. properly functioning education system which would reduce the level of competency mismatches to the

Already at the stage of planning the educational path, it is necessary to take steps towards getting to know the profession, confronting it with one's own predispositions and preferences. It is therefore worth concentrating more on the planning of future education. It is important to take into account the future, i.e. what can be expected on the labor market in 10-20 years (competences of the future).

requirements of the labor market. Employers' statements also point out that, before choosing a profession, candidates do not, on the one hand, carefully examine the specific nature of the industry, the profession in which they undertake education, and, on the other hand, that the school does not introduce students into the world of their profession, it does not let them face the work reality. Already at the stage of planning the educational

path, it is necessary to take steps towards getting to know the profession, confronting it with one's own predispositions and preferences. It is therefore worth concentrating more on the planning of future education. It is important to take into account the future, i.e. what can be expected on the labor market in 10–20 years (competences of the future).

In the *Future Work Skills* report<sup>6</sup>, the authors attempted to forecast the competences that will be required in the labor market by 2020. The analysis takes into account the following socio-economic changes, which will be the main determinants of changes in the labor market:

- extending life expectancy,
- increasingly frequent use of machines performing repetitive routine activities,
- new media environment,
- increasing importance of large structured organizations,
- progressive globalization.

Taking into account the above determinants, ten important competencies have been identified for the future. It is worth mentioning them, as they set the direction of educational activities individual societies should take now:

- 1. The ability to perceive deeper meaning, hidden sense the kind of reasoning skills the machine will never have, because they cannot be encoded. These skills allow you to make critical judgments about the decisions you make.
- 2. Social intelligence ability to communicate with others. The importance of social and communication skills will be increasing, as employees must work in larger and more diverse teams.
- 3. Innovative thinking and adaptability ability to react to unexpected situations and creativity will gain importance in the future. "The employee of tomorrow" will need to have the ability to perform tasks that are not subject to clear rules and procedures. It is the ability to perform tasks that require adaptation to new situations and the ability to think abstractly that will be essential in the future.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> A. Harvey, B. Frost-Smith, op.cit., Bruksela 2002.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> A. Davies, D. Fidler, M. Gorbis, *Future Work Skills* 2020, Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute, 2011.

- 4. Multicultural competences ability to work in different cultural environments, ability to adapt to changing conditions, to react to different cultural contexts. The changes taking place in the world, globalization, the spread of international corporations they
  - all exact the skill. In addition, more and more employers see that diversity of teams is the driving force behind innovation. Intelligent and innovative groups are groups whose members are of all ages, have different skills, represent different disciplines of science. Competencies of cooperation in a diverse environment will become crucial for any organization.

ABILITY TO REACT TO UNEXPECTED SITUATIONS AND CREATIVITY WILL GAIN IMPORTANCE IN THE FUTURE. "THE EMPLOYEE OF TOMORROW" WILL NEED TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO PERFORM TASKS THAT ARE NOT SUBJECT TO CLEAR RULES AND PROCEDURES. IT IS THE ABILITY TO PERFORM TASKS THAT REQUIRE ADAPTATION TO NEW SITUATIONS AND THE ABILITY TO THINK ABSTRACTLY THAT WILL BE ESSENTIAL IN THE FUTURE.

- 5. Analytical thinking the ability to interpret data, to reason on the basis of huge amounts of data. This competence will gain value, as the number of available data is constantly increasing, and so is the demand for employees with the ability to analyze them.
- 6. The ability to deal with new media the next generation of staff will need to be fluent in creating and communicating information in visual (video) format.
- 7. Transdisciplinarity the ability to understand concepts in different disciplines. The ideal future worker will have specialized knowledge in one area, complemented by general knowledge from other areas. This requires curiosity and willingness to go beyond your area of interest.
- 8. Project attitude ability to carry out projects leading to desired results.
- 9. Ability to filter information in a world rich in information, you can experience cognitive overload. To effectively carry out their duties, the staff will have to skillfully filter the information that reaches them, and focus on the most important issues.
- 10. Virtual collaboration the ability to act effectively as a member of a virtual team. Collaboration in such an environment requires completely different competencies than real world collaboration. You need to know different types of involving strategies and strategies motivating the distributed group. Virtual team members also need to create a motivating environment for work that will replace the workplace in the enterprise, such as a co-working office<sup>7</sup>.

Changes that are likely to occur in the labor market will force adaptability, adaptation to changing working conditions, use of technology, etc. In the future, the need for job-related mobility will also increase. The research already provides information on the increasing need for changing the place of work<sup>8</sup>. As shown by quotations from Polish, Bulgarian or German employers, social and personal<sup>9</sup> competences play an important role in the labor market. Therefore, there is a strong emphasis on the development of these competencies among potential employees. Undoubtedly, folk high schools can contribute to it, which seems to be proven by more and more numerous studies and theoretical work of the authors associated with these institutions.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> M. Kocór, S. Czarnik, *Bilans potrzeb zatrudnieniowych pracodawców i możliwości rynku pracy*, [in:] Górniak J. (ed.), *Młodość czy doświadczenie? Kapitał ludzki w Polsce*. Summary report of the 3rd edition of BKL research 2012, PARP, Warszawa 2013.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Cf. T. Maliszewski, *Uniwersytet ludowy jako szkoła dla życia*. W poszukiwaniu przyszłości, [in:] Maliszewski T., (ed.), *Szkoła dla życia*. *Przewodnik po współczesnych uniwersytetach ludowych*, Kaszubski Uniwersytet Ludowy, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne "Ziarno", Wieżyca-Grzybów 2016, pp. 13–18.

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#### DREAMS, VISIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR FHSs IN DENMARK IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

#### Dreams:

Every human being will face questions about the fundamentals of life. Where do we all come from? How can I live a good life? How can I bring up my children to be healthy, strong individuals? What is happening after death? Since the start of folk high schools in Denmark it has been a corner stone to debate these issues and have the students to keep on asking and trying to answer them. For the future it will also be essential not to be satisfied with some scientific or philosophical high profiled answers. The layman's wondering is equally important and points of view is a way to broaden horizons for everyone.

Parallel to the individual ponderings there is a corresponding need of focus on how people live together. Be it in families, in local settings, on a national level or as world citizens. Each area has its own characteristic requirements and a folk high school must involve students in all of them. It develop the capacity and the awareness of man's inherent need to live in communities.

A Danish word for teacher is "underviser". It literally translates into "the one who shows wonders". For the continued significance of FHSs it is vital for their teachers to follow this approach of mediating the wonders in the world and to use the inspiration of life in all its diversity in their ways of motivating students to dig into the big life questions themselves. Life includes human beings but definitely also Planet Earth and in both the wonders are limitless hence a never ending ressource for learning more about conditions of life.

#### Visions:

In folk high schools it must be made possible and easy to create labs for sustainable life. A wide range of approaches to the issue is necessary to make life for all creatures on this

planet a healthy and fullfilling one. Students can be inspired to become front runners in civil society organisations which will be much more important in the future because it seems that governments and the business world not are able to move away from a strictly growth based ideology. It will be vital to have people's based groups to come up with examples of ways to meet the challenge of ressource depletion and climate changes

IN FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS IT MUST BE MADE POSSIBLE AND EASY TO CREATE LABS FOR LIVING IN INTENDED COMMUNITIES. AN INVESTIGATION OF VALUE BASED WAYS TO LIVE IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES WITH DIFFERENT FOCUSES, I.E. LOCAL PRODUCTION, CRAFTMANSHIPS, ARTS AND MUSIC, NATURE RESTORING AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, SPIRITUAL AWAKENING, EXPANDED CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY, INTEGRATION OF MARGINALISED PERSONS.

which are caused by shortsighted economical interests. Folk high schools can be excellent ambassadors for an investigation in this matter due to their independence from state charted guidelines.

In folk high schools it must be made possible and easy to create labs for living in intended communities. An investigation of value based ways to live in smaller communities with different focuses, i.e. local production, craftmanships, arts and music, nature restoring and other

environmental issues, spiritual awakening, expanded concept of democracy, integration of marginalised persons. The grassroots approach of living life in communities is a necessary step to balance the mainstream narrative which for a lot younger people lead to very stressfull years with fulltime job, newly established family relation, maybe mortgage for an expensive house and challenges in making ends meet. The rapidly increasing prescription of anti-depressive drugs (20% increase per year in the period 1995–2009)<sup>1</sup> is a sign that must alert everybody and makes it important to look for other ways to be present in this world apart from following the beaten track.

#### Challenges:

In terms of presenting topics that are appealing for the students and that goes with enthusiastic teachers the folk high schools must walk on a razor's edge because the idea of letting a folk high school stay stress the development of the whole human being can be undermined by a narrow range of subjects offered. Too specialized FHSs can have a tendency of being very much alike the formal educational system and the students risk to miss the diversity of life aspects that is an overall frame for the FHSs.

No folk high school is guaranteed its economical survival. The board of trustees and the principal are the main responsible for combining the value based education and the finances of the school. In this economical reality it can be a struggle to manouvre because the school needs to have enough students to run its courses and a decline in that number will force the school to either sack teachers or limit the amount of activities and subjects. Therefore an adequate state grant is needed to make sure that a FHS has enough space to manage a temporarily lower number of students enrolled. Furthermore it's crucial that the main public discourse is in support of the folk high school system otherwise a school with less students or less activities will soon face hardships. The trending policies in Denmark and the financial difficulties also experinced in the state budget have allready resulted in a one-sided reduction (decided solely by the government) of the grants by 2% for each of the following 4 years (2016–2019). For most schools it will probably mean a rise in the school fee put on students and that will have a negative impact for the young people who have limited means to pay for a semester at a FHS.

Some FHSs attracts students who have a very defined set of interests which they can develop intensely during their stay at the school, i.e. a specific sport, music, philosophy and others. In these cases there is a risk that the group of students will be of similar background and thus create a "community" within the school where it's difficult to abide by the wish of diversity. If a group of students are too homogeneous in political, cultural and social ways the risk is that the FHS will be a kind of reservation where the possible outcome of terms of getting a broader perspective on life is limited.

#### Webography

<sup>&</sup>quot;Antidepressive utilization and suicide in Europe" avaliable online at http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0066455#s3 (accessed January 13th 2017).

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Danish Folkehøjskole" available online at http://danishfolkhighschools.com/media/247068/the-danish-folkeh jskole-web.pdf (accessed January 13th 2017).

#### An open letter to my children

Give me a simple life, a merry heart,
And kings may keep their pomp and garments splendid;
Let me in hut or mansion live the part
Of one from worthy ancestors descended,
With eye for things above as God ordained,
Awake to greatness, goodness, truth and beauty,
Yet knowing well the yearnings unattained,
Thro' knowledge, great achievement, deeds, and duty.

A wholesome life like this have I desired To be my children's aim and aspiration; And when my soul was from its brooding tired, My childhood prayer brought me consolation; Then from the Spirit came this truth to me: That God's own garden full of joy is growing On earth, when we will give ourselves to be The plants of Him from whom all life is flowing.

But we may not expect the ripened fruit
Except through growth, the law of all creation;
In spring we see the green and tender shoot;
In early summer like a relevation,
A burst of glory, flowers bright unfold;
Then through the sunny summer days appearing
The fruit matures for harvest: So the soul
Is only step by step its harvest nearing.

 $(1839)^{1}$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> These verses originate from the poem of M.F.S. Grundtvig, "An open letter to my children", from the book of Thomas Rørdam "The Danih Folk High Schools" (1980).

#### Midsummer Night at Frederiksborg

Cool winds sigh softly in moon's dimmish light, flower scent is wafting this midsummer's night, the grey castle, lake-bound on Hillerød Island, stands ancien and still, while birds softly trill in fair groves with nightingales calling.

Cool winds sigh softly in moon's dimmish light, flower scent is wafting this midsummer's night, the warrior's last embers in Denmark's own Tempe find long yearned-for rest, with sleep he is blessed like nightingale fledgling in hedgerow.

Cool winds sigh softly though old age now clings, autumn's scent wafts less than summer's and spring's, but greater its power, with corn, blue-eyed flower a harvest entire of spring's keen desire in fair groves with nightingales calling.

(1849)

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Illustrations presented on the title pages of each part were produced within the final work of the Swiss course in biodynamic agriculture. Pictures were painted by Peter Stratenwerth in 1985 using watercolours and plant-based paints.

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All works belong to the collection: Easter flower! What would you here? Anthology of songs and hymns by N.F.S. Grundtvig (collected by A.-M. Mai and J.H. Petersen, translated into English by J. Irons under the assistance of K. Høeckem) and a poem "An open letter to my children" was published in the book of Thomas Rørdam "The Danih Folk High Schools" (1980).