



## **'It's good to be useful': activity provision on green care farms in Norway for people living with dementia**

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### **Abstract**

*Background:* Green care farms offer activity provision to people living with dementia but the body of knowledge on how participants use and appraise these services is limited.

*Aims:* To study how participants make use of the farms, how social interaction and activities facilitate or hinder enablement and reablement, and how participants relate this to wellbeing and joy.

*Methods and participants:* Data were drawn from a study of green care in three Norwegian municipalities. The theoretical framework was micro-sociology, and the methodology was case studies/participant observation, including approximately 25 participants, five farmers and three farms. Ethical approval was obtained and discretion was exercised when assessing conditions for consent.

*Results and discussion:* Enablement and contentment are related to micro-interaction, roles and audiences. The farmhand/maid role is created by tasks, tools, a supervisor and 'being useful', the guest role by coffee drinking, a host and 'being away'. Micro-interaction creates a liminal experience, during which the significance of the dementia is diminished.

*Conclusions:* Green care provides contact with nature and animals, physical activity, communal meals and social interaction. It enables/reables participants and reduces the risk of embarrassment and stigma. Provision needs to be developed, with a greater variety of activities to support the persons' identity and self-esteem, and to ensure there are person-tailored services in a social setting. More research is needed to show how valued elements from green care can be implemented within regular dementia daycare services.

*Implications for practice:*

- Activity provision on green care farms shows that real and meaningful activities enhance participants' sense of wellbeing
- Green care is a liminal experience during which interaction creates a sense of community and a situated identity, diminishing the significance of dementia
- Farmers and their employees need practical and relational skills to be able to identify and take advantage of enabling activities and environments at the farm

**Keywords:** Green care, dementia, strength-based activity, liminality, reablement, wellbeing

## Introduction

In Norway, there is growing concern about the challenges posed by an ageing population to health and social services capacity, particularly in relation to dementia. Policy responses to this include calls to increase support for families to care for loved ones living with dementia, greater allocation of fiscal and human resources, and targeted education for healthcare and social care professionals. The report, *Innovation in Care Services* (Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2011), recommends initiatives to facilitate practice development across professional and institutional boundaries. It suggests that health and social care services should be offered in business, industry, agriculture, culture, civil society and NGOs, because real-life settings contribute to health and enablement/reablement within a non-stigmatising environment. This article presents and discusses green care as a promising service for persons living with dementia (Hartig et al., 2014; Myren et al., 2016; Steigen et al., 2016; de Boer et al., 2017; de Bruin et al., 2017; Hassink et al., 2017).

Green care is a well-established practice using animals, plants and nature in health promotion and learning. Steigen et al. (2016) identify five interrelated components:

- Contact with animals
- Supportive natural environments
- The service leader as significant important other
- Social acceptance and fellowship with other participants
- Meaningful and individually adapted activities in which mastery can be experienced

De Bruin et al. (2017) suggest three lessons have been learned so far. These are to:

- Take the preferences and remaining capacities of persons with dementia as a starting point
- Ensure the environments where daily care occurs include stimulating elements
- Have the courage and vision to implement a radically different care philosophy

This study shows how participants at green care farms for people living with dementia make use of the components identified by Steigen et al. (2016), and how de Bruin's lessons (2017) may be operationalised in practice. Additionally, it shows how activities and social interaction in real-life environments make the dementia diagnosis almost insignificant during the green care experience.

## Aims

The study aims to shed light on this hitherto relatively unexplored service in the Nordic welfare states. The objectives are to provide knowledge about how participants make use of the farms, how social interaction and activities facilitate or hinder enablement/reablement and how participants relate this to wellbeing and joy. The everyday interactions, perspectives and experiences of farmers and participants are relevant to the study.

## Background: green care farming

The Norwegian healthcare system is a publicly financed universal system, with limited co-payments. Private health and care services are few, and expensive. The universal scheme has been criticised for mainstreaming services, and an inability to accommodate individual needs. Some critiques have been answered by allowing municipalities to commission services from private health and care sources, including welfare services on farms.

Green care farms in Norway have their own trademark, *Inn på tunet* (Into the farmyard), and a website run by Matmerk ([matmerk.no/no/inn-pa-tunet](http://matmerk.no/no/inn-pa-tunet)) – a quality control system for the agricultural sector. Use of the trademark and logo requires health, environmental and safety quality standards to be met. Matmerk ensures farmers follow around 1,800 statutes and regulations in these areas for people, animals, land and produce. Special accreditation for green care must be renewed every two years; without accreditation, farmers face constraints in offering welfare services to municipalities, and commissioners hesitate to buy their services.

As a result of applications initiated by participants, family members, GPs and healthcare personnel, activity provision is offered to people living at home with cognitive decline in Norway's 354 municipalities, including at nursing homes, through home visits or as green care. Participants pay a small fee for any daycare service, to cover transport and meal costs. Some 40 farms in Norway currently offer green care services to people living at home with cognitive decline or dementia, according to the Norwegian National Advisory Unit on Ageing and Health. A few farms offer single-day visits to persons in long-term care institutions. To the authors' knowledge, there are no standard screening, assessment or enrolment procedures such as application forms or formal interviews, to select participants for activity provision at farms, except for a self-reported ability to walk (aids accepted) and self-reliance at the toilet. Discretion is exercised based on knowledge of available services in relation to needs as described by the person concerned, next of kin, municipal health carers or GPs. There seem to be differences in opinion between case workers over who is eligible for activity provision at farms with respect to age, gender, previous experience in farming, or ability to work (Giskeødegård et al., 2016).

The government is in the process of preparing new initiatives under the title 'Living while alive', with proposals for quality reform to support the ageing population in their own homes and in long-term institutions, focusing on nutrition, activity, community, healthcare and co-ordinated services. Policies on active ageing, health promotion and agriculture call for practice development outside standard healthcare and social care systems, and identify the agricultural sector as an underused resource.

### **Method and material**

The data underpinning the arguments put forward here are drawn from a comparative case study (George and Bennett, 2005) of purchaser-provider relationships within green care welfare services in three Norwegian municipalities between 2014 and 2016. Data were derived from policy document studies, interviews with stakeholders (buyers, providers and participants), observation of participants at farms, and workshops with purchasers and providers. The study highlights variations in the organisation of green care, and in the types and approach of commissioners of care. Green care services are tailored to local situations, with regard to purchaser expectations and provider offers (Giskeødegård et al., 2016).

The authors visited more than 20 green care farms with a diverse range of welfare services across Norway and in the Netherlands (three farms) over the past five years. Both authors lecture and supervise on topics related to green care, and have taken students on many farm visits. Additionally, both are members of several academic and provider networks on green care. The first author (TTS) has been project leader in a research and development study on horse-assisted activities on farms for people with addiction problems (Sudmann, forthcoming 2018; Sudmann and Agdal, 2015). All these experiences influenced the approach to the subject matter and analysis of material.

### **Setting and access**

There are some 30 green care farms in the three municipalities studied, of which three offer daycare services for people with dementia. The authors used internet entries, farmers associations and networks to get an overview of the field and contact farmers, made direct contact with farms via telephone, text and email, and visited the farms to inform them about the study. Due to distance and travel time, the authors spent substantially more time on one of the farms. Some of the farms offering services to people living with dementia have ceased doing so since the project started in 2014.

The three farms offering day services are all family run and close to a city centre. All the farmers are enthusiasts and find it personally rewarding to add value to other's life. They all emphasise that farm life can support recuperation, enablement and wellbeing, irrespective of the challenges people face.

Farm A is a dairy farm, with production of eggs, firewood, vegetables, fruit, herbs, berries, and breeding of cattle, sheep and domestic animals (cats, dogs, rabbits, alpaca). Of the couple that runs the farm,

the woman works there full time, offering services to schools, mental health services, eldercare and sheltered work (work designed for those who cannot work in standard settings). A group of five people with dementia visits the farm weekly. Participants, aged 60-90, also attend daycare at a nursing home and self-select for farm visits. They arrive at the farm in a minivan with two assistant occupational therapists. The male of the farming couple is a preschool teacher, without specific education in dementia care. Farm A has offered activity provision for people with dementia since 2014.

The couple that runs farm B both work full time; they have horses and produce cattle and sheep, and domestic animals (cats, dogs, rabbits). They have a riding school and offer riding for the disabled. The farm offers teaching for school pupils, sheltered work, mental health services and eldercare. A group of five people with dementia may come up to three days a week. Participants, aged 60-90, are assigned one, two or three days, depending on their needs or capacity, and their time at the farm may be combined with regular daycare. Both of the farming couple have agricultural education and undertake continuous education in dementia care. The farm also has up to four employees who combine receipt of disability benefits and paid work. Kindergartens, primary schoolchildren, adolescents and stablehands may visit the farm during the visits of the people with dementia. Employees have communal meals with participants. The couple picks up and returns participants and farm employees. Farm B has offered activity provision for people with dementia since 2008.

At farm C, there is only subsistence production (vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers, berries) although the farm has a few animals – goats, hens, cats and dogs. Farm C specialises in green care for persons with head injury or early onset dementia. Participants, aged 50-70, may come for up to four days a week. Of the couple that runs the farm, the woman is a healthcare professional with relevant further education, and the man is a craftsman who has undertaken adult education in dementia care. They pick up and return participants to their homes. Farm C has offered activity provision since 2009.

Each of the farms get visits from veterinarians, hoof trimmers, farriers, plumbers, carpenters, electricians, stablehands and volunteers. They take deliveries of animal fodder, and private customers come to pick up produce. Visits vary considerably for each farm, depending on factors such as weather and season.

### ***Case studies and field work***

Case studies are well suited to the mapping of unknown terrain, and complex material (George and Bennett, 2005), both of which apply to green care. Within case studies, all stakeholders' views are of interest – in this case purchasers, farmers and participants. The authors carried out fieldwork on the farms, and their collaborators conducted interviews and policy document analysis to map purchasers' perspectives (Giskeødegård et al., 2016). The authors participated in feeding animals, weighing hay, cleaning stables and animal cages, preparing meals, baking, cooking, walking, mucking out, assisted riding, singing, quizzes, knitting, crochet, carriage driving, Christmas decoration, collecting and cleaning eggs and transportation. During activities, they became acquainted with participants – small talk was facilitated.

Participatory methods are just as well suited to interviewing people with dementias as any other person (Hellström et al., 2007). Being together at a farm, relating to the present, makes conversation easy. Both researchers were raised in western Norway, are close in age to the youngest participants with dementia and have parents close in age to the oldest participants. Both are familiar with local geography, names, dialects and habits. This local knowledge facilitated conversation with the participants, and the authors were accepted as part of the farm environment. They were told that several participants missed them when field visits became less frequent, and the farmers were always very welcoming.

The authors visited the farms at irregular intervals, varying from several times a week during a period of a couple of months, to weekly or more randomly. They stayed in contact with the farmers by email and telephone during the project period, and by taking part in arrangements for green care farmers locally and nationally. Data from day-to-day life on the farms were created by participant observation, informal and formal conversations with participants, farmers and others present at the farm, walk-along conversations, and mini focus groups during activities, such as weighing hay together (Carpiano, 2009; Skår, 2010; Pihammar, 2012; Pink, 2015). Field notes were made but no person-identifiable information, such as full name, age or addresses, was recorded or otherwise collected. Photographs were taken of the farm environment, activities and animals to facilitate recollection of the farms, the ambience or specific activities – for example, a wheelbarrow or newborn lambs. Participants are rarely in the photos; where they do appear they gave consent to being photographed. Participants viewed and selected the pictures that could be retained. The farmers had no objection to picture taking. Interviews with three farmers were audio recorded.

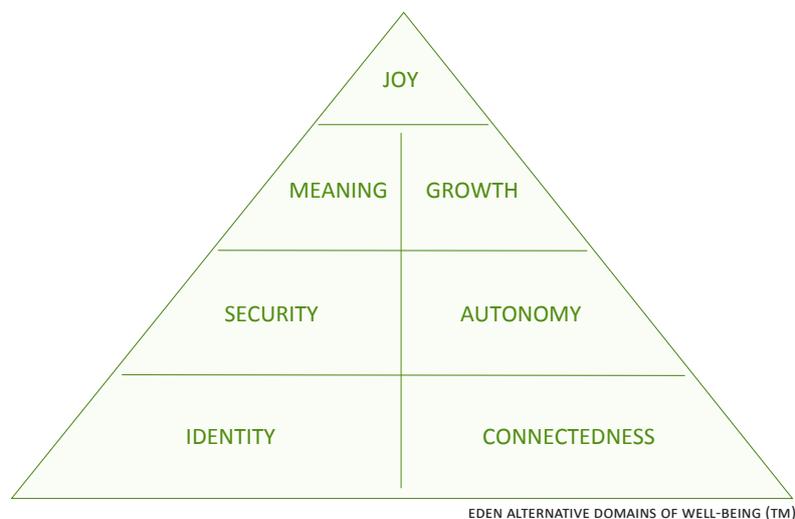
#### *Research lenses and theoretical framework*

The theoretical framework for the study is micro-sociology, which is indebted to Erving Goffman's studies of face-to-face interaction in different settings Goffman (Goffman, 1959, 1963a, 1963b, 1967, 1972a, 1972b). Goffman's approach to social life is to pay heed to small details in communication and interaction; social interaction is sacred, and people are responsible for saving each other's face, their self-esteem and prestige. Furthermore, people cooperate to sustain a social situation and help each other present a trustworthy self to their audience. People use words, signs, movements, props, clothes or other artefacts to make the impressions they want, and expect others to respond courteously, generously and supportively. According to Goffman, people are always already immersed in social settings, and they need each other to be and become the persons they would like to be. The sacredness of interaction and social situations is also detailed by Turner (2004) as *communitas* or community. Turner's understanding of liminal experiences, when one is between what has been and what is to come, is relevant to the green care experience. Liminality is dependent on micro-interactions and environment, as will be shown below.

A common challenge for people living with dementia is to communicate and interact with family, friends or others in ways that are intelligible. Thomas Kitwood and G. Allen Power, leading scholars on living well with dementia, both underline the importance of micro-interaction, when they show us how the minute details of everyday living have the potential to destroy or fulfil social life for persons with dementia. Both scholars show how the everyday interaction between persons with dementia and their formal or informal caregivers contribute to wellbeing or discomfort. Power's model is a pyramid where the seven building blocks constitute the elements of wellbeing: identity and connectedness, security and autonomy, meaning and growth, and joy (Power, 2014, Figure 1). Each of these building blocks are established through micro-interaction, curiosity and generosity. Kitwood compares malignant social psychology (for example, intimidation, belittling, inattention) with positive interaction (eye contact, touch, patience) to show how the significance of micro-interaction (Kitwood, 1997) – elements embedded in Power's pyramid. Goffman's and Turner's framing of social interaction as sacred can be derived from Kitwood and Power as well. These scholars are all indebted to micro-sociology and studies of marginalisation, discrimination and stigmatisation. Everyday life on a green care farm is made up of micro-interaction between people and animals, which lends support to the chosen theoretical framework.

**Figure 1: G. Allen Power's wellbeing pyramid (2014)**

When restoring a sense of wellbeing to another person, it can be beneficial to follow an order that starts with knowing the person well and having a close connection.



### **Analytical strategies**

The empirical material consists of notebooks, audio-recorded interviews, photographs, webpages and documents (contracts, rules and regulations). Interviews and notes were transcribed to standardised Norwegian. The authors approached the material with an open sociological question: what's going on here? Goffman (1967) advises us to follow where the action is, and to study details. Alvesson and Kärreman (Alvesson, 2011; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011) are inspiring companions to micro-sociology when they compare qualitative data analysis with mystery solving. Following these leads, the two authors read each other's notes critically, looking out for paradoxes, interesting or surprising elements, muted topics, salient features or other intriguing facets of micro-interaction in green care settings. Hansen and Ingemann (2016) suggest the whole of the world can be observed in a grain of sand if we pay heed to the minutiae of social life.

The analysis benefited from the authors' experience teaching, supervising, farm visits with students, and visits to activity provision centres for people living with dementia. In qualitative research, production and analysis of the material are part of the same process. When encountering intriguing or unintelligible material during the analytical process, the authors went for a walk or a hike, or went back to the farm to experience the farm environment anew, and to catch up with participants and farmers alike. Visiting a farm always fuelled discussion. Field research is embodied and sensuous knowledge production, and revisiting the field adds value to the process (Hansen and Ingemann, 2016). Walking and talking facilitates executive functions in both researchers and participants (Lord et al., 2010; Pink, 2015).

### **Ethical considerations**

The study was ethically approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, and by Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), and follows the research rules and regulations set by both. First, farmers were given oral and written information, and gave consent to enrol their farm in the study. Subsequently, the farmers informed participants orally about the study, and gave them written information to take home. Participants gave oral consent to the visits and fieldwork, and interviewees gave written consent. During the project period, participants and farmers were reminded that the authors were researchers, and would lecture and write about activity provision at farms for persons living with dementia. The authors, as healthcare personnel, exercised their discretion to assess conditions for the giving and reaffirming of consent during the project period.

### Results: paradigmatic examples

The authors have chosen to present key findings from the study as three paradigmatic cases (below). The cases represent regular, irregular and seasonal activities, and are from farms A and B. The arguments put forward in the discussion below draw on material from all three farms.

#### Example 1: A regular activity – weighing the horses' hay

Weighing hay happens on most days the participants are at the farm, except at times of the year when rich pastures make it unnecessary. The case description below is a Weberian ideal-typical construct (Kim, 2012) based on multiple observations during the project

At the farm are 16 horses, living in the same stable, and fed three times a day. Before lunchtime, 48 bags of hay must be filled, weighed and hung on the correct hooks. When the breakfast meal is drawing to an end, often one participant volunteers to start weighing hay and others join in; otherwise the farmer asks, *'Who would like to do the hay today?'* Usually two or three participants go to the stables to do the hay. The hay room is an old small grain silo, three metres in diameter. When the daily hay crew arrives, the floor is covered by 48 hay bags, emptied and thrown in the day before. There is hay all over the place, waiting to be split between the 16 horses.

The job starts with tidying up the crammed silo, placing the bags together away from the hay bales. Step two in this process is to read the name of a horse on a bag and find the same name in the table at the silo door, with the kilogrammes of hay this horse needs. The loading of the bags varies from 2.5-4kg, in 0.5kg batches. When the bag is partly filled, the hand weight is used first, with the question to a colleague: *'Is this enough, can you check?'* Sometimes they agree on the weight, at other times they check with a hanging scale. When they agree, they help each other identify the right hook on the wall for the horse: *'This is for Hero', 'That's A for Amber'* or *'No, that's not the right hook'*. The 48 bags are filled, verified and hung on the hooks. When done, there are always smiling faces and words of contentment: *'That looks nice', or 'Today they get enough to eat', or 'I gave Ben some extra'*.

The task involves each person finding, reading and sorting bags, wrestling with hay bales, and lifting close to 100kg. The heaviest work is sometimes tearing the hay loose from the bale. Standing in the crammed silo doing this kind of work might be physically taxing, but it is cognitively invigorating. There is always a lot of laughter, banter and jesting, and lighthearted comments. Afterwards the silo is completely transformed, and everyone passing can see the result of a couple of hours' work. Participants might go for a stroll, or back to the farmhouse where they wash, drink coffee and talk. None of the staff or farmers goes into the silo, but they monitor the weighing discreetly, and help is offered if necessary.

### Example 2: A seasonal activity – baking krotekake

In the late autumn, traditional pastries called krotekake were baked, for Christmas. Participants were notified the day before, and asked to make sure they were properly dressed to work for a few hours in the Eldhus (a separate small farm building for baking and brewery). If the weather had turned colder, the baking session would have been cancelled. The following observations were made about one session in field notes:

When the minivan arrives, seven women enter the farmyard, of whom two are assistant occupational therapists. In the Eldhus the table is laid with coffee cups, plates and a cake stand with buttered krotekake. The women start to discuss different recipes for krotekake, and eat and comment on the cakes: *'It is important to make the dough perfect'*, otherwise this or that will happen following crosscutting, and contradictory anecdotal evidence. They laugh a lot, and talk about different preferences and habits in utensils, griddles, rolling pins, baking sticks, ladles and the like. The *bakstekoner* (the woman travelling from farm to farm to oversee the baking) animates the discussion, which concerns taking part in seasonal baking, and the women's personal experiences with baking. Some of them used to make coffee and oversee the events without baking themselves. Everyone had taken part in baking in one way or the other during their lifetime. However, one of them comments that she can't do it anymore, and that she has given all her utensils away. When the coffee is finished, they all put on aprons.

The farmer checks that everyone gets seated at the baking table – a large table one metre wide by three metres long, with a wooden skirting that keeps flour on the table. The dough is parted, and the keener women start rolling it with standard rolling pins. The dough must be rolled into large, round thin cakes (60cm in diameter) and correctly patterned by a second special rolling pin. The keener women say the trick of the trade is to make the pastry as thin as possible by letting it 'dance around' beneath the rolling pin. The woman who had said she couldn't do it anymore is not rolling her dough, to the increasing concern of the four other women. They all join in to encourage her: *'Just try!'*, reassuring her she is still capable. Eventually she has a go, and the first few rollouts of the dough are highly commended and praised by the others: *'Look, you still know how to do it!'* Soon, she remembers how to do it, and she is once again a baking woman, making near-perfect cakes, and appreciated by others. She smiles and is soon absorbed in baking and talking with the others. At this stage, the farmer simply stands back and lets the women enable and support one another.

When rolled out, the pastries are flipped on the griddle with a baking stick. The farmer handles the frying of the krotekake, one by one. When they are done, they are soft and are put aside to cool down; when cold they are like hard bread. The women also invite the author (IBT) – the 'city-lady' as they call her – to try the rolling pin and krotekake baking. The women encourage her and are delighted when she can make the dough dance. When the baking is done, the women return to everyday conversation about how nice it is to be on the farm, they smile and laugh. The farmer tells us the participants always clap their hands before they leave. One woman stated when leaving: *'It's so nice to be here. I must call my son and tell him.'*

### Example 3: An irregular activity – wheelbarrowing

Keeping the animal stalls clean and healthy is paramount on a farm, and entails changing bedding and sweeping sawdust and manure from the stable corridor (sawdust is used as bedding). On a few occasions, we observed two different pairs of male participants self-organising, cleaning the stable corridor and fetching new sawdust for bedding in the stalls. The first pair worked in tandem to clean the corridor, holding bags, brooms, shovels, wheelbarrows or other props for each other. With few words, they co-ordinated their work and helped each other fulfil the task. One day both authors visited the farm and recorded observations of the other pair in field notes

The authors arrived before the participants, and chatted with the woman farmer while she prepared breakfast, helping to lay the table. When the minivan arrived a lot of people came into the cottage. Everyone was greeted by the woman farmer and by the authors. People left their jackets in the cloakroom and helped to carry coffee, bread, fruits, cold cuts and so forth to the table. The table was almost crowded: five participants, two farmers, two stablehands, and two authors. There was a lot of talk – some talked more than others. Food and coffee were passed around, everyone making sure others were served.

When the meal was drawing to a close, the farmer asked if two of the men could help the two stablehands to fetch new bedding for the stables. Some said yes, others mumbled, and all left the table. Those who had not said yes left the table in a less organised way than those who were helping with bedding. The authors did not understand if the participants and farmers had agreed on a plan for the day, and went to the stables to see how the men were doing. The rest of the participants arrived in the stables subsequently. When the authors arrived, the two male participants had self-organised, fetching 30kg of large rectangular balls of sawdust, piled up in storage. One author (TTS) asked if she could tag along, and was shown where the balls were piled up. One man placed the balls in the wheelbarrow, and told her that they could not be balanced. When asked, he allowed TTS to assist him in lifting the cumbersome balls into the barrow. The men divided the task by swapping wheelbarrows halfway between the storage and the stable, so that the fitter of them drove the wheelbarrow when it became most unstable.

The men worked efficiently and silently together, watching each other and just mumbling, wheelbarrowing hundreds of kilogrammes of sawdust to the stables. When observing their work, we saw cooperation, strength, and skills in handling barrows and heavy weights – parking one barrow, lifting the end of the sawdust bag, and looking towards the colleague to encourage him to lift, and so forth. The flow of the work was interrupted when the farmer called out that we were going for a walk. People gathered at the yard. The two men looked confused, and were told to leave the barrows and join the group for a walk. One of the men (the fitter of the two) left his barrow, the other stayed at the farm and continued the work alone. The confusion also affected the authors, who both left with the group. They were told that the man left behind enjoyed working alone with the stablehands.

### Discussion: roles and liminality

All the participants the authors met have, on their own initiative, expressed their appreciation for green care. As stated above, research on how participants benefit from green care services suggests that nature and animals affect human health and thriving (Hartig et al., 2014), and that the situated context of place, people, animals and tasks enables the participants and facilitates wellbeing and joy (Power, 2014; de Bruin et al., 2017; Hassink et al., 2017). However, as the case of wheelbarrowing in Example 3 above showed, being on a farm is not enough in itself to create wellbeing. Face-to-face interaction depends on cooperation, and joint efforts to agree on a situational definition. Every social situation must be initiated and ended, and this is done by micro-signs between the participants (Goffman, 1959, 1963a, 1967). A communal meal usually begins with *'I hope you will enjoy the meal!'* and ends with *'Thank you for the food'*. Missing micro-signs may confuse or discredit the participants, and role enactment may be constrained. When persons' identities are acknowledged, they feel connectedness and security, and they can find meaning and growth in the activities (Power, 2014). Below, we introduce two Weberian ideal-typical roles (Kim, 2012) enacted by the participants, the first being a farmhand or maid, and the second a guest. Both hold the potential for enhancing wellbeing and joy.

***Being a farmhand or a maid is being good at doing something***

*'When I'm here I can do something, I feel useful, I learn more than at the regular day care centre'*  
(female participant).

*'The farmer can't do everything, he needs my help'* (male participant).

Traditionally, farms in western Norway employ seasonal labourers to help with harvest or maintenance during the spring and summer months, or for short-term work during autumn or winter. Life on farms A, B and C follow this rhythm, and participants in green care can enact roles as 'workers', with the farmers being 'foremen'.

Goffman (1959) discusses how roles are constituted by appearances, movements, props, signs and words. Communication is impression management and interpretation of signs intentionally given, and signs given off (which cannot be controlled). In Example 2 above, when four of the baking women noticed that one of them was only watching, rather than joining in, they interpreted her bodily pose and lack of initiative as fear of failing, and reassured her that she was still capable. The women cooperated in upholding a situational definition of traditional baking, in which everyone has to take part – unless someone is designated as a coffee provider. The woman in question responded after repeated urging, and soon she worked energetically, looking dedicated and pleased. All the women were immersed in work, and their dementia had little relevance.

Traditionally, maids carried out household chores, overseen and approved by the farmer's wife or another authoritative woman. Enactment of the maid's role necessitates practical skills and an honest audience that is encouraging or correcting if necessary, as shown above. As noted above, Power (2014) identifies several domains that must be addressed to restore wellbeing: identity and connectedness, security and autonomy, meaning and growth, and joy. When the women arrive at the farm they are greeted by their names and welcomed, and their identity is confirmed. The subsequent coffee table laid in the Eldhus creates a context for connectedness and sense of community. Identity confirmation and connectedness facilitates a sense of security and autonomy. All the women expressed joy and contentment. Enablement and restoration of wellbeing necessitates that the tasks at hand, however, must be placed in a relevant social and material context. The Eldhus environment is probably a much more stimulating environment than most nursing home kitchens.

Likewise, the hay silo is a good example of a supportive context – hay, named bags and hooks. The task of preparing the horses' meals is meaningful and well-known, and relates to all Power's seven domains of wellbeing. The two, or sometimes three, persons in the silo enacted the farmhand role by paying close attention to each other's movements and signs – deliberately given and unknowingly given off – and to the task at hand. By working together, they confirm each other's identity, autonomy and security. After the job is done the participants are always very pleased, they know the horses are fed, and experience contentment and joy.

Wheelbarrowing, cleaning, collecting and washing eggs, or feeding small animals are tasks where participants cooperate to solve practical challenges, and where the context of the task supports the situational definition. Participants and farmers alike communicate with few words, paying close attention to each other and the task at hand. Cognitive decline seems to have little bearing on their collective performance. During the years since the farms started providing green care, there have always been participants with previous experiences of farm life, and participants who have never been to a farm. Maids and farmhands teach one another under the farmers' supervision. The roles of farmhand/maid are designed by the farmers, when preparing for baking or stable work, but the roles are upheld by the participants as individuals, and by collective effort. When the participants wish, they can change to a guest role – as, for example, when the work is finished.

### ***Being a guest – being away from the ordinary***

*'The most important thing is to be together and have a good time'* (female participant).

*'I'm looking forward to going to the farm, there is strength in numbers'* (male participant).

*'It's so nice to be here, meet people, it's so depressing to be alone at home'* (male participant).

Being a guest is being part of the action without doing so much. As stated above, any performance needs an audience. Many of the participants told us about previous experiences with gardening, handicraft, cooking or maintenance, and how they now enjoyed watching others perform these tasks. A friendly word of advice is handed out when they see fit. Goffman, Power and Kitwood show the importance of micro-details. Withholding information, turning a blind eye, refusing to acknowledge efforts or making fun of people are examples of micro-aggression (Sue, 2010; Sudmann, 2015), or malignant interaction (Kitwood, 1997). Guests may counter such threats of ignorance by acting as a supportive and corrective audience.

At the farms, people might go for a stroll, and coffee is always available indoors, as in a café, or outdoors, around a fireplace. When enacting a guest role, one has a prime view of the human and non-human traffic of daily living. Regular participants at the farms often know of each other beforehand, or have shared knowledge of people and places. This gives them ample opportunities to talk and discuss what they see, feel, hear or smell. One of the participants said she appreciated these conversations as they were different from those at home and at the regular daycare centre. As a guest, one usually attends to the present, to the situation or context at hand. There are no demands in terms of problem solving or remembering. Being part of the action without doing so much still holds the potential for deep involvement. The participants came as guests in the morning, awaiting coffee, and left as guests in the afternoon, after enjoying the final cup of coffee. The disruptive situation described above at the end of Example 3 could have been ameliorated if there had been guests to supply needed information. During a day at a green care farm, participants can enact several farmhand/maid roles, interchangeable and parallel – all of which seemed to facilitate wellbeing.

### ***Enabling encounters – liminal experiences***

*'This is the smartest thing they ever came up with (at the regular daycare), sending us here.*

*Sitting at the centre is of no value to me'* (female participant).

The quote above is an appreciation of 'being away' from a less attractive alternative. Many relate the 'being away' to unspecified alternatives, and to an experience of a different temporality: *'Time is different here'* and *'The ambience here – it's so good to be here'*.

A salient feature of farm life at green care farms is that the reasons for being eligible for activity provision at farms – that is, cognitive decline and problems with activities of daily living – are hard to observe. The first time the authors visited farm A they were unable to distinguish which of the persons were participants, employees or extended family. The participants were the ones who taught the authors about tasks or animals, just as their extended family had when they visited farms as kids or young adults. The authors concur with Goffman, Power and Kitwood that this is the most significant contribution of green care: the creation of real-life situations for real-life community and interaction, where people cooperate to save each other's face and reputation. Green care abounds with opportunities for a strengths-based and empowering approach to the participants, and for designing social situations where persons with or without dementia may thrive.

Applying Goffman's and Turner's concepts in a new context, green care can be framed as a ritual where interaction is sacred (Goffman, 1972a, 1983; Turner 2004, 2008). A green care farm is a meticulously created environment, where the participants enter a different social and material setting together, facilitating a temporal and liminal experience. In a liminal phase, all present are expected to pay close attention to the material and social context at hand, which seems to enable participants to uphold the roles of farmhand/maid or guest, and to uphold a situational definition. The liminal phase is oriented

towards the present, to solve practical tasks, walking or drinking coffee, where the significance of what has been or what is supposed to come has less relevance. For people living with dementia, lifting the pressure of remembering and relating to topics or objects not present, gives way to being and knowing otherwise (Mitchell et al., 2013). The domains of wellbeing are embodied, and living well with dementia at a green care farm entails embracing the presence, the commonplace and the everyday through bodily interaction with the environment (Goffman, 1972a; Kontos et al., 2017). Power (2014) underlines that any behaviour or movement is communication, and that reducing cognitive pressure opens an experiential pathway to wellbeing. Communication breakdown, as when the wheelbarrowing of sawdust balls was interrupted in Example 3, opens an experiential pathway to confusion and unhappiness.

To enable the participants' sense of wellbeing, the situational definitions and the 'magic' of the liminal experience must be sustained throughout the day. The roles of farmhand/maid or guest need their counterparts of work leaders or hosts. As participants shift their roles, the farmers must respond with a complementary role shift. Whether at a green care farm, or at a tourist farm, success is dependent on having the right persons at the right place at the right time. Following studies by several authors (Andersson Cederholm and Hultman, 2010; Brandth and Haugen, 2012, 2014; Valkonen et al., 2013), farmers using their home as a workplace need both relational and practical skills. The authors observed how the farmers used their relational skills when welcoming everyone to the yard, addressing people by name, acknowledging their communicative style, or providing counselling or compassion, and how they appreciated the participants' different capabilities and needs. To be able to run the farm, and to accommodate participants' needs and expectations as farmhands and maids, farmers also need practical skills, such as in horse handling, tractor driving, ploughing, running a workshop and so on. The farmers enact these expectations by constantly monitoring the situation at hand, considering what has been and what is expected to come – improvising and playing by ear, to sustain the magic of the present. The quote below confirms this:

*'The farmer is so knowledgeable; we get answers to all our questions'* (female participant).

### **Concluding remarks**

The aim of the study was to contribute to the body of knowledge on activity provision at green care farms for persons living with dementia, on how they make use of the farms and on how social interaction and activities facilitate or hinder enablement and/or reablement.

The authors observed countless situations where participants expressed joy, but also some situations where participants got lost and felt unhappy and unsettled due to unintelligible situations, contradictory messages, or missing contextual cues. These kinds of malignant interactions (Kitwood, 1997) also create a liminal experience (Turner, 2004), but of a negative kind. An experience of being caught in the middle, not knowing what has happened or what is to be expected, unbalances the pyramid of wellbeing (Power, 2014). When identity and security is threatened, enablement and wellbeing moves out of reach.

Green care offers strengths-based welfare services on farms where participants can experience mastery, learn new skills, or teach others. Contact with nature and animals, physical activity, communal meals and social interaction are the hallmarks of green care. Against this backdrop, this study shows how activity provision at farms for people living with dementia places the participants in an everyday setting where they can choose to present themselves as farmhands, maids or guests, and thus reduce the risk of embarrassment or stigma due to cognitive impairments. Correspondingly, the farmers present themselves as work leaders or hosts. Participants and farmers constitute each other's audience, and cooperate to confirm roles and presentations of selves (Goffman, 1983). The micro-interaction of everyday life is vulnerable to disruptions and malignant social interaction (Kitwood, 1997), which increases the burden of dementia. However, it also entails a liminal experience (Turner, 2004), during which interaction creates a sense of community and a situated identity, diminishing the significance of the dementia.

Practice development should entail a variety of adult day services and activity provisions outside the traditional health and care institutions, to support persons' identity and self-esteem, and to ensure personal tailored services. Real-life participation is key to success. Being at a farm provides 'action' without the participants' initiative, as opposed to the environment at a daycare centre, which is 'artificial' and in which activities and 'action' have to be created. The subject matter of health and care services outside the standard contexts is relatively under-researched, but also surrounded by a naïve and uncritical positivity.

Further studies are needed to shed light on how green care can enable and facilitate wellbeing of the participants, and on how the farmers can be supported in developing the necessary skills to design and run a strengths-based and empowering service at their farms. Further studies are also warranted to detect how elements from green care can be implemented in regular daycare offers.

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