



Obituary for Anne Agerkrog Algers

Matthias Kaiser¹ · Helena Röcklinsberg²

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(Photo: Courtesy of Bo Algers)

We deeply mourn the death of our previous Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Food Ethics* and dear colleague, Anne Agerkrog Algers (*24.04.1961 – † 02.03.2022). Her passing away means not only the premature loss of a good friend for us personally, but it means also the loss of an inspired intellect within the field of food ethics. Anne had always her mind set on educating the young students, in particular in relation to ethical reflexivity, and providing material in research and teaching which was clear, comprehensible and well connected to the factual context.

Anne (née Rasmussen) was born in Denmark but had her permanent residence in Skara for many years, and later in life in the vicinity of Gothenburg, Sweden. As a first-generation

✉ Matthias Kaiser
matthias.kaiser@uib.no

¹ Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities (SVT), University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

² Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)
<https://www.slu.se/>

university student, she received her MSc in Animal Science from the University of Copenhagen in 1986, with a focus on animal husbandry, ethology, and food science. Anne completed her PhD from the University of Gothenburg in 2015. At that time, her specialization was within Educational Sciences. It is probably not too far-fetched to state that her early interest in ethology and animal husbandry led her in a direct line to food ethics later. This interest raised for her the very practical question how to introduce more ethics in our foodways, in particular in relation to improving food quality by improving animal husbandry.

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s Anne worked in close connection with the food industry in Denmark and Sweden, like e.g. in a project under the Danish Meat Research Institute, and in a project under the company Doggy AB on the development of canned pet food. Far from this being an outlier in her career development, this experience did add two aspects to her later interests. First, it gave her first-hand insight into the perceptions and needs in the food industry, and second, it established a useful network spanning the diverse sectors and fields.

Anne entered the network of the *European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics* (EurSafe) for the first time in 2006, when she was co-author of two papers which discussed the computer program “Animal Ethics Dilemma”, a learning program for veterinary students (Dich et al. 2006). Anne was centrally involved in the development of this program. These papers were published in the book *Ethics and the Politics of Food* (Kaiser and Lien 2006). Discovering the academically rich environment of EurSafe, Anne later attended the EurSafe conferences in Bilbao (2010) and Cluj (2015).

This also triggered her more general interest in food ethics. She agreed to become Co-Editor-in-Chief when this journal, *Food Ethics*, was founded in March 2015. The close collaboration with one of us (MK) was a crucial step to get this journal off the ground in its early phase. Without her collaboration this journal would assumedly never have seen the light of day. Her network and insights into animal husbandry and ethics were the necessary academic complement to ensure the broad scope of food ethics. In 2016 Anne and MK published a foundational editorial for the journal: “Food ethics: a wide field in need of dialogue” (Kaiser and Algers 2016). The editorial placed food ethics in a dynamic social context of deliberations in civil society and global food chains, clearly indicating some pressing challenges, like e.g.: “Ethical consumerism is *en vogue*, but its content is contentious” (ibid, p.5). A later editorial, introducing a series of relevant papers, was entitled “Trust in Food and Trust in Science” (Kaiser and Algers 2017), a topic that was, and still is highly relevant in view of populist trends to depreciate facts and scientific insights: “we lose the basis for acting ethically if we do not respect facts, try to score points with ‘alternative facts’, or are no longer interested in the arguments which may make those right with whom we disagree. Those who are beyond facts do not deserve trust.” (ibid. p. 95). Anne left her role as Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Food Ethics* in July 2019 due to time constraints.

Teaching at the Swedish Agricultural University (SLU), and later at Gothenburg University, stimulated Anne to actively look for new ways to convey important content using the means of information technology and open learning sources in the life sciences. In the beginning of the 2010 she established a master program in Food science at SLU, Anne was eager to create an international, interdisciplinary open learning environment, and set up a format (distance) and pedagogical structure well suited to inspire students to reflect on global food situation, science, sustainability, health and ethics in workshops every semester. It was a pleasure for HR to be part of the development and teaching under Anne’s inspiring leadership. Being a first-generation university student was probably behind this engagement in pedagogical development for non-traditional student-groups. We have already mentioned the development of the program *Animal Ethics Dilemma*. This was later

followed up with a project funded by the Nordic Council but now focusing on the wider field of *Food Ethics Dilemma* (cf. Algers et al. 2010). Anne was leading this project, and MK was part of the project team. Again, the leading idea was to stimulate student reflexivity through concrete cases where ethical viewpoints from different stakeholders were brought in. One of the cases was about wine production and the possible use of modern (gm) technology. Unfortunately, the project only made it to the prototype of the program, and was running out of funds for further and broader application.

But it was this type of engagement with interactive online learning which was the topic of her PhD in 2015. It was also this activity which was the reason that guided the University of Gothenburg when they awarded her the title of *Excellent teacher* in 2021. In an interview on the University website she described the development this way [our translation from Swedish]: “In recent years, teaching on the basis of social networks and the possibility to build knowledge together, with the teacher as a critical friend, has sprung up. I believe that students experience stronger motivations when they experience that they can contribute with something new – a little piece of the puzzle in the collective knowledge. This is what people think of when talking about open learning.”

Anne was successfully engaged in open education, promoting equity and inclusion and advancing openness as a process and resource of academic research, including ethical reflectivity in the last part of her life.

Anne leaves behind a mourning husband, two children and grandchildren. This journal is deeply indebted to Anne for her engagement and promotion of food ethics.

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