

# TAKE RESPONSIBILITY



10 Lessons from  
the Folk High School

Bjørn Hansen

# Take responsibility

*Take responsibility*

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# Take responsibility

We live in a time when the strength of our democracy can no longer be taken for granted. The level of loathing for politicians is alarmingly high, while young people's faith in their own capacity to make a difference is low. Running parallel to the threat presented by such resignation – and perhaps as a consequence of it – we can see a burgeoning of directly undemocratic forces.<sup>1</sup>

This is ominous. A democratic crisis threatens not only democracy itself but has an impact on social issues of all kinds. Whether it is a question of the climate crisis, of integration or of inequality, the banal requirement for any collective solution is that there are many of us who believe in the *possibility* of achieving it and, in addition, that we believe we can ourselves be part of the solution. The moment we lose faith in ourselves, in our collective responsibility, and our combined ability to act, to create, and to find solutions, we, as a society, are in a mess.

The folk high school movement has to take up this democratic challenge as its own. Its contribution to finding a solution has to be a comprehensive mobilisation of energy, hope, and will among young people. This is not simply a matter of young people finding their inner motivation, what they are best at or most want to do. It means that they to some degree make the challenges facing society their own and in this way finding their calling in the encounter between their own motivation and the needs of society.<sup>2</sup>

There may be none better placed to take up this challenge than the folk high school. For the folk high school tradition of having strong links between social critique and the desire to work for change together with a form of teaching centred around 'enlivening before enlightenment' point towards the task currently facing the folk high school.

Learning processes need to be created – enlivenment – that dramatically increase the self-democratic confidence of young people. A striking description of this can be found in the writings of the author and resistance supporter, Martin A. Hansen, who described the learning process used in the resistance movement: