Culture plays a distinctive role for transformation. We internalise the norms and values of our cultural imprints. Values "act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action (...) which are closely connected to personal integrity and personal identity" (Halstead 1996, 5). The uniqueness in our "mental programming" can be described with three levels: human nature, culture and personality (Hofstede et al. 2010, 6). These aspects are linked with self-awareness and consciousness (development), which are represented by the yellow orb in the pyramid in figure 1.

Against this background, farm education will be reflected with a special focus on values orientation for teacher formation in higher education. With regard to the “UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development” educators and trainers are characterised as powerful agents of change in educating for sustainable development (UNESCO 2014, 20). Apart from the necessary knowledge and skills, they also have to develop attitudes and values as well as identity and commitment for a societal transformation. Farm education is highly suitable for contributing to the aforementioned.

Concerning agriculture in Lower Saxony in Germany, the topic of factory farming is a useful approach for ethical reasoning based on system thinking. The problems of factory farming affect all dimensions of ESD (ecology, economy, society, culture, politics; see figure 2). These problems were discussed for example in an article of DER SPIEGEL „Factory Farming: The True Price of a Pork Chop”, being published at the end of October 2013 (Amann and others 2013), with a special focus on the situation in Lower Saxony. A lot of articles were published in German public media in the last years, focusing amongst others on animal welfare or dangers for societal health (for example Schießl 2017, Birmann et al. 2014).
Referring to values education, a theoretical frame was developed (Meyer 2013, Meyer 2016a), which was and is the basis for planning and processing a special seminar in geography education at Leibniz University Hannover. Its main aim is to reach a reflection about our connection to nature and about environmental ethics. This involves visiting two different types of farms (conventional and ecological) and the experience of a shamanic oriented ritual referring to indigenous knowledge at the end of the seminar. Three times in a row, this seminar took place since the summer semester 2014, and is one of the best seminars in geography education from students’ perspective. Based on the evaluation, the seminar was adapted accordingly (as will be described in the following). In summer semester 2014, ten (of altogether twelve) students completed the questionnaire of EvaSys (evaluation system at our university). The global indicator was 1.1 (s=0.2). Some positive comments emphasised the effect on their consciousness. Because of the recommendation to implement a visit of an ecologically oriented farm, I modified the conception in this direction. In summer semester 2015, I did not ask the ten participants for an official evaluation because of the positive results of 2014. One year later, 16 students took part. The (then measured) LQI (Lehrqualitätsindex, “index of teaching quality”) of 10 completed questionnaires was 1.3 (s=5). Again a lot of positive comments were given. The shamanic oriented ritual was not mentioned in the evaluation because we reflected it in the session after this experience, which lasted altogether four lessons. It was not detached from school geography because the students also learned about the meaning of shamanism in other cultures (Meyer 2016b). The ritual, which was performed by Nina Freimann in 2016, focused on the four elements “Air, Fire, Earth, Water” (Meyer 2013; Meyer 2018). This approach was strange for the students because we have lost the connection to nature and our root (Meyer 2013, 16ff.). Wangari Maathai (1940–2011), who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 “for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace” (The Norwegian Nobel Institute 2014), stated in “Taking Root” (Merton & Dater 2008): „I’m a child of the soil“ (Time: 40:07-40:11). As to this evidence, the main goal of this special experience was the reconnection to soil. “(Soil) represents nature and sustains the entire life-system. Everything comes from the soil and returns to the soil. (...) The soil is a metaphor for the entire natural system. (...) Through the soil we are all related and interconnected. We are held and sustained by the soil. We depend on the soil. (...) The word ‘nature’ means birth. Whatever is born and will die is nature. (...) Thus nature and humans are one. Therefore, we need to understand that what we do to nature we do to ourselves” (Kumar 2013, 17ff.). The body plays a distinctive role in this ritual. It is „a sensuous
being, the material basis for our connection with, and experience of, the world” (Valentine 2001, 23). It is furthermore “a surface upon which cultural values (...) are inscribed” (ibid., 33).

When we talk about values, “a strongly affectual dimension comes in” (Joas 2001b, 54). Hence, values have to be experienced, “because values commitments cannot arise if we are not captivated (‘ergriffen’) by values. This means that our communication about values is oriented toward a communication about feelings and in experiences which are different from rational discourse” (ibid., 55). Based on the considerations by Hans Joas (2001a/b), three interconnected stages of values education can be identified (Meyer 2013, 21ff.; 2016a, 7ff.; see figure 3).

Figure 3: Three levels of values education (design: C. Meyer)

1. To be touched and deeply moved means that we have such intensive feelings of self-transcendence, which lie in the heart of humanity (in German “Ergriffensein”) and connect us with human nature, nature and our home planet.

   This stage was not only for example reached by visiting the farms and experiencing the ritual but also by showing sequences of the documentary “Our Daily Bread” by Nikolaus Geyrhalter (2005), focusing on factory farming (Meyer 2018, 62f.), and a sequence of the movie „Avatar” by James Cameron (2009) (Meyer & Remmers 2016, 45).

2. Being involved and connected means empathising with people and understanding their perspectives, which in turn broadens our own cultural horizons.

   In the seminar we discussed for instance about animal welfare from different perspectives and furthermore prepared questions for the farm visits as to the different dimensions of sustainability (see figure 2).

3. To be confident and committed means being self-aware and acting responsibly with respect to our social and physical environment.

   In the seminar we often reflected upon our values orientations concerning the production and consumption of food. These considerations also include a critical reflection of cultural imprints as well as values preferences of the economy.

The presentation will give an insight into the realisation of the seminar and is a contribution to quality criteria of farm education, focusing especially on values education in higher education for teacher formation as well as on identity, commitment, cultural awareness and consciousness development for a societal transformation.

"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.“ (Maathai 2004)
References


Kumar, Satish (2013). SOIL • SOUL • SOCIETY – a new trinity for our time. Lewes: Leaping Hare Press.


