

Proposal for an European “Agriculture and Art” summerschool module

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The proposal for a European “Agriculture and Art” summerschool / module is based on experiences made by the participants of the “Landwirtschaft und Kunst – agriculture and art”-programme in the Faculty of Agriculture, International Rural Development and Environmental Protection, at the University of Kassel in Witzenhausen (Germany). Since 1995, four Summerschools with the topics “Agriculture and Art” (1995), “Agriculture, Art and Animal Husbandry” (1997), “When Will the Working Process of the Farmer become Art?” (1999) and “Agriculture and Art as a Place of Learning” (2001) were organised within the framework of the University. They were open to everybody who wanted to take part.

The Initiative “Agriculture and Art – Landwirtschaft und Kunst” was started by two students of organic farming: Patrick Meyer-Glitza and Andreas Weidringer.

Landwirtschaft und Kunst is a crossdisciplinary concept, linking sciences with agriculture, agriculture with art, and agriculture with art and practical elements.

The Agriculture and Art summerschool programme is based on the national heritage of each participating country. This proposal is an open framework and it is to be adapted to every cultural context according to the specific traditions and cultural challenges of the participants.

Long term aims of the summerschool

- to discover new realms of creativity and intuition
- to discover new interdisciplinary and cross-cultural ways of teaching and learning
- to use methods based on art to examine aesthetics governing the farming economy
- to discover the true potential of farming methods and products, when freed from the economical necessity governing them
- to encourage reconsideration of each country’s notions of culture
- to reevaluate cross-cultural (language based) methods
- to communicate through the discovery of non-verbal forms

Proposal for a summerschool as a pilot-project

A good way of starting a summerschool is to organise a pilot project during the summer term at College/University. Or to start a summerschool “Agriculture and Art” on an (organic) farm. Cooperation with an artschool is recommended. During the summerschool, which should last 4 – 10 days, professional artists with skills in Agriculture take the part of course leaders. They work in groups with 2 – 5 participants on aspects of the main topic of the summerschool.

The artistic work during the daytime should be supplemented by an evening programme of (crossdisciplinary) lectures dealing with the main topic of the summerschool, e.g. discussions, music, literature, dance, presentations of artists.

In the forefield of the summerschool, during the summerterm at college/university guestlectures, seminars, platforms, and excursions can be organised.

The final documentation should include lectures on the theoretical framework, a presentation of the artworks created during the summerschool and different statements of the artists and participants.

The evaluation of the pilot-project can be done by a professional independent evaluator based on the material gathered, the documentation and questionnaires (interviews). The evaluation can also be achieved through a students examination work/paper.

Module Agriculture and art

As a frame for a long-term summer school programme “Landwirtschaft und Kunst – Agriculture and Art” the module “Agriculture and Art”, is recommended. In this framework, the programme can be run on an international level with an integrated exchange programme between the participating colleges/universities.

The module should be integrated within the agricultural curriculum with the cooperation and support of an artschool/academy of Fine Art. It takes three years to run a whole programme.

The places of activity are the college/university, (organic) farm(s) – for instance the experimental farm of the university – and a village. The participation of a village is important in order to integrate social contextual experiences into the programme. The village could run a culture-programme based on the local rural heritage in cooperation with the agriculture and art programme in the module.

A team of students (and other participants), artists and staff of the college/university (i.e. teachers, farmers, scientists) is to be formed. The artists should be integrated in the lectures and seminars of the agricultural curriculum and they should supplement the topic of the lessons with practical artwork in seminars or workshops, or other artistic forms. Also, teams of artists and scientists could cooperate in research-projects.

The module should organize a summerschool (discription as in the pilot-project) every two years. In the forefield of the main topic of the summerschool interdisciplinary guestlectures, seminars, platforms, workshops should be organised. An international exchange-programme is included for students, participants, staff of the college/university, villagers and artists.

Proposal for a three-year programme

The starting point of this programme is the local farming situation and the learningprocess in the agricultural college/faculty at university. In the first phase research carried out on the traditional background of the contemporary agricultural images. This research takes place in

Presentation of the German project “Agriculture and Art” at the Conference “Grass Roots: A new vision for rural communities, the countryside, and the rural economy” in Chipping (Britain) in October 27th 2001; in picture from the left Ian Hunter, Patrick Meyer-Glitza, Helena Rytönen and Oliver Korb; Foto: Cornelia Stellbrink

teamwork by visual artists, students, farmers and scientists. The change in the image (college/university, farm, village) is documented by art-based methods. A summerschool should take place.

In the second phase the teams investigate with the aid of art-based methods – the most important influences (economical, social, political, cultural) on the agricultural image. Seminars, platforms and conference can be organised in cooperation with artists, students and specialists (scientists) for a larger audience.

The third stage is devoted in innovations in arts and in scientific works based on the traditions and contemporary influences in agriculture including practical knowledge. A summerschool should take place.

Example for the topic “bread”

The topic “bread” could include the whole process of bread-making starting with the seeds. The different aspects of the process e.g. seeding, sowing, cropfields, plants, manure, machines, buildings (barns, bake-houses), harvesting, marketing, shops, myths, rituals are the subtopics for the crossdisciplinary teams, which work within the curriculum of the college/faculty of agriculture and in the social context of the village.

Introductory phase: The contemporary situation of the subtopics of bread could be documented by the teams with art-based methods (fotos, video, maps, books, and other materials). This should take place in the “field of learning – college/faculty of agriculture”, on the organic farm, and in the village. Exhibitions ending with a party where bread specialities are offered should be organised in the different working contexts.

First phase: Traditions beyond the contemporary image of the subtopics “bread” could be investigated by the teams in the college/faculty of Agriculture, on the (organic) farm, and in the village.

- village exhibition “old fotos”
- visual art works on the campus and in the buildings of the college/faculty of agriculture which show the traditions in the curriculum, cross-disciplinary lectures, seminars, excursions
- summerschool on the (organic) farm “traditions and bread”

Second phase: Important influences on the contemporary visual and acustic situation, ways of actions/movements should be researched. EU-agricultural politics, human values, pedagogical standpoints should be investigated related to “bread” by the teams.

- village: land-art-camp “breadprocess” and farmers market
- college/faculty of agriculture: conference with scientists, farmers, artists and students on “‘our daily bread’ politically, economically, culturally and in the social sense”
- (organic) farm: platform with interest groups connected with agriculture, arts and sciences; exhibition “bread-art”

Third phase: Innovative images “bread” and new visions for agriculture. Farmers, students, artists and specialists (scientists) cooperating together

- village: a “bread.monument” made in cooperation with villagers, artists and specialists with a village-culture-programme (church, dance, market, traditional festivities, etc.)
- college/faculty of agriculture: innovative visual artworks on the campus and in the buildings “vision bread”; seminar including all the subgroups “on sustainable bread”
- (organic) farm: summerschool “ecological vision of a new bread-culture”

In every phase there should be an international exchange-programme linking farm to farm, college/university to college/university and village to village. Basing the local activities on the local cultural heritage, will make the exchange programme very interesting. This will encourage people to reconsider their own notions of culture. They will experience different ways of learning, especially in acquiring practical knowledge.

The whole process which should last over three years is documented via an internet-page, the internet-journal “bread”, fotos, texts, artist-books, different works done by the students for the purpose of examination, project works and via research-diaries and film.

The process has to be professionally evaluated either by a team which should consist of an artist, a student, a farmer, a villager, a member of staff of the college/university, or by an independent specialist in evaluation.