

WHAT IS THE HEART OF MY FARM

by Simone Helmle, Germany

The main **GOAL** of this exercise is to allow farmers to exchange with their peers on different aspects of their farm. It is expected that the synopsis of all farm presentations supports the conceptualization of farm organism and farm individuality. The exercise strengthens the awareness of one's own farm initiative and it gives insight into the context of other enterprises. It also trains observation and encourages independent thinking, while emphasizing the uniqueness of the farms in their embedding in the natural, landscape and climatic space. The exercise strengthens the trust of the individual participants and trust between the participants.

THE EXERCISE

- Start by introducing the exercise: explain what the exercise is about and what you hope to get out of it for the training and for the individual participants.
- Small groups of 3 to maximum 5 people are created. The guiding question for each participant is:
- **What is the heart of my farm?**
- The small groups will work together for 60 minutes. Each person in the group will talk on the question for about 7 minutes while the other participants in the small group listen attentively. Everything that is said remains in the confidential space of the small group.
- Make sure that there is no discussion in the small groups. It is important to create a "listening space" that allows the speakers to speak while the listeners follow along.



- When everyone has said something, feedback follows. The guiding question for the feedback is:
- **Which part of your narrative has been valuable to me for my own farm development?**
- Final conclusion in the plenary. For the closing, you can ask three participants to report how they personally experienced the exercise. Alternatively, you can invite participants to spend 7 minutes in silence reflecting on the work and writing down personal notes.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH THE EXERCISE

For most participants this exercise takes some effort. It is very personal, touching and the setting is unusual. The leading question stimulates almost everyone and invites them to look into one's own enterprise in a different way. Furthermore, the participants have the opportunity to feel how much respect and attention they receive from their colleagues. It is a moment of pause and reflection for the place and the people we interact

with on our farm every day. Encourage them to try it out themselves. Point out how important it is not to discuss, but to remain in attentive listening. It is about reflection and strengthening oneself. It is not about ready-made answers or very big plans, but about exploring into the question of the “heart of one’s own farm”.

Sometimes the idea of standing like a bird or a star above one’s own farm helps to look at oneself with the focus “what do I see when I look for the heart or hearts from this perspective of my farm? What makes up the heart, what do I discover there in the place, in the rhythm, in the flow, in the pulse ...?”.

If the training is carried out by a team, it is worthwhile to do this exercise with the team during the preparation. Instead of the farm, the question could be about “the heart of my activity” or “the heart of our course”.

What is most appreciated by the participants is what they were able to listen to the other people, which is warm, touching and stimulating. If the feedback remains as a strengthening verbalization, in the form of “what do I notice about you in particular?” or “what made it valuable for me to hear from you?”, people feel a deep, heartfelt gratitude.

NOTES TO THE HEART

“One sees well only with the heart, the essential remains hidden from the eyes”, - The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

The Little Prince expresses in simple words what we are able to experience in the heart. Personally, I discover again and again how gestures can be different from each other. I experience the desire to meet at eye level as a desire for equality and acceptance, so I experience it as a delicate line between above and below. How different it

is when we meet at heart level. I experience this gesture much warmer, it’s more open and inviting to walk with each other. For a moment I am truly received by another person. Or another person is visiting me in my heart. This can be experienced as a process of warmth spreading through the heart-belly area. Knowing that I can only look a little bit into my organs and that I don’t notice a lot of things there, I increasingly try to observe the emotional expressions of the organs and pursue the questions.

- When do we actually perceive our organs?
- How seriously or how lightly do we relate to the organs?
- How do organ observations help us to see life and the organism better?
- How can plants, in their appearances and in their metamorphoses, make us aware of the organs, their mobility, their shape, their abilities and their characteristics?
- How can we find clues for the agricultural or horticultural organism from the observation of the organs?

For participants, it is helpful if you collect some aspects of the heart. You can do it together before starting the exercise. Try to describe the organ a little in the sense of: What does it look like? How does it feel? What are the tasks of the heart? Where is it located? Perhaps everyone puts their hand on their chest, feeling the heartbeat and the warmth of the body, and feeling the breath. What kind of organ is the heart? Here are a few ideas about the heart:

- The heart lies between the head pole, of perceiving, and the metabolic pole of moving. The heart, like the lungs, lies above the diaphragm. If we look at

the second lecture of the agricultural course, the diaphragm stands for the ground. Where does this place the heart in this view?

- In the heart the blood streams from above, below, left and right. With the four chambers, the whole can be imagined as two lemniscates. Thus, the heart is the center of a lemniscate which connects the human being with the outside world at the top via the lungs and head and is in connection with the inner organs at the bottom.
- The heart is at the center of our circulation. In it, blood is compressed to the maximum and is thus subject to heaviness. This is countered by capillary effects, i.e., suction effects that bring the blood to the periphery. This is rather a fine, light movement.
- The heart is severely challenged when movement and sensory stimuli are overloaded or underloaded on one side. In fact, it often happens in course groups that a great deal is done sitting or standing. Movement through dancing, running, singing, sculpting etc. is very beneficial for the heart. It seems to us that the muscles become joyful and are gripped by what is happening around them.
- The heart is an organ that has been studied since ancient times. Our heart stands for compassion, care and love. We can carry the sun in our heart; without the heart, like without the sun, we cannot be. The heart is our organ of fate and memory, it is more comprehensive than a quick smile and it is more complex than a pump.
- Rudolf Steiner mentions in the fifth lecture that the stinging nettle “should really grow around man’s heart, for the world outside – in its marvellous inner working and inner organism. The stinging nettle is the greatest boon.”