Worldwide there is currently an enormous interest in values and norms and in the role of education in this matter. This interest stems in particular from the postmodern situation of a lack of common values and norms. The positive side of the postmodern development is the greater autonomy individuals have in constructing their own identity and morality. The problematic site of this postmodern development is the uncertainty about which values are important to live and the difficulty of constructing norms together. Value construction is a psychological process that involves the personal life. Constructing norms together is a sociological process of living together, of dealing with differences and jointly constructing social life and society. Processes of value and norm constructions are important for the individual, for social and cultural groups, and for society. Cultural groups articulate which moral values are important for them and how norms can be constructed.

In this chapter we want to present a humanist perspective on these processes and on the role education can play in developing moral values and social norms. We will demonstrate that there are different ways of thinking about values and norms and the associated task of education. These different ways are grounded in different social-political and philosophical ideas. We opt for a humanist perspective with a focus on both autonomy and social concern. We will outline the contours of a more humanist pedagogical approach for moral and citizenship education which, more than is currently the case, stresses the development of personal moral values and social norms. Our work is embedded in the context of the Netherlands. However, we will analyse the Dutch developments in more global perspectives.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VALUES AND NORMS

In the public debate the terms values and norms are usually mentioned together, although they are actually two very different concepts and individuals have a different relationship with values then with norms. Moral values are opinions based on an idea of what is good and bad. They refer to concepts of the ‘good life’. Moral values are not personal preferences based on taste, but are more or less explicit and fully developed ideas about how a person relates to his or her life and social and natural
Moral values are affectively loaded cognitions related to behaviour, these values drive behaviour (Berkowitz, 1995; Oser, 1997; Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). Moral values are personal choices and are situated on the cultural level. Each person constructs his own value configuration. This construction can be more or less reflective, often however this process is implicit and hidden. Moral values give meaning to personal life. It’s a process of creating personal meanings of life.

People who support the same values may congregate in subcultures, ideologies, religions or other worldviews. Together they can live and celebrate their common values. They can inspire each other, create a moral community that binds together and gives the participants a moral home. These moral communities give the participant a feeling of belonging and helps in constructing a personal value system. These moral communities can be ‘thin’ or ‘thick’, they can be connected loosely or strictly, they can be horizontal or hierarchical. People also participate in different communities.

Norms are different from moral values. Norms are encapsulated in rules. Norms are standards which are based on values, and are highly context dependent and have the attributes of agreements (Joas, 2002). Norms are developed within every group in society, for example in a family, a sport team, a school class, a local community, a worldview organisation, in a country, or in the United Nations. The development or construction of norms is a process in which the moral values of the different participants struggle for hegemony. This is not an open communication and competition; in these struggles power relations are at work (Mouffe, 2005; Castells, 2009; Todd, 2009).

In norm construction the values of the dominant group are elevated, to a greater or lesser extent, to the norm of the whole group. Norms are like values that are imposed on all concerned. Norms may be formulated very broadly and give participants the possibility for a personal articulation, but norms may equally be very restrictive and demand only adaptation. Norms are implicit and explicit agreements on attitudes and on particular behaviour, while moral values are developed by an individual, in a process of giving meaning to life.

Attributing significance, sense making and giving meaning are human capacities. Human beings have the cognitive possibility for sense making and to reflect on values and norms, human beings can develop moral values. Because of these cognitive and social capacities human beings can in reflective and dialogical processes jointly create norms. Education can stimulate these reflective and dialogical processes of personal value development and social norms development. Education can challenge people to reflect on their value construction, to get engaged in moral dialogues and to jointly build norms.

CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE ON VALUES AND NORMS

Attention for values and norms and educational discourses and practices change over time and are part of larger cultural struggles and social and political devel-