Imagining Better Animal-Human Futures

Farmed Animal Sanctuaries

"The animal sanctuary movement persists in a belief that humans and animals could live well and free together. That future remains only a vision at this point, but their efforts to reach that future are an insistence that another world is possible." **(Abrell, 2016, 315)**

Farmed animal sanctuaries provide "forever homes" (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015, 51) for animals who have endured the "victimisation of factory farming" (vegan.com, 2021). Animals – including cows, pigs, chickens, goats, and sheep – arrive at sanctuaries in a variety of ways: abandoned, willingly donated by their owners, seized by animal welfare officers, or taken by activists (Abrell, 2016). When these animals reach sanctuary, they are almost certainly saved from "a fate of confinement, slaughter and commodification as food and clothing" (Donaldson, 2020[1]). Sanctuaries for formerly farmed animals play an increasingly significant role within the broader animal advocacy movement. As well as rescuing farmed animals, many sanctuaries "advocate for animal rights and veganism" and "engage in public outreach and fundraising" (Beggs, 2020, 1). Generally, they offer us a glimpse of "alternative ways of living with and relating to animals as subjects worthy of moral consideration" (Abrell, 2019a, 573).

[1]This quote is taken from an article published in French titled, 'Refuge d'animaux', which appeared in the collection, La pensée végane, published in 2020 by Presses Universitaires de France. The author, Sue Donaldson, kindly sent me a word-processed English translation of the article (personal communication, 19 Oct 2020), hence the lack of a page number attributed to the citation.

The first farmed animal sanctuary was established in 1986 in Watkins Glen, New York (Gingerich, 2016, 18) by animals rights activists Gene Baur and Lorri Houston. Farm Sanctuary has since become an inspiration and model for hundreds of similar organisations around the world[2] (Donaldson, 2020). Sanctuaries for formerly farmed animals are typically found in rural areas on several acre sites (Bartell, 2017). In addition to space, other benefits of rural settings include easier access to food, provisions, and specialist veterinary care (Abrell, 2016). As charitable or non-profit entities (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015), farmed animal sanctuaries rely on donations. Rescued animals, therefore, essentially become ambassadors (Abrell, 2019b) for the sanctuary, as well as the wider animal protection movement. This compromise – where an animal's status shifts between refugee and value-generating commodity – is why some describe sanctuaries as "limited sites of resistance" (Wrenn, 2018, 168), an issue discussed in more detail later.

Academic interest in farmed animal sanctuaries has so far been limited. It's only during the last few years, in fact, that researchers have investigated these institutions. Furthermore, studies are restricted to sanctuaries in North America (primarily the USA and Canada) and Australia (DeMello, 2014; Jones, 2014; jones 2014a, 2014b; Abrell, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2021; Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015; jones and Gruen, 2016; Bartell, 2017; Scotton, 2017; Gillespie, 2018, 2019; Pachirat, 2018; Beggs, 2020; Blattner et.al, 2020;

[2]Vegan.com (2021) currently lists over 130 farmed animal sanctuaries worldwide not including Australia, which is home to a further 69 sanctuaries according to Veganaustralia.org (2021).

Donaldson, 2020). This perhaps mirrors the fact that there are considerably more farmed animal sanctuaries in those countries compared to Europe[3][4].

A concept that runs parallel with the broader farm animal sanctuary movement is "microsanctuary", defined as "… any vegan home… caring for animals who aren't usually seen as "companions" …" (Microsanctuary.org, 2020) with a specific focus on farmed species. According to the Microsanctuary Resource Center (MRC), an organisation established in 2014 to encourage more people to consider rehoming farmed animals, a microsanctuary "can be as small as one rescued individual" (Microsanctuary.org, 2020). As MRC founder, Justin Van Kleeck, states: "Sanctuary is a state of mind" (2016, 69), where the emphasis is on integrating the care for nonhumans into your ordinary everyday life. Unlike the larger more traditional farmed animal sanctuaries, microsanctuaries deprioritise or avoid fundraising activities, as this goes against the principle of utilising whatever resources you have to provide immediate sanctuary to an animal in need. It's a point that is often reinforced in activist media, with one writer stating, "anyone can do this work, and we can do it now…" (Hipp, 2016, para 6).[5] Further, while traditional farmed animal sanctuaries are in some ways

[3]Catherine Oliver, an urban ecologies researcher at the University of Cambridge, suggests that a lack of available land makes starting a sanctuary an "… impossible dream for most people, especially in the UK" (personal communication, 27 May 2021). This is perhaps why there are more sanctuary spaces in North America and Australia compared to geographically smaller, densely populated countries such as the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

[4]Vegan.com (2021) lists over 100 (USA 97; Canada 9; Columbia 1; Costa Rica 1) in North America, compared to 22 (Denmark 1; France 1; Germany 4; Greece 1; Ireland 1; Netherlands 5; Spain 3; UK 6) across the whole of Europe. These figures don't paint the whole picture, as there are several other sanctuaries for farmed animals spread across the world. The Global Federation for Animal Sanctuaries lists 28 such institutions (2021), many of which are not included on the Vegan.com list. Media articles also reveal anecdotal statistics. In Spain, for example, there are now believed to be between 30 and 40 sanctuaries specifically catering for surrendered farmed animals (Daly, 2021, para 6).

[5]There are no formal databases of microsanctuaries. As Catherine Oliver highlights, recreating a sanctuary experience in your garden is "a completely unregulated activity" (personal communication, 27 May 2021). Potential questions for this project, therefore, are: How many people are already living in this way and what

"reconfiguring the power dynamics of the dominant mode of rural human-animals care-based relations" (Abrell, 2019b, 109), microsanctuaries within typically "backyard" urban settings, help demystify farm animals by allowing them to become a "normal part of your average household" (Van Kleeck, 2014, para 16). This, as Donaldson and Kymlicka imply, is perhaps a more powerful form of animal activism, given how rural settings may inadvertently "reinforce assumptions about where farmed animals belong", as well as their as role as commodities (2015, 54).

Mirroring the growth in academic studies of farmed animal sanctuaries has been a steady increase in media interest in sanctuary spaces, especially during the last three years. Themes include the rehabilitation of specific species – e.g. ducks and geese (Krista, 2019), biographies of animals now living happily at sanctuaries (Blake, 2020), initiatives for launching new sanctuaries (Jacobs, 2020), as well as broader pieces concerned with the "Quiet Power" of these organisations to change the way we think about our food systems (Scott-Reid, 2020a, 2020b), and help build better connections between people and animals (Pittman, 2017; Daly, 2021). Journalists have also been keen to highlight the challenges of running a farmed animal sanctuary. Articles focus on the lack of adequate veterinary care (Knopp, 2020) and the difficulties of fundraising (Asp, 2020; Woodroofe, 2020), as well as concerns about the dedication of newly established microsanctuaries (Olvera, 2020; Scott-Reid, 2020c). Inadvertently, too, writers have revealed potential ethical inconsistencies within sanctuary spaces. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, articles promoted cow and sheep "hugging" opportunities (Gormly, 2021; Stratton, 2021) for people starved of intimacy during extended periods of lockdown, as well as sanctuary led initiatives to "Invite a Goat to

can we learn from them? And, what does it mean to live differently with farmed animals in urban spaces versus sanctuaries?

Your Next Zoom Meeting" (Myrow, 2020), or for animals to provide virtual entertainment for children being schooled at home (Gardner, 2020). Instances such as these, as Wrenn would argue, help to "perpetuate speciesist attitudes and behaviours" (2018, 173).

Academic studies of farmed animal sanctuaries have so far focused on how sanctuaries improve animals' lives, as well as change how people think about other animals – e.g. as members of egalitarian communities rather than simply as food. Some of the key themes introduced by scholars include the role of interspecies friendships on sanctuaries, animal agency, and how sanctuaries act as prefigurative spaces for future human-animals relations. In their seminal work, Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights, for example, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka encourage us to see animals as "… neighbours, friends, co-citizens, and members of communities ours and theirs" (2011, 24). They contend that farmed animal sanctuaries "provide some insight into a possible future with domesticated animals" (2011, 121) where these relationships are paramount. Animals at sanctuaries, the authors say, become "co-citizens of a mixed human-animal polity" (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 137). They describe several instances of cross-species friendships and environments which offer "a rich form of existence to a wide variety of individuals, including humans" (2011, 81).

According to sociologist, Guy Scotton, due to the injustices inflicted upon them, humans have a moral duty to socialise and befriend farmed animal species. He argues that participation in farmed animal sanctuaries "is a promising way to fulfil this duty" (2017, 86). Scotton addresses Donaldson and Kymlicka's claim that any form of justice for farmed animals must include a process for "enabling agency" (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011, 110) by suggesting that this can be achieved through encouraging "Intimate, reciprocal relationships including friendships" (Scotton, 2017, 87) with nonhuman animals. Similarly, in

his comprehensive study of farmed animal sanctuaries anthropologist, Elan Abrell discusses agency in relation to animals that are treated "as fellow subjects with at least some interests and needs equal to those of their human cohabiters" (2016, 83). This includes being given the requisite space to move around freely, the opportunity to forage and find their own food, as well as to make friends and enjoy relationships with nonhuman animals from different species. In contrast to industrial farming practices, where animals are typically separated by species, the freedom afforded to animal residents by some farmed sanctuaries means that interspecies relationships often develop naturally.

There are various examples of interspecies friendships on farmed animal sanctuaries within the literature (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015; Bartell, 2017; Scotton, 2017, Gillespie, 2018; Blattner, et al, 2020), yet the most revealing cases are those documented at VINE (Vegan Is The Next Evolution) Sanctuary in Vermont, on the north east coast of the USA. VINE is significant in the first instance as it was founded by two scholar-activists – Miriam Jones and pattrice jones – who continue to write about their experiences as sanctuary owners. Further, several other scholars have been invited to conduct research at the site and there is lots of published material concerning some of the innovative practices of care and community that occur at the sanctuary. Blatter et. al. highlight how interspecies friendships are "readily observable" at VINE and play a "significant role in fostering a sense of inclusion within the community (2020, 32). Whether it's pigs and alpacas, sheep and cows, or roosters and ducks, it's clear that if given the opportunity, farmed animal species will demonstrate high levels of non-discriminatory sociability. As Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015) argue, this is unsurprising, as the reason farmed animal species were domesticated in the first place was due to their capacity to easily befriend humans.

Taking the idea of agency beyond friendship, Miriam Jones discusses how many of the chickens that are brought to VINE, when given the freedom to roam, will do so with gusto at the 100-acre site. They will explore trees, bushes, and rocks, and spend time climbing over hilly terrain, as well as finding niches in which to hide under and sleep. Further, some chickens over time even choose to sleep in trees and bushes and eventually learn other "wild/feral behaviors" (2014, 95). Another sanctuary owner who has written extensively about her experiences of providing forever homes to rescued chickens is Karen Davis. She confirms the natural sociability of chickens, as well as their instinct to explore: "They plod eagerly out of their houses in the morning… ready for sunlight and fresh air" (2014, 174). Similarly, geographer Catherine Oliver, in her ongoing research on UK-based microsanctuaries, describes the unconventional living arrangements of chickens, who, when given a degree of freedom to move around are "… often indoors, on the bed, etc." (personal communication, 27 May 2021). She contrasts this with the living arrangements of chickens who are rescued and then kept as egg producers. In these situations, she explains, the chickens are always kept outside and in a specific area of the garden. Critical animal studies scholar, Kathryn Gillespie, states that in facilitating these behaviors, sanctuaries demonstrate "nonnormative ways of creating livable spaces for formerly farmed animals that do not reproduce farming models of species segregation, farm-based practices of care and highly uneven power relationships between human caretakers and animal residents" (Gillespie, 2018 127).

Within these multispecies communities, humans also gain insight into the emotional lives of animals through witnessing their expressions of grief. This is something that is, again, often hidden within the systems of oppression in which farmed animals live usually out their lives (Bartell, 2017). At VINE, pattrice jones and Lori Gruen describe the death of Violet the

chicken and the subsequent period of mourning undertaken by her best friend, Chickenweed. This included Chickenweed observing Violet's burial, followed by several weeks of visibly uncharacteristic behaviours such as storming and stomping around and refusing to spend time with anyone – human or nonhuman – at the sanctuary. Over time Chickenweed became more sociable again but, according to the authors, "… never recovered his sunny personality (2016, 198). While other studies explore, in great detail, the emotional lives of animals (Bekoff, 2007; King, 2013) little is known about this aspect of farmed animals' existence. Kathryn Gillespie is one person who has offered this insight. And she argues that witnessing these emotional responses in farmed animals has "transformative potential" (2016, 585) to change the way people view the animals that they ordinarily eat (Gillespie, 2016, 2018, 2019).

The inherent ethics underpinning sanctuaries are revealed in the literature too, through actions that reinforce opposition to human use of animals' bodies and their secretions for food and other commodities. At Farm Sanctuary, for example, Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015) highlight how wool that is sheared from sheep is used as bedding for birds and other animals, rather than being sold. The sheep, in this instance, have been bred to increase their wool production and therefore require regular removal of wool to avoid overheating. Similarly, eggs that chickens lay as part of their natural cycle are fed back to them as a source of protein, instead of being consumed by human residents or sanctuary employees, or indeed sold to visitors or the general public. Further, at VINE, pattrice jones (2014a) notes the challenges of making decisions about the sanctuary space on behalf of the animal residents. While animals are capable of communicating their needs and preferences in multifarious ways (Meijer, 2019) on occasions when it's unclear what the most appropriate path is, pattrice and Miriam make decisions "…in physical proximity to animals." This, they contend, ensures animals are not treated as "abstractions" (2014a, 73) like they are within our food

systems. In The Oxen at the Intersection, a book that tells the story of VINE's beginnings, jones describes a scene where herself and Miriam are making an important decision in one of the sanctuary barns, surrounded by residents of all different species, with others popping their heads in through the doorway.

Given the examples above, it's clear how farmed animal sanctuaries can be viewed as prefigurative spaces that reveal ways in which we may conceivably learn to live better with farmed animals in more democratic and non-exploitative ways. Before considering some of the work which has already alluded to these potentialities, as well as the opportunities to develop this idea further using the "hermeneutic method of utopia" (Levitas, 2013, 27) and associated concepts such as "estrangement" (Sargisson, 2007), "everyday utopias" (Cooper, 2014), and "lived utopianism" (Sargisson and Sergeant, 2017), it is important to consider the limitations of farmed animal sanctuaries as outlined by scholars that have undertaken fieldwork at these institutions.

If we start with interspecies friendships, while the most progressive sanctuaries such as VINE have "intermingled populations" (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015, 57)[6], this isn't representative of most sanctuary spaces. As Donaldson and Kymlicka highlight, separating animals by their species or sex is in line with best-practice animal welfare standards regarding animal safety (e.g. preventing larger animals from harming smaller animals, restricting predator access) as well as the proactive containment of diseases. This is even the

[6]"The sanctuary is subdivided into several areas, including a large upper pasture and forest where a community of semi-feral cows live mostly apart from humans; a lower sanctuary ("the Valley") where many birds (and some humans, dogs, and cats) live; and a large middle multispecies commons ("the Commons") in which residents of many species (including humans) live, and are largely free to commingle on their own terms. It also contains specially designated areas for convalescing, vulnerable, or self- segregating animals, or newly introduced residents" (Blattner et. al, 2020, 6).

case at the original Farm Sanctuary which has become a model for other institutions (Bartell, 2017). Yet, there are additional drivers behind decisions to segregate species. Abrell (2016), for example, discusses the need to separate species to provide better educational experiences during sanctuary tours. This often includes isolating certain individuals if their behaviour is deemed aggressive and therefore a danger to human visitors. A conclusion reached by Abrell is that forced separation at sanctuaries results in animals becoming "sacrificial citizens," whose freedom and subjecthood is limited for the "… furtherance of the sanctuary's mission (2016, 215). This, he argues, problematises the transition of farmed animals from an existence defined as "bestia sacer" (iv) or *bare life* in the food industry, to "subjects" (237) within a sanctuary space.

As discussed earlier, animals at sanctuaries become ambassadors for their species and the wider animal protection movement. Tours are the typical way that sanctuaries educate the public about the abuses that animals suffer within the food system and raise money, yet, as Bartell highlights, this model of fundraising helps reinforce ideas of "humans being entitled to view animals and allow for the human "gaze" (2017, 136). Taking her lead from animal studies philosopher, Lori Gruen, Bartel further argues that these "zoo-like" (99) experiences can undermine the dignity of animals: "Thinking of animals as things to be looked at… precludes seeing animals as having dignity" (Gruen, 2014, 242). On this point, Abrell (2016) provides an example from Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary in New York where chickens have limited space in which to avoid human visitors, something, he says, they are often clearly eager to do.

Generally, the concept of captivity is problematic for sanctuaries. All sanctuaries, in one way or another, are limited in their attempts to provide for the wellbeing of animals. Sanctuaries

have walls and fences and many, due to the constraints of space and resources, as well as perceived ethical obligations, must restrict other aspects of animals' lives, such as their desire to procreate and raise young (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015). Philosopher, Karen S. Emmerman, writing about sanctuaries for chimpanzee survivors of biomedical research, argues that because of the necessity for the ongoing captivity of chimpanzees, sanctuaries "…are better understood as part of the work of moral repair" (2014, 213) rather than representing the ultimate remedy to the harms animals have suffered. This certainly applies to farmed animal sanctuaries too. Bartell (2017) provides a helpful typology of farm sanctuary spaces, rating them on their efforts to "maximize the agency and freedom of the nonhuman residents." Yet even VINE, a "Type IV" sanctuary (the highest ranking according to Bartell) acknowledges its shortcomings. Blattner et al. describe cow residents at VINE have access to "a large acreage of woods and cleared pasture all the way to the sanctuary peak," yet note how co-founder pattrice jones is adamant that the cows "would happily explore further than current boundaries allow" (2020, 18). Abrell labels this as a form of "captive freedom" (2016, 88). As VINE's other founder, Miriam Jones, says, instead of arguing about the ethics of captivity in these contexts, perhaps it's better to judge the "actions we as humans take" (2014, 99) toward nonhuman animals.

Despite the limitations of farmed animal sanctuaries outlined above, the potential of these prefigurative spaces is clear. Prefiguration describes the "…conscious attempt to build, if only temporarily and on a limited scale, 'utopic' alternative social relationships in the present" (Naegler, 2020, 29). Spaces where, as Casey et. al. suggests, "…participants can cross boundaries between the actual world and the world they envision" (2020, 1659). Indeed, some of the studies already cited, including those by Elan Abrell (2016, 2017) and Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2015), as well as Wayne Gabardi (2017) and Timothy

Pachirat (2018), have already intimated at this aspect of farmed sanctuary spaces, yet there is lots of potential to explore this idea further. First, let's consider the work of those authors who have emphasised the alterity of farmed animal sanctuaries.

In his introduction to a special issue of Animal Studies Journal focused on sanctuaries, Elan Abrell (2017) argues that sanctuary spaces are an example of what Michel Foucault (1986) called "heterotopias", or spaces that actually exist within our culture, where normative behaviours and values are inverted. This is evident in the way sanctuaries "spatially manifest an ethical critique" of the role of animals as commodities through, "enacting different ways of living ethically" with them (Abrell, 2017, 5). Elsewhere, Abrell has insisted that regardless of the limitations of sanctuaries, their symbolic value for inspiring a vision for a world where animals and humans "live well and free together" (2016, 315), is augmented by ongoing efforts to work through some of the difficulties and contradictions highlighted above. Much like how the writers of utopian science fiction – who operate in what Frederic Jameson calls a "Spatial Genre"– "take apart" and "tinker" with (Jameson, 2005, 308) their imagined worlds, those who run farmed animal sanctuaries "perform a pragmatic labor that must be done before any sort of liberation is possible." (Abrell, 2016, 333).[7]

Political philosopher, Wayne Gabardi, in his 2017 book, The Next Social Contract: Animals, The Anthropocene, and Biopolitics, also acknowledges the importance of farmed animal sanctuaries. Within his framework of "posthumanist communitarianism" (2017, 124), he sees sanctuaries as nurturing "mixed human-animal cooperative societies" that have the potential

[7]In a recent interview, Abrell has stated that despite the fact that the impact of farmed animal sanctuaries is negligible in terms of how many animals are actually saved, there is still "real value in the cultural work they do, even if they can't change the bigger system" (Milburn, 2021).

to grow “spatially and temporally” (168). Gabardi’s ‘Next Social Contract’ describes a future consisting of “an archipelago of *humanimal* households, niches, nodes, contact zones, enclaves, cultures, communities, social networks, corridors, and passages” (153). These conceptual “territorial islands” all represent an alternative culture and society that exists on “the periphery of dominant civilisational order” (154). Farmed animal sanctuaries are very much a part of this alternative culture, occupying a “a precarious dual existence” (154) alongside systems of animal oppression. Over time, Gabardi envisages the periphery to “outflank increasingly outmoded institutions.” Towns and cities, for example, may declare themselves “animals sanctuary cities” (169) as democratic animal politics become more and more mainstream.

Similarly, political scientist, Timothy Pachirat, argues that farmed animal sanctuaries are embedded in a larger and ongoing “topography of enmity” (Pachirat, 2018, 339). And as sites of resistance and places of “rupture” in a broader struggle for global justice, he calls for sanctuaries to make greater efforts to collaborate and express solidarity with other institutions that are creating a refuge for humans and non-humans “outside hegemonic structures of human domination” (Donaldson, 2020 [referring to Pachirat’s thesis]).

The most explicit exploration of farmed animal sanctuaries as types of prefigurative spaces occurs in the 2015 paper, Farmed Animal Sanctuaries: The Heart of the Movement? by animal studies scholars, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka. The authors of Zoopolis, while commending the efforts of sanctuaries for providing refuge for abused animals alongside doing critical advocacy work, say that, for the most part, these institutions aren’t doing enough to transform human-animal relations. To truly represent a microcosm of what a shared interspecies society could look like, Donaldson and Kymlicka propose “A different

vision of a farm sanctuary", one in which animal residents are seen "less as refugees and ambassadors, and more as citizens and pioneers of new "intentional communities[8]" who are given the freedom to create a new social world." (2015, 50).

According to Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015), contemporary research on intentional and transition communities reveals key principles that underpin these experimental ways of living: shared membership, non-hierarchical social relations, commitment to self-determination, a "3P" model of rights (Protection, Provision, and Participation), dependant agency, scaffold choices, and reconfigured spaces. Currently, most farmed animal sanctuaries, in the authors' view, are representative of "total institutions" (56) such as asylums, orphanages, and prisons with an overemphasis on paternalism and control. By adopting the principles above and evolving into "ongoing communities of members" (66), farmed animal sanctuaries will benefit from [citing Sargisson, 2007] a "politics of estrangement" often associated with intentional communities, through genuine attempts to maintain a "creative tension with mainstream society" (65).[9]

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[8]Lyman Tower Sargent classifies "intentional societies" (of which there are 19 distinct types) as one of the "Three Faces of Utopianism" (1994). His standard definition of an intentional community (the preferred label for this broad phenomenon) is "a group of five or more adults and their children, if any, who come from more than one nuclear family and who have chosen to live together to enhance their shared values or for some other mutually agreed upon purpose" (1994, 15). According to sociologist, Krishan Kumar, "projects that offer small-scale models of the good life" (2010, 562) are perhaps the most noteworthy characteristic of present-day utopianism.

[9]Estrangement is a device common to utopian fiction which triggers "fresh perceptions of the limits of the possible" (Sargisson, 2007, 394). In 'Strange Places: Estrangement, Utopianism, and Intentional Communities', Lucy Sargisson draws on her research within New Zealand and UK based intentional communities to argue that estrangement is also at work in "the empirical world of utopian experiments" (393). Sargisson acknowledges, however, that utopian experiments tend to "exist in a condition of perpetually precarious balance between inside and outside" (426) – at once embedded within and isolated from mainstream culture. This, she says, makes them powerful sites of resistance to normative social and economic practices, but also sometimes weak in terms of their ability to truly incite wider change. It's a perspective which may suggest that urban based microsanctuaries, rather than traditional rural sanctuaries, are the vanguard of the farmed animal sanctuary movement, given how they challenge certain ideas of utopian withdrawal and isolationism. However, this argument is problematised, for example, when you consider VINE Sanctuary's location in the heart of rural Vermont, also known as "dairy country" (jones, 2014a, 11) because of the state's economic reliance on dairy produce, as well as being the place where the factory farming of chickens was invented. The following exploration of 'Everyday Life, Everyday Utopias, and Lived Utopianism' will add further scrutiny to the idea that one type of sanctuary location is better than another.

Donaldson and Kymlicka conclude their paper by acknowledging that there is an emerging practice of intentional community apparent at "some sanctuaries, to some degree" (2015, 51). VINE is cited as an example of a sanctuary that is pushing the boundaries of what is possible. Another example of how farmed animal sanctuaries could evolve into human-animal intentional communities can be found at Big Sky Sanctuary in Victoria, Australia. A house that was relocated to the sanctuary's rural site has enabled Big Sky's founders to create a refuge for humans too, who can become permanent residents and live equally with and among the rescued animals in a truly interspecies community (O'Sullivan, 2018). By establishing the conceptual framework outlined above, Donaldson and Kymlicka hope that researchers will be encouraged to investigate the farmed animal sanctuary phenomenon further. My assertion – that sanctuaries are ripe for interpretation as utopian spaces – takes its lead from Donaldson and Kymlicka's call for further exploration of the transformative possibilities of farmed animal sanctuaries.

Everyday Life, Everyday Utopias, and Lived Utopianism

"…embedding abstract utopian ideals inside collective everyday matters can have an extraordinary and lasting impact. Our challenge to other scholars and activists is to look for other examples of widespread lived utopianism." **(Sargisson and Sargent, 2017, 23)**

By exploring farmed animal sanctuaries and/or microsanctuaries through the lens of utopianism, I hope to further reveal the transformative potential of experimental alternative human-animal spaces. This will contribute greater depth to the work already done by Donaldson and Kimlycka and other scholars that have considered the prefigurative possibilities of farmed animal sanctuaries. The concepts of "everyday life", "everyday utopia", and "lived utopianism" will underpin these efforts.

The sociologist, Michael E. Gardiner has written extensively on what is known as everyday life studies. This field of research, he stresses, is based on the assumption that it is a mistake for social researchers to always focus their attention on "memorable, highly visible or extraordinary events of the sociocultural world" (2004, 229). Rather, to really understand how societies function and, more specifically, how they may come to change, attention should be given to those "collective energies that constitute the minutiae of lived social relations" (2000, 208). In doing so, social researchers may uncover the "hidden and oft-suppressed potentials" (2) of ordinary human beings. While mainstream scholarship may indeed approach the everyday as a "realm of the ordinary", Gardiner – drawing on the work of key theorists of the everyday such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Agnes Heller – insists, on the contrary, that it is a "domain that is potentially *extraordinary."* This is because, despite its seemingly "routinized, static and unreflexive characteristics", everyday

life is full of "microscopic expressions of care and solidarity" (17) as well as moments of "penetrating insight and boundless creativity" (6). When experiencing these often fleeting but transformative events people can "develop a heightened understanding of their circumstances and use this newfound intellectual capacity to "alter repressive social conditions" (19). Sociologists, then, must work to disentangle and analyse everyday life's "repressive and emancipatory qualities" to reveal glimpses of a "transformed social world" (99).

A central tenet of Gardiner's argument is that there is an evident link between "the utopian impulse and daily life" (2004, 232). He defines utopian impulses as expressions or desires which seek to "transcend the routinization of everyday life" (2000, 85) in a way that "critiques the status quo without projecting a full-blown image of what a future society should look like" (17). Utopian impulses should not be discounted as naïve simplistic thoughts or whimsical daydreams but rather recognised as a "major animating force behind the social imaginary" imbued with "genuine human needs and desires that continue to call out for actualization" (154). Of particular importance here is the work of the Hungarian philosopher, Agnes Heller. Gardiner describes Heller's utopianism as a type of "immanent utopia" that is "within everyday life and yet desperately at odds with the social world as it currently exists." Heller sees acts of love, kindness, comradeship, and other types of emotional support, as being instrumental in triggering utopian impulses – being that these subjective emotions and feelings are jarring in the face of our "impersonal" and "highly bureaucratized" (152) modern world. Significantly, according to Heller, social transformation is only possible if we work to infuse everyday life with this "ethics of care" (155). She urges people to live "rational and virtuous" lives, which Gardiner interprets as a form of "striving to be moral within the confines of an immoral society" (156).

Indeed, utopian studies scholar, Lisa Garforth, contends that by the end of the twentieth century, the concept of utopia had firmly moved "beyond the blueprint" of an idealised imaginary society and into "everyday life" (Garforth, 2009, 15). Very much in line with thinkers of the everyday life like Heller, utopia today is considered "processual, critical, reflexive, open-ended, and immanent" (5). In the past, Garforth explains, attempts to conceptualise utopia were mostly focused on defining what utopia is. Nowadays – in large part thanks to the work of Tom Moylan (1986), Ruth Levitas (1990), and Lucy Sargisson (1996) – scholars are primarily concerned with what utopia does. This, Garforth states, reveals utopia to be a "heuristic device that might inculcate the possibility of and desire for radical social change" (7). Her contribution, then, is to argue that if utopia is indeed "immanent", then the role of intention – having a plan, an objective, an end point – is undeniably "problematised" (18) and "largely irrelevant" (17). By resisting closure and embracing unintentionality, utopia, in Garforth's view, is "more insistent, more ubiquitous and perhaps more important than ever before" (25).

Political theorist, Davina Cooper, is someone who has explored this theoretical shift within utopian thinking by seeking out real-world examples of what she calls "everyday utopias." According to Cooper, an everyday utopia can be a network or space that performs regular daily life "in a radically different fashion" (2014, 2). She uses examples such as Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park, and Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS) to illustrate her case. Cooper's thesis contributes to the broader turn within utopian studies, which has seen a gradual distancing from the imaginary "blueprint" of a static idealised society, to instead focus on utopia as an ever-changing "ethos or complex process" (4) as well as a way of engaging with real "spaces, objects, and practices… oriented to the hope, desire, and belief in the possibility of other, better worlds" (3). Everyday utopias, she says, are "constantly

adapting and changing" (4). And rather than engaging in campaigning or advocacy efforts, as such, participants of everyday utopias are merely interested in "digging in and getting things done" (7) although be it in "counternormative ways" (11). Significantly, participants of everyday utopias involve themselves in "quotidian practices" that are "performed in an organized, ambitiously counterhegemonic manner" (130).

While they share many characteristics with intentional communities, everyday utopias are different in that they aren't considered "totalizing longlife places" (8) but rather are "more akin to hotspots of innovative practice" (9). Further, and perhaps most significantly, their physical proximity to ordinary life – "nearby and near to hand" (226) – and their intersection with "mainstream economic time" (151), as well as participants' "entangled relationships" (9) with local communities and those engaged in other everyday utopias, gives them "a critical form of closeness" (9) that traditional utopias and most intentional communities lack. Cooper suggests that the everyday aspect of everyday utopias, together with their critical proximity to ordinary life, intensifies the role of estrangement. In many ways, they are utopias "in formation" which provide a way of "experiencing, demonstrating, and bringing into being [a] more developed (even institutionalized) future reality" (82).

In a similar vein to the work of Davina Cooper, Lucy Sargisson and Lyman Tower Sargent, in their 2017 paper, Lived Utopianism: Everyday Life and Intentional Communities, discuss how people try to realise "their ideas and dreams of a better way of life, in the here and now" (2017, 2). Like Cooper, the authors seek to engage with utopian theory that prioritises the minutiae of everyday life, something they feel has been neglected within utopian studies. Further, sociological research on everyday life, they say – which draws on the seminal work of scholars such as Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau – has also largely failed to address

"community life and collective action" (4). While Cooper's research focuses on daily often transient practices of utopianism, Sargisson and Sargent are more concerned with what they see as the "utopian impulses" (4) evident in everyday life, and particularly within intentional communities – an area of utopianism that the authors have a pre-existing degree of expertise in[10]. These impulses – indicative of the "critical or forensic function of utopianism" (9) – reveal a broader criticism of society beyond the community. Within the intentional communities that form part of the study, this manifests as a perceived "cultural malaise, linked to pollution and climate change" (9). Certain "mundane daily activities" (14) such as eating, therefore, help reaffirm collective beliefs and goals – in this instance how particular food choices and methods of procuring food are considered to be more environmentally sustainable than others. However, the authors confirm that food remains an "area of perennial strife" (7) and conflict flashpoint in "several different kinds of communities, including urban socialist communities, rural ecovillages, suburban cohousing groups, and anarchist and feminist communities" (19).[11]

[10]Though, as the quote at the start of this section asserts, they don't see lived utopianism as being confined to intentional communities, but rather as a more widespread phenomenon "occurring in other spaces, practices, and activities" (3).

[11]This is common theme throughout the history of intentional communities. The Shakers, Fruitlands, and The Oneida Perfectionists were three well-known intentional societies active during the nineteenth century that pursued vegan or vegetarian diets. But, as Lyman Tower Sargent (2015) confirms, they each ultimately failed to maintain these practices due to ongoing disagreements about the morality of consuming animals and their secretions. In a study of 1960s communes, author Timothy Miller also notes how the "chief topic of conversation… was food, not sex or God" (1999, 199). While the communities that Miller investigated certainly tried to use diet to "live out their convictions" (Aguilar, 2015, 80), again disagreements around the morality of eating animals, as well as environmental sustainability, were common, and ultimately led to dissenting members refusing to adopt the desired eating practices of their communities, or indeed breaking away to form new communes. Further, Aguilar's more recent research on three contemporary US based intentional communities also considers fractures created by dietary policy. Specifically, how the ascetic vegan or vegetarian dietary practices preferred by these communities "unintentionally exclude, or make communal life more difficult for, non-white and lower-class members" (2015, 79).

For Sargisson and Sargent, these moments of disharmony point to a key feature of lived utopianism, – that it is "a process and not an end point" (20). Much like within Cooper's everyday utopias, the actualization of ideals in intentional communities are never fixed but remain "fluid", "partial" "provisional" (20). Living in utopia, they say, is "simply impossible" (22) if the overall aim is to achieve a state of perfection. In fact, experiencing and embracing the "complicated and messy" (20) process of lived utopianism is what makes these endeavours worthwhile for those who participate in them. Sargisson and Sargent's comprehensive research within UK and New Zealand based intentional communities – which informs this paper and several others (Sargisson, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2007) as well as a book (Sargisson and Sargent, 2004) – confirms that even dissatisfied community members, or former members of now defunct communities, express a positive attitude to these "deeply transformative experiences" (Sargisson and Sargent, 2017, 23). To return to the quote used at the start of this section, the fact that even failed attempts to enact utopian impulses within everyday life can have an "extraordinary and lasting impact" (23) on people is proof, according to the authors, that it is "possible to live a utopian life" (23).

The capacity for these productions of the utopian impulse to affect individuals is the focus of cultural geographer, Francesca Fois, in her 2018 paper, Enacting Experimental Alternative Spaces. She argues it is the very experimental nature of spatial attempts to "alter, challenge and resist mainstream economic, cultural and/or political institutions and discourses" that fundamentally change the people who participate in them. This is because of the heightened "emotional, affective and embodied experiences generated" (123). Fois, like Sargisson and Sargent, uses intentional communities – sites which she labels "utopian laboratories" (108) – as models for where this kind of social experimentation occurs. Of particular note, is her emphasis on attempts within intentional communities to "heal some of the issues of

contemporary societies" (110) as well as challenge normative behaviours and ways of organising everyday life. Certainly, Fois's suggestion that intentional communities are places where people come to "know, rely on, and support each other," (121) taps into Heller's view that expressions of love, kindness, and comradeship are essential for sparking the utopian impulse. This solidarity, together with the "processual, open-ended and dynamic" life on intentional communities, which is often "provocative and disordering" and fraught with problems, helps to fundamentally "unsettle and transform the self" (123) by "expanding… individual awareness into new ways of being, connecting and living in society." Ultimately, enactments of utopian desires says Fois, can initiate wider social change beyond intentional community settings.

Rhiannon Firth is another sociologist who offers an important contribution to these discussions. Writing from an anarchist perspective, Firth's research on intentional communities concludes with the view that acts of "sharing non-monetary goods", consensus decision-making, and "prioritising the good of the community over personal gain" (2018, 498) – all typical within intentional communities – "de-naturalise taken-for-granted assumptions about human nature, economy and belonging" (504). She, like the work of the scholars considered above, believes that the transgressive utopianism at play within these social experiments can inspire change within "our unintentional communities" (505) such as classrooms, neighbourhoods, and relationships. Previously, Firth has argued that utopia should not be seen as "an attribute of fixed spatialities" but rather as something which is "expressed through practices of autonomy" (2012, 89). Referring to Garforth's argument that utopian intentionality is largely irrelevant today, Firth suggests that autonomy itself is an intentional act that also resists closure through "self-determined and continually differentiating desire rather than fixed social production" (92). Further, that expressions of

autonomy exist in both rural and urban alternative spaces leading to the view that spatial utopianism "is an attribute of no site in particular" (93). Firth concludes her 2012 paper on 'autonomy and active desire', by stating that in moving away from set spatial formations, greater attention should be given to the "recomposition of social bonds" (100) in the construction of any type of evolving or transient autonomous space.

The impetus from this project initially came from an interrogation of the role of intentional communities within the broader field of utopian studies. Scrutinising Sargent's definition of intentional societies (cited above) from an animal liberationist perspective[12], however, it immediately struck me as perhaps limited in its vision, given its lack of consideration for the many and varied nonhumans who we share our communities with anyway. Further, when investigating what are considered some of history's most successful pioneers of utopian social experiments, it was clear that the recognition and protection of the individual interests of nonhuman animals did not wholly factor in their utopian ideals. I use the word 'wholly' deliberately here because, as outlined earlier, there are clear historical examples of communities that have aspired to live fully vegan or vegetarian lifestyles – underpinned by the belief that consuming animals and their secretions is morally indefensible. However, the failure of these communities to always commit to morally-driven dietary practices are amplified, in my view, by other jarring activities that indicate what I see as a disconnect between the positive intentions towards animals and a failure to pursue the cause of animal liberation. The Oneida Perfectionists, for example, a New York based intentional society active in the nineteenth century, raised dairy cows and funded their operations by selling milk. Lighthearted entries in the Oneida Daily Journal from 1866 include descriptions of the

[12]A broad term to describe the movement which pursues greater recognition and protection of the individual interests of nonhuman animals.

dairying practice of taking newly born calves away from their mothers – one cow apparently "hid her baby in the grass and pretended not to know anything about it while Mr B. and others were looking for it" (cited by Lawson, 2018, para 7). The Oneida's also manufactured and sold their own brand of animal steel traps.

Another example of what I see as a contradictory attitude towards the interests of nonhuman animals can be seen in the utopian social experiments established by the socialist philosopher, Charles Fourier (also nineteenth century). Fourier's communities raised animals for food but in a way that emphasised the "convivial" way in which humans and animals can live and work together (Donati, 2019). Fourier believed that the pleasure of food comes not from connoisseurship but rather through "the heterogeneous associations bound up in the act of farming and eating" (121). Reconnecting agriculture and consumption through a commitment to higher welfare practices of animal husbandry, he argued, is a way to bring people and animals together in a co-constitutive relationship. Proper animal husbandry formed a core part of the education of children who lived in his communities, which also included food preparation. In Fourier's system, children would "… take turns working the spits in front of the fires, preparing the food most appropriate to their age and size, graduating in a piquant description by ingredient size from larks to quails and pigeons, on to chickens, and then to larger joints as they themselves grow bigger" (Levi, 2015, 48). While I'm certain other moments of estrangement were active in Fourier's communities, by killing, cooking, and eating the animals who lived alongside them, any "fresh perceptions of the limits of the possible" experienced by community members did not include a de-objectification of other species.

Yes, context is important. And these examples are undoubtedly representative of prevailing attitudes towards animals at that time. Yet, even today, within the booming intentional community movement (Howard, 2021), in the main, animals that live on communities continue to fulfil normative roles as "livestock, pets, and sources of food" (Lawson, 2018, para 4). During a recent study of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri, USA, one member revealed how before joining the community they adhered to a vegan diet but now will happily eat the animals she helps raise because "it breaks from the mold of the industrial model of meat production" (Rubin, 2020, 10). Cultural anthropologist, Olea Morris, in her ongoing research on multispecies entanglements in Mexican ecovillages has discovered similar sentiments held by community members. At one particular site, she noted, while the animals raised as food receive the highest levels of care and wellbeing, human residents have no qualms about eating their fellow community dwellers, believing vegetarianism to be a "deeply misguided" philosophy (personal communication, 6 May 2021). Further, as suggested previously, the values of members of contemporary communities are mostly aligned with an 'animals as commodities' perspective. I make this assumption again based on the fact that only 14% of the intentional communities listed on the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC) website are classed as "fully vegan" (Foundation for Intentional Community, 2021).[13]

As Lawson suggests, "One way to view communal utopias and intentional communities is to understand them as a microcosm of wider society" (2018, para 10). If this is the case, then certainly the role and perception of animals in these social experiments are reflective of wider society's ongoing domination of the nonhuman world. Yes, intentional communities may

[13]An online search of the FIC Communities Directory on 19th June 2021 revealed that out of 988 Intentional Communities registered by the FIC, only 136 specified a dietary preference as being "fully vegan."

demonstrate other ways in which we can live better and more sustainable lives – e.g. with regards to ecological sustainability, energy consumption, and self-sufficiency (Wagner, 2012). Yet, in instances where animal bodies are exploited for food and other material resources as part of everyday life or even for income-generating purposes, there is little difference, in my view, between an intentional community and a small-scale farm.[14] In fact, Katherine Bartell (2017) makes a similar point in her thesis, 'From Farm to Sanctuary.' She argues that small-scale family farms, while touted as a positive solution to large-scale industrial farming practices, are still "morally objectionable due to the farm spaces themselves as well as the values and structures they perpetuate" (6). Yes, there is a persuasive counter-argument that focuses on the need to find better ways of "honouring life in the spaces of slaughter" (Donati, 2019, 127). Inspired by posthumanist thinkers such as Donna Haraway (2008, 2010) and Val Plumwood (2003), geographer Kelli Donati, in her paper 'Convivial world-making on a multispecies farm', argues that through seeking out "a relational ethic of killing guided by care rather than efficiency" (127) we can move towards de-industrialising the killing process. But, if we are to truly imagine better animal-human futures, then surely we need to look beyond a system that prioritises buying and selling, killing, and eating other species? In a recent interview, cultural anthropologist Elan Abrell, suggests that as we enter the Anthropocene – a geological epoch characterised by anthropogenic climate change, environmental destruction, and mass species extinction – humans will increasingly need to find better ways of coexisting with other species (primarily those that are domesticated, tamed, or raised in captivity) in close proximity. To do this successfully, he says, we need "techniques, abilities and skills in order to live with them in a way that isn't exploitative and

[14]If we take Donaldson and Kymlicka's (2015) suggestion that some farmed animal sanctuaries are beginning to adopt the practice of intentional community, then perhaps we need an addition to Sargent's typology of international societies to include these emerging egalitarian human-animal communities.

violent." Currently, it is only animal sanctuaries that "are doing the work to figure that out"[15] (Milburn, 2021).

The framework of everyday life and utopianism, as outlined above, can help us to consider how far – if at all – do farmed animal sanctuaries inspire us to imagine and actualise better human-animal futures through helping humans reconnect with other species. Interestingly, a recent survey of utopian literature confirmed that western literary utopias have been historically "averse to the consumption of animal flesh" (Bulleid, 2020, 49) on ethical grounds. Much like how the abolition of money and property "runs through the utopian tradition like a red thread" (Jameson, 2005, 20), Bulleid's research confirms that vegetarianism remains "central to the ethical and environmental ethos of these idealised societies" (2020, 67). Yet, while scholars of utopian studies and communal studies have, in recent years, considered the role of food and eating within utopian literature and intentional communities[16], there have been few attempts to interrogate the broader animal rights movement using the analytical tools of utopianism. The lack of engagement is perhaps evident in Lucy Sargisson's seminal work, 'Fool's Gold? Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century', published in 2012, which only briefly mentions animal rights during a broader

[15]Abrell gives examples of this, such as the development of innovative veterinary procedures and medicines for animal health issues that humans have always previously been unconcerned with – e.g. the impact of the ageing process on industrialised chickens and cows. Up until the last 20 years, and the dawn of the sanctuary movement, he says, few if any industrialised chickens or cows were living past adolescence: "Sanctuaries are figuring out what kind of health problems a geriatric cow might face in later life." (Milburn, 2021).

[16]A special edition of Utopian Studies Journal in 2015 focused on the theme of "Utopia and Food." Other significant works include Madden, E.M. and Finch, M.L (2008), Eating in Eden: Food and American Utopias; Stock, P. V. (2015), Food Utopias: Reimagining Citizenship, Ethics and Community; and Botelho, T. F. et. al. (Eds.) (2019) Utopian Foodways: Critical Essays.

discussion about cloning. It seems inconceivable, almost 10 years later, that a book about 'Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century' doesn't have a chapter dedicated to the animal rights movement.

Things are changing, though, as scholars are gradually beginning to identify a complementarity between utopianism, animal rights, (critical) animal studies, and multispecies justice. In their 2014 paper, "The Promise of Expansionist Pragmatism in Generating New Everyday Utopias", Paul Davis and Doug Wotherspoon rightly argue that a powerful contemporary utopian impulse is the process of "attaching rights to sentient non-human species, rights to other (non-sentient) species, rights to nature itself (as an inter-penetrating ecology)" (14). Referring to philosopher Norman Geras' (2000) insistence that "Embracing Utopia means Embracing an Alternative Ethics", they suggest that attempts to actualise these utopic rights-based projects will require everyday utopias that enact antispeciesist values.

In her 2017 paper, 'Uncivilising the Future', interaction design researcher, Michelle Westerlaken, also highlights the importance of "Imagining Non-Speciesism." By incorporating utopian thinking into her critique of the field of critical animal studies, Westerlaken suggests a key tenet of critical animal studies is that "a utopian future will never manage to be free of oppression (for both humans and animals) if we continue using, killing, mistreating, and exploiting animals for purposes such as food, clothing, or research" According to Westerlaken, rather than focusing on "criticising current practices and engaging in animal activism", more efforts at "imagining and considering futures that are non-speciesist" (54) are needed. This will involve trying to conceive the "potential shape in which non-speciesist futures could exist among other futures seeking to abandon oppression and

violence." How do we do this? Well, Westerlaken is clear that the most sensible place to start is by being more attentive to animals themselves. She encourages artists and designers to "continually discover alternative perspectives" by getting closer to animals and "being open to surprising engagements" (61). Westerlaken's research is aligned with the processual trend within utopianism discussed earlier, in that she urges a "flexible scenario of imagining possible futures [where] we could try to continuously make, remake, test, and evaluate potential ideas" (57).

Political theorist, Mathias Thaler, has more recently used utopian social theory to articulate how calls for multispecies justice – an idea premised on there being a "flat distribution of all beings" (2021, 3) – is an "Expression of Utopian Desire." That desire is for a future where "structural anthropocentrism…has been thoroughly abolished" (1). Thaler suggests that the agenda behind multispecies justice fits perfectly with the generation of estrangement or "what-if" plot lines found within utopian literature. Through reasoning that humans and non-humans enjoy equivalent "moral regimes" (7), multispecies justice offers a direct attack on the "liberal principles of individualistic normativity" (12). Thaler refers to anthropologist Anna Tsing's call for a "passionate immersion in the lives of the nonhuman subjects" (Tsing, 2010 cited by Mathias, 2021, 8), as being a worthy agenda for multispecies researchers, who through their research, help to "defamiliarize us from what we habitually take for granted" (18) as well as "educate our desire for a more equitable, dignified, and nonviolent world" (23).

Finding and exploring everyday utopias that enact antispeciesist values, being more attentive to animals, and immersing myself in the lives of nonhuman subjects, are all key considerations when developing a methodology for a project focused on 'Imagining Better

Animal-Human Futures.' As well as contributing to the emerging body of work on farmed animal sanctuaries, this research, I believe, could offer something really valuable and timely to utopian studies too. I turn next to a summary of some key works which will inform my research methods.

Multispecies Ethnography and Beyond

"A landscape without flowers or magnificent woods may be depressing for the passer-by; but flowers and trees should not make us forget the earth beneath, which has a secret life and a richness of its own." **(Lefebvre, 1947, 87)**

"Without engaging political, legal, and ethical discourses centered on animals as valuable in their own right, multispecies ethnography – or for that matter, any anthropology of nonhumans, will remain depoliticized and disengaged." **(Kopnina, 2017, 350)**

"*Sorrow, I felt great sorrow, an endless sense of mourning, for every dead animal. One period of grief is followed by another, so I am in constant mourning."* **(Tokarczuk, 2018, 100)**

The tradition of ethnography is closely associated with anthropological studies which seek to describe the everyday routines adopted by a particular group or culture (Fetterman, 1998). Most ethnographic data is collected from "direct observations in fieldwork" and measured on the researcher's ability to give significant "descriptive detail" (Thomas, 1993, 10) to the data that has been retrieved. By analysing the "extremely obscure" (Geertz, 1993, 311) elements of a society or civilisation, ethnography unearths the genealogy of ideology and the political meanings behind how and why society functions as it does. Fundamentally, it gives a bottom-up perspective to research, by prioritising the actions and experiences of individuals and the influence they have in forming the prevailing structures of power which ultimately govern over them, rather than looking at how structures of power work and endure.

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in more-than-human communities within the social sciences. The initial "animal turn" in the discipline has now evolved into what scholars refer to as the "nonhuman turn", which incorporates research focused on "plants and machines as well as other animals" (Shapiro, 2020, 21). A methodological approach that has emerged from these developments is multispecies ethnography. According to anthropologists Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich (2010), multispecies ethnography combines ethnography with environmental, science, technology, and animals studies. Its primary focus is on "the alterworlds of other beings" (553) which includes charismatic animals and plants, as well as "understudied organisms" such as insects, fungi, and microbes. In particular, it seeks to "place a fresh emphasis on the subjectivity and agency of organisms whose lives are entangled with humans" (566). Multispecies ethnography, Kirksey says, is also a way of "writing culture in the Anthropocene," (548) to better understanding how human activities are "remaking [the] Anthropos as well as its companion and stranger species on planet Earth" (549).

Environmental sustainability researcher, Helen Kopnina, contends that despite its entry into mainstream academic discourse over the last decade – whereby animals have been "pressed into the foreground" of anthropological studies – multispecies ethnography has failed to address the "scale of use, abuse, and dispossession of nonhumans" (2017, 338). This is because those who engage in multispecies investigations refuse to take a stand on issues pertaining to animal exploitation. Kopnina acknowledges the positive steps that have been made through innovative methodological practices to break down the "artificial dichotomy" (341) between humans and other animals. Yet, an overabundance of "theorizing and ontological choreography" (351) means that difficult ethical questions have been ignored or sidelined in favour of protecting positions promoting human exceptionalism. The "lack of

moral commitment" (347) demonstrated by multispecies anthropology is particularly galling, says Kopnina, as nonhuman suffering continues apace, illustrated by the "intensification of factory farming and mass extinction of wildlife species" (339). To conclude her paper, Kopnina argues that anthropologists who "recognize animal selfhood, sentience, and agency" (349) and want to challenge "the acceptance of daily animal suffering" (351) should engage with activist-influenced fields, such as critical animal studies and radical animal law, to address the "exploitive nature of human-nonhuman relationships" (342) and make a difference by explicitly supporting animals rights.

In their investigation of VINE sanctuary, Blattner et. al. (2020) undertake exactly the type of politicised multispecies ethnography called for by Helen Kopnina. The authors argue that the "lack of realised agency" of farmed animals within environments of "extreme confinement, deprivation, and violence" is exactly why they are dismissed as "fungible entities of limited potential for agency" – a key rationale for their "continued oppression." According to Blattner et. al, too many studies have focused on animals "in spaces of animal use and exploitation" whereby researchers themselves become complicit in the violence through passive participation. VINE sanctuary, on the other hand, provided the ideal environment to truly understand farmed animals as intentional beings, outside of systems of human oppression.

Gaining a deeper understanding of society, the author's say, "requires attending to its multispecies dimensions, the subjectivities of its animal members, and their agency as co-creators of our shared life worlds" (4). Blattner et. al concurred that to comprehend how farmed animals might want to live in a community with humans, they needed to "enter and be part of their world" and "respond and adjust [the] learning process through relationships with

them" (14). Multispecies ethnography was chosen as the methodological approach because it emphasises the need to participate in the lives of nonhumans to "glimpse the world through their eyes" (15). Feminist accounts of agency "as an embodied and relational phenomenon" (5) were also incorporated into the method, as researchers attempted to build "ethical relationships" (10) with animal subjects. A key characteristic of the study was to use guiding questions[17] in a "general spirit of open inquiry", rather than enter the sanctuary with predefined hypotheses to test. This was necessary, the author's assert, due to the "utter inadequacy of existing research ethics protocols for animals used in research" (16). Researchers embedded themselves within the sanctuary as workers (e.g. general maintenance, etc.) and residents. Observational field notes, photographs and videos of animals were collected, as well as anecdotal evidence from human staff and volunteers, which was used to inform conclusions. Based on their experiences, Blattner et. al remained adamant that "political multispecies ethnography" offers the best way to articulate how "animals are the true teachers and leaders of a movement for interspecies justice" (46).

The 'inadequacy of existing research ethics protocols for animals used in research' is the basis of Lauren E. Van Patter's, and Charlotte E. Blattner's 2019 paper, 'Non-Invasive, Respectful Research with Nonhuman Animal Participants.' Van Patter and Blattner – a geographer and a legal scholar – criticise the outdated 3R framework[18] for its inability to "guide respectful, non-invasive research relations that aim to encounter animals as meaningful participants and safeguard their well-being" (171). While a universal framework

[17]"How reliably can we interpret animals' nonverbal communication? What is the status of anecdotal information from human informants about the animal residents? How can we gauge animals' voluntary participation during the course of interactions? When should research with animal participants remain purely observational, and when is it appropriate to foster more active engagements?" (Blattner, et. al, 2020, 16).

[18]"The principles of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) were developed over 50 years ago providing a framework for performing more humane animal research" (NC3Rs, 2021).

for non-invasive research with animal participants has "yet to be advanced" (172), the authors offer a possible alternative to the 3Rs, arguing for a more ethical approach to animal-based research that is underpinned by "respect, justice, and reflexivity" (185). The approach outlined by Van Patter and Blattner has three core principles: non-maleficence, beneficence, and voluntary participation. These principles each reinforce the idea that animals are individual "subjects of their own lifeworlds and co-creators of knowledge" rather than "passive objects to be used in the creation of knowledge" (173). Respecting animals "otherness" (177) is fundamentally important, the authors say, given the propensity for animal capacities to be "routinely underestimated… misinterpreted and misrepresented" (174). Regarding non-maleficence, Van Patter and Blattner highlight, for example, the need to sometimes anonymise animal research subjects, particularly when the animal may be known in the community (e.g. a sanctuary resident 'liberated' from a local farming operation). Further, "improved livelihood opportunities as a result of research outcomes" (176) are also essential. If a study does not demonstrate "a real potential to change animals' lives for the better" (183) then it should be reconfigured or discounted. And in terms of voluntary participation, the authors emphasise the need to ensure "ongoing embodied assent from animal participants" (197). Here, Van Patter and Blattner discuss factors such as responsible anthropomorphism and attunement[19] as being critical aspects of the research method.

My proposed project – Imagining Better Animal-Human Futures – will involve an ethnographic investigation of farmed animal sanctuaries and/or microsanctuaries. Generally, I

[19]Animal geographer, Catherine Johnston, defines responsible anthropomorphism as "'attending more closely to understandings of nonhumans garnered from the practice and experience of co-relationality" (2008, 645). Attunement is where the researcher "looks for ways of sensitising their bodily responses to non-human registers of experience" (Noorani and Brigstocke, 2018, 20).

think there's lots of scope for innovative research methods here, that integrate the nonhuman animals as participants and explore all the ethical issues around researching their experiences, telling their stories, and attempting to include their perspectives and what it might mean for co-constructing utopian spaces with other animals. Introducing new technologies and incorporating image, video and sound recording as well as written notes, for example, will be the kind of methodological innovation that will excite potential funders. Further, I can envisage lots of interesting material being generated by interviewing sanctuary owners/staff about their work and its impact on social change. And indeed interviewing or surveying sanctuary visitors about the impact it had on their lives after the visit(s).

I want to end here by drawing again on the work of Francesca Fois and her 2017 paper, 'Understanding Ethnography Through a Life Course Framework.' Fois suggests that an important but often overlooked aspect of ethnographic research is how the researcher's own "social and cultural background" (423) can help shape the trajectory of the project. Further, she also states that certain "turning points", "transitions", and "trajectories" (423) can affect the direction of the research, as well as the researcher's own life course, in addition to the life course of the research participants. While the lives of research participants are always the primary focus of any ethnographic investigation, by "conceptualising their own life course and how it is affected" (421), researchers can generate data during the fieldwork process that becomes "instrumental within the research output" through revealing a "reciprocal influence" (423) between the researcher's ethnographic journey and the impact it ultimately has on research participants. This approach also encourages researchers to acknowledge how reflecting on a project's "long-term effects" (424) is an important additional phase to an ethnographic study.

In his 2016 PhD thesis, Elan Abrell discusses how he was "brought to sanctuary" (44) through an early fondness for animals, as well as a formative experience of taking care of a sick cat – a story he shares in detail at the beginning of the thesis. My interest in sanctuaries is relatively new and driven by a desire to engage in activism that prioritises animal flourishing over suffering. I became a vegan in 2016 and have since primarily participated in animal rights activism at what Kathryn Gillespie would describe as "fraught spaces" (2019, 19) – e.g. protesting at the gates of slaughterhouses and meat markets – as well as using extreme video footage of animal abuse to persuade people to reconsider their food choices. Over time, I have become unconvinced of the efficacy of these approaches but also fatigued by prolonged exposure to animal suffering. So, last year, I turned to farmed animal sanctuaries. Or, should I say, reading about farmed animal sanctuaries, as I have never set foot in one myself, nor have I (like the vast majority of people) ever spent any time in close proximity with farmed animals, let alone farmed animals enjoying uncharacteristically 'free' lives at sanctuaries. The estrangement that I will likely experience at my chosen research sites will undoubtedly inform my findings. Therefore, (as per Fois) self-reflexively recording my emotions, feelings, and embodiments during the fieldwork process will hopefully contribute to the wider project of figuring out how we can imagine better animal-human futures – while positively impacting the lives of the research subjects along the way.

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