



# Toward an Animal Standpoint in School?

Critical Animal Pedagogy as  
Sustainability Education

Jonna Kallaste Håkansson





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Jonna Kallaste Håkansson



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## Abstract

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The overall aim of this thesis is to explore how critical animal pedagogies (CAP) can contribute to environmental and sustainability education (ESE) by addressing, challenging, and transforming current exploitative human-animal relations and their social, ethical, and environmental ramifications. It explores questions critical to subject matter education and contributes to ongoing debates regarding how nonhuman animals and human-animal relations can be introduced and addressed in ESE. It does so by exploring the potential of CAP to address, disturb, and disrupt exploitative human-animal relations and enable a re-thinking and re-learning of how to live together with other species.

The project was carried out as a feminist activist ethnography, in which I collaborated with teachers, students, animal rights activists, and scholars by discussing, developing, and introducing CAP in Years 1-3 in two Swedish upper secondary schools. Theoretically, the thesis takes its point of departure in critical animal studies and its subfield CAP, or more specifically animal standpoint theory, reading these with and through feminist affect theory, feminist philosophy, educational philosophy, and poststructuralist theory and pedagogy. Starting from this theoretical framework, the thesis is concerned with the didactical conditions upper secondary education provides for working with CAP and how this context, particularly in ESE teaching, informs and possibly transforms what CAP is and can achieve. It explores the (im)possibility for nonhuman animals to emerge and be responded to as subjects and what human-animal relations are enabled or disabled.

As such, this thesis contributes ethnographic fieldwork that provides insights into what happens when an openly normative and critical pedagogy standing in solidarity with nonhuman animals is introduced within ESE in upper secondary school. It analyzes possibilities for interspecies sustainability and justice to be envisioned and enacted and questions a sharp division between normative and pluralistic approaches in ESE. The thesis makes visible how an imagined human collective unwilling to change puts boundaries in place for how ethical human-animal relations that can be imagined. It also acknowledges openings in critically addressing animal exploitation within ESE.

Drawing upon the overall insights from the project, the thesis argues for the importance of creating space for taking an animal standpoint in ESE and addresses the risks of reproducing and reinforcing speciesism and anthropocentrism if such a standpoint cannot be taken. It acknowledges the potential in engaging with animal rights material, learning more about other species, and asking students to start from the perspective of nonhuman animals. The thesis shows how CAP can contribute to ESE by increasing student engagement and enable critical reflections through engaging with interspecies sustainability.

For Rexi

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Jonna Kallaste Håkansson,  
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Part I Setting the scene:  
Possibilities for introducing critical  
animal pedagogy in sustainability  
education



# Chapter 1: Introduction

A growing awareness of the central role of human-animal relations in sustainability issues has contributed to increased interest in nonhuman animals within the field of environmental and sustainability education (ESE), especially during the last decade (cf. Russell & Spannring, 2019; Pedersen, 2019b; Spannring, 2017). How nonhuman animals and human-animal relations can be introduced and addressed in ESE is debated, however. As this is the central focus of my thesis, it takes its starting point in the middle of these ongoing debates. This thesis explores critical questions related to subject matter education and engages with previous research and practice pertaining to ESE in general, and nonhuman animals and education in particular, by discussing possible critical approaches to human-animal relations in ESE. I explore the potential of critical animal pedagogy (CAP) to address, disturb, and disrupt exploitative human-animal relations in and through education and to enable a re-thinking, and re-learning of how to live alongside other species (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al., [Eds.], 2019). Hence, this thesis provides insights into what happens when an openly normative and critical pedagogy, in solidarity with nonhuman animals, is introduced in ESE, mapping how critical animal pedagogy can contribute to ESE didactics.<sup>1</sup>

When it comes to nonhuman animals in environmental education, Russell and Spannring (2019) map two main approaches. The first is critical and seeks to disrupt anthropocentrism and speciesism, and the other has constructive and reconstructive ambitions focusing on the more-than-human and encouraging more ethical and sustainable ways to co-exist with nonhuman animals in “multispecies communities” (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1138). The constructive and reconstructive approach can be related to pluralistic approaches

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, “didactics” is used in place of the German term *Didaktik*. In the context of this thesis, its meaning and connotations should thus be differentiated from what would commonly be implied within an Anglo-Saxon context (Kansanen, 2009; cf. Riquarts & Hopmann, 1995). When used in reference to a specific subject, such as human-animal relations, or subject area, such as ESE, “didactics” should, in the context of this thesis, be read to mean “subject matter education” or “subject matter *Didaktik*”: an intersection between subject matter and *Didaktik* (Kansanen, 2009, p. 31). When combined with a specific subject, “didactics” is used to mean “subject matter education,” and both terms are used interchangeably. The English term “didactics” is used here in place of the German *Didaktik* for the purposes of readability.

to ESE, which are understood to provide openness in education by addressing conflicting views, perspectives, and values through “deliberation” and “democratic dialogue” (e.g., Öhman & Östman, 2019; cf. Lindgren & Öhman, 2019; Lundegård & Wickman, 2012; Öhman, 2008). Those more in line with the pluralistic tradition often eschew (openly) normative approaches to ESE (e.g., Jickling, 1992; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019; Öhman, 2008; cf. Lundegård & Wickman, 2012). Drawing upon practical experiences of engaging with openly normative approaches within ESE in Swedish upper secondary schools, this thesis problematizes, and ultimately questions, the idea of pluralistic and normative approaches being mutually exclusive categories.

The increased attention being paid to nonhuman animals as well as human-animal relations within ESE can be attributed to the urgency of environmental crises and climate change (Pedersen, 2023). At the point of writing, the need to address (and resist) anthropocentrism in education, as well as the centrality of human-animal relations in pressing sustainability issues, has been made abundantly clear by scholars (e.g., Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Ortiz, 2011; Pedersen, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Saari, 2021; Twine, 2024). For example, animal industrial farming is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, water use and pollution, deforestation (Steinfeld et al., 2006, pp. 270-3), antibiotic use (Twine, 2013), the spread of zoonotic diseases (Kotzmann & Stonebridge, 2022), and biodiversity loss (Machovina, Feeley & Ripple, 2015). One can speak of the paradox of animal production and species extinction, referring to the fact that the mass production of some “domestic” species is causing the mass extinction of other “wild” species (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). The FAO conservatively estimated that more than 85 billion land-living animals were killed in 2023 due to human food production and consumption (Our World in Data, 2025) and subjected to exploitation in factories, usually hidden from public view. Moreover, social injustices impacting humans and nonhuman animals are intimately intertwined. Discourses of speciesism, the presumption of human superiority over other animals (Andrzejewski et al., 2009), contribute to processes of animalization or dehumanization of certain groups of humans (Wolfe, 2003a; cf. Deckha, 2010; 2012; Lloro-Bidart, 2018a; Ko & Ko, 2017; Ko, 2019; Rowe, 2016; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019), which result from the low status nonhuman animals are typically assigned in human society (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 421; cf. Gålmark, 2005). Hence, speciesism is intimately connected to other forms of oppression, such as sexism, racism, classism, and ableism, as well as those based on religion, sexuality, and gender identity. Taking

these connections as a starting point, numerous ecofeminists and scholars advocate for a broadened definition of sustainability, including care and justice for nonhuman animals and other groups framed as “the Other” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; e.g., Adams, 2010; Donovan & Adams, 2007; Adams & Gruen, [Eds.], 2014; Gaard, 2002; Kheel, 2008; Plumwood, 1993).

One issue related to how nonhuman animals and human-animal relations should be introduced in ESE is the current presence of nonhuman animals in education. Critical explorations of the role of nonhuman animals in (Western) education reveal their exploitation as tools for teaching and learning, as scientific objects in dissection and research, as metaphors or representatives for entire species, and as food served in schools (e.g., Cole & Stewart, 2016; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2010a, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019ab, 2024; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021; Sallaway-Costello et al., 2021; Sjögren, 2014, 2016; Solot & Arluke, 1997; Truman, 2016). Moreover, Pedersen (2019a; cf. Repka, 2019) acknowledges that the conditions for nonhuman animals in contemporary education settings are tied to an openness of educational institutions to the “animal-industrial complex” (Noske, 1997; developed in Twine, 2013). For example, institutions of higher education educate students in collaboration with agri- and pharmaceutical businesses (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 422; cf. Noske, 1997), and the animal industry targets compulsory schools, providing educational material and promotional products (cf. Deckha, 2024; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Linné & Pedersen, 2016; Repka, 2019; Rowe, 2013; Saari, 2021). Hence, nonhuman animals seem to be present in education in a multitude of ways but seldom as subjects. In fact, any notion of nonhuman animals as anything other than being *for* humans to exploit seems almost unthinkable within the educational imagination (Wallin, 2014, p. 149; cf. Pedersen, 2019b), which must be understood in relation to the anthropocentric legacy of Western education (Wallin, 2014). Within Western traditions, children and young people are expected to not only accept but also be active participants in extensive animal (ab)use, a practice that has been normalized in society (Pedersen, 2011, p. 43). Education is an essential part of this socialization process, and asymmetric relationships of power and domination between species are even considered “an inbuilt component of education itself” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 46, drawing upon MacCormack, 2013). Therefore, Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2019, p. 46) see a need for CAP in education, framing it as “a disturbing and disruptive process,

a reflective practice, and countermovement to animal, human, and environmental exploitation” (cf. Rowe, 2011).

CAP builds upon critical animal studies (CAS), which rejects the total accessibility of nonhumans for humans. Instead, nonhuman animals are approached as real, living, and embodied persons owed solidarity, respect, and support (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 263). Hence, the notion of nonhuman animals within CAP radically shifts humans’ relationship with other animals, in that they are no longer considered a resource for humans to exploit. In this way, CAP breaks with an anthropocentric logic in education. This pedagogy addresses the role of nonhuman animals within education and the role education plays in forming humans’ relationships with other animals (Pedersen, Håkansson & Wals, 2019). However, CAP is also about exploring alternative teaching practices that could enable new forms of human-animal relations that are more ethical and sustainable (Pedersen et al., 2019). This thesis engages with both these processes but is particularly concerned with the possibility of creating space in upper secondary education to introduce such alternative teaching practices in ESE.

Building on previous research contributions, the thesis explores possibilities for creating space to interrupt, disturb, and ultimately transform the current presence of nonhuman animals seemingly as objects in education through introducing an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) in ESE. An animal standpoint includes nonhuman animals in humans’ ethical deliberations (Donovan, 2006). This standpoint demands that humans listen and pay emotional attention to nonhuman animals, caring about what they are telling us by centering their perspectives and paying attention to the political context (Donovan, 2006, pp. 305-6, 311). In this way, an animal standpoint seeks to enable an understanding that can rupture and transform current discourse by drawing upon knowledge from Earth and animal liberation movements (Kahn, 2011, p. 54). This creates potential for a more comprehensive understanding of how a hierarchical society functions by emphasizing marginalized perspectives (Harding, 2009, p. 194; see Harding, 2009, and Collins, 1997, for an account of the feminist standpoint theory, from which animal standpoint theory draws). While an animal standpoint is anticipatory, since it strives for a future that is only partly realizable in the present (Kahn, 2011, p. 54), this thesis is concerned with the introduction of an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) in upper secondary education today, and the possibilities such a standpoint could present. This is explored more concretely in this project by engaging with “interspecies sustainability” (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021) in ESE. Similar to the animal

standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), interspecies sustainability includes the concerns and interests of nonhuman animals in sustainability research and practice, alongside those of humans. While some environmentalists draw a sharp distinction between “wild” and “domesticated” species, which sometimes leads to wild species being the subject of protections and concern and renders domesticated species as part of the “anthropogenic threat” to wild species (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 233), interspecies sustainability transcends the wild/domesticated dichotomy. Accordingly, “farmed animals” (so-called “production animals”) are understood as direct victims of climate change rather than a cause and given ethical consideration (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016). Hence, the project follows a call for an educational reform for interspecies sustainability, which, according to Saari (2021), would involve addressing and disrupting violence against other animals within education: a necessary step in creating a sustainable future.

Since CAP was not routinely engaged with in schools at the time this thesis was initiated, I sought to establish a collaborative project with actors who shared an ambition (and ability) to develop and introduce CAP in practice. In this project, teachers, students, animal rights activists, and scholars collectively discussed, developed, and explored possibilities for working with CAP. The project began with workshops in which the participants and I engaged in the pedagogical development of CAP. This work resulted in the development of lesson plans to be used in ESE, an overarching, cross-subject knowledge area in Swedish schools. The pedagogical practice of CAP was then tested in practice in the participating teachers’ classrooms within the subjects of Swedish as a second language, civics, humanities and social science, natural sciences, and religious education. Methodologically, the project is carried out as a feminist activist ethnography (Davis & Craven, 2016), drawing partly on critical participatory action research in its collaborative design (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017). In line with my methodological approach, I engaged with and carried out the project as an activist-scholar, following the commitment of CAS to stand firmly in solidarity with nonhuman animals (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014; Taylor & Twine, 2014). Hence, I carried out this research with the goal of supporting social change directly or indirectly (Garry, 2008).

It should be noted that it is only possible to start at the point of discussing, developing, and introducing CAP thanks to previous research carried out within the field of CAS and its subfield CAP. Insights from these overlapping fields provide a starting point for how and why this should be done. Hence, this project

builds on previous research, providing important theoretical and practical insights on possibilities and challenges for engaging with critical perspectives on human-animal relations in education (e.g., Andrzejewski, 2003; Andrzejewski et al., 2009; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Kahn, 2003, 2011; Kahn & Humes, 2009; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Linné & Pedersen, 2014; c-Bidart, 2018ab, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; MacCormack, 2013; Ortiz, 2011; Pedersen, 2010ab, 2019ab, 2021; Repka, 2019; Rice, 2013, 2017; Rowe, 2011, 2013, 2016; Russell, 2019; Saari, 2021, 2025; Schatz, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; White, 2019). Empirical work exploring different critical pedagogical approaches to human-animal relations has mainly been carried out at the level of higher education and provides crucial insights for this project (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2018ab, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; Oakley, 2019; Pedersen et al., 2019; Linné & Pedersen, 2014; Pedersen & Palmer, 2017; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; Schatz, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; White, 2019; cf. Flynn, 2003). However, possibilities for engaging with multispecies justice-oriented education (Saari, 2025) and multispecies storytelling (Tammi et al., 2024; cf. Saari, 2025) have also been explored at the secondary school level. At the primary school level Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) acknowledges possibilities for posthuman and critical animal pedagogies, and in terms of the preschool level Palmer and Pedersen (2017) encourage preschool educators to explore ethical dilemmas connected to human-animal relations together with children. Previous research has also explored educational approaches (particularly “humane education”; e.g., Selby, 1995; Unti & DeRosa, 2003; Weil, 2014) introduced by external actors visiting schools, for example by conducting an interview study with these external actors (Saari, 2021) or looking at educational programs provided by organizations (see, for instance, Dolby, 2020).

Considering what is already known about the role of nonhuman animals in education, anthropocentrism, and ESE, exploring what happens when CAP is developed and introduced in practice in upper secondary schools as a starting point offers the possibility of providing a substantial contribution to the fields of CAP, CAS, and ESE. Starting from the theoretical and practical contributions and suggestions mentioned above, the other workshop participants and I tested some of the ideas in practice, exploring what happens when they are developed into lesson plans and introduced in upper secondary classrooms. By developing CAP specifically as (and in) ESE, this thesis also engages with ongoing debates within the field of ESE, especially in relation to working with openly normative pedagogy (e.g., Bruckner & Kowasch, 2019; Fien, 1994; Ideland & Malmberg, 2015; Jickling, 1992; Jickling & Wals, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Lindgren & Öhman,

2019; Pedersen, 2019b; Öhman & Östman, 2019). Hence, this project contributes to previous research with ethnographic fieldwork focused on the possibilities for engaging with critical pedagogical approaches to human-animal relations in ESE at the upper secondary school level, an area of research that, to my knowledge, is scarce.

## Aim and research questions

This thesis seeks to explore how CAP can contribute to ESE by addressing, challenging, and transforming current exploitative human-animal relations and their social, ethical, and environmental ramifications. In this respect, its aim is twofold. Firstly, to contribute knowledge about what happens when an openly normative and critical pedagogy, firmly standing in solidarity with nonhuman animals, is introduced in upper secondary schools through collaboration between activists, teachers, students, and scholars. Secondly, to identify the didactical conditions upper secondary education provides for working with CAP and how this context, particularly in ESE teaching, informs and possibly transforms what CAP is and what it can achieve.

## Research questions

To achieve this aim, the following research questions are posed:

1. When and how can nonhuman animals emerge (and be responded to) as subjects in upper secondary education?
2. What human-animal relations are enabled or disabled in upper secondary classrooms when norm-critical pedagogy addressing animal exploitation is introduced?
3. What happens to CAP when it is introduced in ESE in upper secondary schools, and, conversely, what are the implications for ESE when it is introduced as CAP?

## Overview of the thesis

The previous, and first, chapter consisted of an introduction to the thesis, while Chapter 2, titled “State of the art,” consists of a literature and research overview, accounting for the state of the art and situating this project in relation to previous research. Chapter 3 accounts for the theoretical framework of this thesis, which consists of reading animal standpoint theory with and through feminist affect theory, feminist philosophy, educational philosophy, and poststructuralist theory and pedagogy. Chapter 4 describes the methodological approach in terms of a feminist activist ethnography inspired by critical participatory action research. It also accounts for the research design, ethical considerations, and validity issues of the project. Thereafter follow four empirical chapters. Chapter 5, titled “Vegan killjoy pedagogy,” is concerned, in particular, with the perspective and role of the CAP educators, as well as how these educators, along with their pedagogical practices, are received in the classroom. Moreover, it focuses on what happens when personal narratives of transitioning to veganism and becoming engaged with animal rights activism are shared in the classroom along with a message of animal rights. Chapter 6, “Addressing animal production,” explores what happens when animal production is addressed from a perspective anchored in interspecies sustainability and justice. The chapter is concerned, in particular, with possibilities and challenges of working with intersectional perspectives that include nonhuman animals and what the students’ situatedness seems to enable (or disable) in terms of addressing and engaging with animal production and veganism. Chapter 7 is titled “Addressing animal slaughter in school.” While the previous chapter focused on the exploitation and killing of so-called “production animals” more broadly, this chapter zooms in specifically on the act of killing. As such, it explores what happens when the killing that takes place in slaughterhouses is addressed (and displayed) in the classroom. Chapter 8 is the last empirical chapter and is titled “Envisioning societies of interspecies sustainability and justice.” It focuses on instances when students engage in processes of envisioning societies of interspecies sustainability, as well as moments when strategies for achieving such societies are discussed and possibilities for new forms of relationships between humans and other animals appear. As such, it explores possibilities for creating space within the context of upper secondary school for addressing current exploitative human-animal relations and envision (and possibly act toward) societies of interspecies sustainability and justice. The thesis ends with Chapter 9 consisting of a concluding discussion focused on the main findings and insights of

the project. In the concluding discussion, some discussions initiated and engaged with throughout the thesis are deepened and their contribution acknowledged. It further suggests future research possibilities and maps out some implications for pedagogical practice.



## Chapter 2: State of the art

In this research overview, I am primarily focusing on the research fields of ESE, CAS, and CAP, mapping out the state of the art of these fields by considering current trends and important questions and debates that are of relevance to this project. This overview is an attempt to map the most relevant work for this thesis and position my project in relation to the ongoing discussions and developments to which it relates. I start by accounting for the development of the field of ESE, as well as how ESE has developed and is currently implemented in the Swedish context. In this regard, I will also address some policy documents and sources from relevant authorities. Since the thesis focuses on the level of upper secondary school, I have primarily included previous research above the level of primary school when it comes to ESE but made a broader overview in terms of critical approaches to human-animal relations. This means that early childhood education and ESE have not been extensively reviewed. Throughout the overview, normative and pluralistic approaches to ESE, and the tensions between them, in particular, are addressed. Although there is much to learn from how ESE is engaged with in different geographical contexts, this part of the overview has an emphasis on the Swedish and Nordic (and to some extent European) contexts, with less focus given to theoretical and empirical work conducted in other geographical contexts. Furthermore, this overview includes accounts of approaches to nonhuman animals in education in general and in ESE in particular. In addition to addressing how nonhuman animals are approached in ESE, I give an account of critical approaches to teaching on human-animal relations outside this specific field. Since the project is situated in the Swedish context and carried out within formal education there is an emphasis on pedagogical approaches to working with human-animal relations in similar educational contexts. In this regard, there is a risk of reproducing a Eurocentric perspective. Different forms of Indigenous scholarship (and activism) have become increasingly influential in both ESE and CAP, and I address some points of tension and alliance between CAS and Indigenous works. Since, my project does not engage with Indigenous scholarship and activism in the pedagogical practices studied, such work is, however, not accounted for in depth in this overview.

I have mainly used chain searches, starting from relevant literature and tracing references, when working with this overview. Chain searches, however, risk reproducing a canon. Therefore, I have also carried out searches in the Education Research Complete, GreenFile, ERIC, and Scopus databases. Several results in the databases cohered with the literature I found using chain searches. I used a combination of different search words when searching the databases, which could be summarized into three different categories: the first comprised different variants of “animals”; the second comprised education (“education,” “teaching,” “school,” “classroom,” etc.); and the third comprised words associated with sustainability education (e.g., ESD/ESE/EfS/EE, among others). I also searched for empirical studies in particular. Carrying out the searches, I focused on texts with the search words appearing in the title, keywords, or abstracts and elaborated using different search words to get more results or more specific results. I performed a first selection by reading the titles and keywords and then read the abstracts of the articles that seemed relevant or those I was unsure about in order to make my selection. I only searched for peer-reviewed results in the databases, but some work that is not peer reviewed is included in the overview if it is of particular relevance to the topic of this thesis.

## Environmental and sustainability education

In addition to “environmental and sustainability education” (ESE), there are several terms used to describe education that belong to this broad field, such as: environmental education (EE), education for sustainable development (ESD), and education for sustainability (EfS). The different terms could be thought of as different phases or development stages in the field, but also in terms of different orientations or interconnected fields emphasizing different themes and questions (for a history of the field of “ESD” and its contested formulation, see Gough, 1997, and Stevenson et al., 2013). In this thesis, I will use ESE as an umbrella term for all different orientations or development phases. However, the different terms are also largely referred to as they are used in the literature

Internationally, the history of EE spans about 50 years, and even longer if outdoor and conservation education and nature studies are included (Stevenson et al., 2013, p. 1). Following the establishment of the United Nations Environment Program, environmental educators from UNESCO countries produced the Belgrade Charter in 1975. According to the Belgrade Charter, the goal of EE is as follows:

To develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and prevention of new ones. (UNESCO quoted in Stevenson et al., 2013, p. 1)

The action component was later emphasized again in the Tbilisi Declaration (1978), which states that students should be actively involved in working toward the resolution of environmental problems (Stevenson et al., 2013, p. 2). Parallel to the increased focus on sustainability (and development), from the 1980s onward, another pathway, characterized by the rise of the New Right and economic globalization, was established that seeks to protect corporate business with the use of environmental disinformation and climate denialism (Lange, 2023, p. 176). Additionally, those committed to this movement have opposed increased democratic and human rights, including labor rights (Lange, 2023). Even at this time, defunding and delegitimization of environmental movements was taking place, especially in North America (Lange, 2023, p. 176), which can be seen even more clearly under the current Trump administration, which is cutting funding for projects focused on sustainability, equality, and human rights.

As a field of inquiry, EE is conceptualized from a multitude of vantage points (Stevenson et al., 2013). ESD is often described as the dominant perspective of EE, and for a while ESD started to replace EE in that EE turned into ESD (Kopnina, 2012, p. 699; cf. Stevenson et al., 2013). The definition of ESD, as formulated in the Brundtland Report by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, is often seen as the central understanding of sustainable development and the point of departure for the development of ESD (e.g., Björneloo, 2007). In the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and development, 1987, Chapter 2: Towards Sustainable Development), sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The continued development of ESD has also been closely connected to the implementation of other programs and policy documents on sustainable development, such as the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014, the Global Action Programme on ESD and the Sustainable Development Goals 2015–2019, and the interconnected Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 2015–2030.

Following the development of ESD, Kopnina (2012) has detected a turn away from “the environment” in EE. Relatedly, Kopnina and Cherniak (2015) address

prevailing anthropocentrism within ESD, in that focus tends to be on *human* burdens, impacts on *human* lives, and *human* futures, with nonhumans and their habitats often subordinated to social and economic objectives (cf. Sauv , 2005). In line with this focus, education concerned with nonhuman animals has not commonly been discussed as an integral part of ESD (Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015). According to Ress (2022, p. 26), many ESD approaches “reflect human-centered, utilitarian earth views rooted in economic development imperatives and dominionist assumptions about human superiority over other beings.” Anthropocentrism within the field of ESD has been addressed and criticized (e.g., Kopnina, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Pedersen, 2019b; cf. Sauv , 2005), however, and a recentering of nonhuman animals and the “more-than-human” nature can be understood to be currently taking place (cf. Russell & Spanning; cf. Pedersen, 2019b; Spanning, 2017), but I will come back to this.

Kopnina (2012) further points to the neoliberal “tone” put forward in ESD, heavily influenced by a Western development paradigm. Accordingly, questions of economic equity are framed in a manner that coheres with and supports the global market economy and consumer culture, with economic reasoning deeply embedded into environmental planning, policy, and practice (Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015, pp. 368, 366). Similarly, Ress (2022) acknowledges how many ESD approaches are conceived within neocolonial economic, social, and political constellations that tend not to address capitalist systems and power relations central to climate change and environmental degradation. What is understood as “development,” moreover, is a political issue, although it is not always framed this way, which can be related to the “post political illusion” of ESD, according to which conflicts are toned down (Knutsson, 2014). Critical ESE scholars fear that tensions between economic and ecological objectives are too easily dismissed in ESD policies and programs, while technical, market-oriented solutions are privileged over cultural and emotional attachment, critical inquiry, or political action (Ress, 2022, p. 26; cf. Jickling & Wals, 2008; Berryman & Sauv , 2016). In relation to this, Sj gren (2016, p. 159) acknowledges an absence of critical questions in sustainability education, drawing upon a focus group study with Swedish teacher instructors, and asks for a re-politicizing of sustainability that would enable education to go beyond a “contemporary post-political framing of environmental issues.”

The centrality of a Western development paradigm in ESD can further be connected to Eurocentrism and, in this regard, Lysgaard and  hman (2022) urge the research field of ESE to play a strong(er) role in addressing the risk of the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework serving to uphold a liberal Eurocentric colonial approach to development. In a similar vein, Ress (2022) acknowledges a doubt regarding whether contemporary ESD efforts can enable forms of learning able to alter current trajectories of multispecies extinction. This worry is growing, especially among those who value the “counter-hegemonic agenda of early-day environmental discourses and activism” (Ress, 2022, p. 26). This can be related to a mainstreaming of sustainability and environmental issues into broader practices of education and education research, with the risk of losing the radical core of ESE as a practice and research field when trying to seamlessly incorporate these issues into existing, sometimes backward-oriented, educational systems around the world (Andreasen Lysgaard & Öhman, 2022, p. 4). To avoid such risks, participants in a seminar group focused on “sustainability issues and controversial educational content” participating in the 15th Invitational Seminar on Environmental and Sustainability Education Research, held in Belgium in June 2022, identified the need for perspectives that are currently marginalized within the field of ESE to play a stronger role (Andreasen Lysgaard & Öhman, 2022).

Perspectives identified as important (and currently lacking in ESE) included voices from the global south, Indigenous knowledge, gender studies, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, critical race studies, more-than-human perspectives, posthumanism, and new materialist critique (Andreasen Lysgaard & Öhman, 2022). The scholars, however, warn against appropriating radically different cosmologies into existing exploitative power structures instead of understanding and addressing how current research approaches often contribute to reproducing unsustainable practices and structures that ESE research and practice should work against (Andreasen Lysgaard & Öhman, 2022, p. 5). These discussions were especially enriched by participating scholars from the global south (e.g., Seithi Kato et al., 2022), for instance, addressing how research appropriates the relationship between traditional knowledge and sustainability (Seithi Kato et al., 2022). Furthermore, Ress (2022) urges ESE scholars to form alliances with today’s “vanguard radicalism,” present in Indigenous collective experiences and critical black feminist and decolonial thought. These perspectives are understood to value dialogue, difference, and conceptual curiosity, and Ress (2022, p. 27) finds such alliance building a crucial step in the direction of reviving ESE’s radical potential. The critique of anthropocentrism, in addition to the critique of neoliberal (and colonial) development and economic growth, has led to a shift from ESD toward Education for Sustainability (Efs) or Environmental and Sustainability Education

(ESE) in many contexts. Hence, the terms ESE and EfS are often used alongside ESD.

## ESE in the Swedish context

ESD has been the predominant concept in Sweden in relation to EE since the 2010s (Bengtsson & Plummer, 2024) and is approached as an overarching, cross-subject knowledge area in Swedish schools. Bengtsson and Plummer (2024) acknowledge that the Swedish curriculum is divided into two main parts.<sup>2</sup> One part is broader and consists of the foundational values and principles that education should strive to live up to and enable in students, overarching goals of education, and the central tasks of schooling, while the other part consists of syllabuses for different subjects. In the broader overarching curriculum, four perspectives, those being historical, environmental, international and ethical perspectives, that schools should provide to students are described in the “Fundamental values and tasks of schools” and linked to enabling students to understand the present, prepare for the future, develop personal standpoints, and act responsibly toward themselves, others, and the environment (Bengtsson & Plummer, 2024, pp. 147-8). In the second part of the curriculum, sustainability is explicitly linked to several topics addressed in the subject aims and central content. It is also emphasized that students should develop a sense of international solidarity and responsibility (Sund & Pashby, 2019). Student-centered and active learning are furthermore explicitly connected to sustainable development in the Swedish curriculum (Bengtsson & Plummer, 2024).

Since the sustainability perspectives put forward in the broader part of the curriculum are intended to permeate all aspects of education, Bengtsson and Plummer (2024) consider ESD to represent a holistic framework guiding the curriculum in the Swedish context. The implementation of ESD in Sweden is also closely connected to democratic school development (Breiting & Wickenberg, 2010, p. 11), with a strong emphasis on fostering responsible democratic citizens, which can be related to “citizenship education” (Bengtsson & Plummer, 2024). In the Swedish curriculum, this comes to the fore in the values and attitudes described as desirable for students, such as respect, compassion and empathy for others, citizenship, stewardship, and social justice (Bengtsson & Plummer, 2024, p. 148). Educating students to become a specific form of citizen through ESD, however,

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<sup>2</sup> A new compulsory curriculum is being introduced in Sweden from July 2025, but the framing of sustainability is similar to that in the curriculum referred to by Bengtsson and Plummer (2024).

has been criticized (e.g., Ideland & Malmberg, 2015; Jickling, 1992), but I will come back to this debate in its complexity later in this overview.

In terms of teachers in Sweden, Bursjö (2014) identifies significant ambition when it comes to ESD but also acknowledges that experience and competence are lacking for working with ESD in practice, especially in relation to philosophical and ethical dimensions. This resonates with a more recent study drawing upon an online questionnaire with 702 physical education and health teachers, in which Wiklander, Fröberg, and Lundvall (2024) state that seventy percent of teachers perceived their competence to be lacking and called for support. Additionally, a focus group study with teacher instructors in Sweden makes visible that it is rather unclear how ESD should be understood and taught (Sjögren, 2016). This resonates with experiences from Ireland and Denmark, although in this case the absence of a clear framework also increased teachers' willingness to engage with ESD due to them being able to decide for themselves how, when, and what to include (Madsen, 2013, p. 3776). Schools and teachers are also called upon to use educational innovations to strengthen sustainability education (Van Poeck et al., 2025). Drawing upon explorative case studies in Sweden (and Belgium), Van Poeck et al. (2025) explore the innovation of "open schooling" through LORET (Locally Relevant Teaching), which is a "methodology to design sustainability teaching that aims to address real-world, locally relevant sustainability problems while, simultaneously, teaching subject knowledge to realizing curriculum objectives [sic]" (p. 606). This didactic research shows that such innovations may be challenging for teachers due to the required departure from habitual ways of thinking and acting (Van Poeck, Lidar, Lundqvist & Östman, 2025). Furthermore, Sund (2022) compares a former Swedish national report (2002) and a small-scale empirical study (2020) in a lower secondary school. Starting from this comparison Sund (2022) addresses how the introduction of the national curriculum in 2011 constrained science teachers' democratic teaching of ESD, reducing possibilities to support pupils' development of action competence. According to Sund (2022), this relates to an increased focus on central content in the science subjects, causing teachers to put greater emphasis on factual content knowledge.

In the introduction to a special issue on "Education and Democracy," Öhman (2011) considers developments within Swedish ESE research and distinguishes between scholars committed to empirical research, especially those concerned with students' experiences of teaching and learning about sustainable development, and scholars primarily engaged in "ideological debate." A "desire to problematize and develop a critical approach" is furthermore framed in opposition to promoting

certain kinds of education and teaching methods (Öhman, 2011, p. 7). Knutsson (2013), on the other hand, questions the sharp division between empirical studies and ideological debates, asking whether this empirical research may in fact rest on certain ideological assumptions that have not been fully recognized and problematized.

In conclusion, practices of teaching ESD are diverse in the Swedish context, but Bengtsson and Plummer (2024) identify two main approaches to ESD in Swedish formal education. One of these approaches mainly treats ESD as content specific and related to specific subjects, while the other understands ESD primarily as associated with the overarching objectives of the curriculum. Bengtsson and Plummer (2024) relate these approaches to three selective teaching traditions commonly referred to in the Swedish context. The first approach identified by Bengtsson and Plummer (2024) tries to integrate ESD-related content into existing teaching, subject areas, and disciplines, and can be related to a fact-based tradition. Within the second approach, normative and pluralistic traditions are more common, although there are clear tensions between the two (Bengtsson & Plummer, 2024; cf. Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; Sund & Wickman, 2011; Öhman & Östman, 2019). I will now turn to the discussion of how these traditions are understood and divided and the tensions between them, as well as addressing some complexity in terms of the division itself.

## The debate between “normative” and “pluralistic” approaches to ESE

Within the Nordic context, ESE is often understood to be divided into three selective teaching traditions (e.g., Öhman & Östman, 2019). Drawing upon results from an evaluation of environmental education in Swedish schools (from pre-schools to upper secondary schools in all subjects), carried out in 2001 by the Swedish National Agency for Education, these traditions are defined as the fact-based, normative, and pluralistic tradition (e.g., Öhman & Östman, 2019; cf. Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; Öhman, 2008). The evaluation builds upon data consisting of a national survey and teacher interviews. According to Öhman and Östman (2019), the traditions differ in their approaches to sustainability, didactics, facts, and values, as well as democracy and education. They summarize it as the *fact-based tradition* (1), which is focused on results in the form of “learning specific types of curriculum-based material,” while the *normative tradition* (2) is concerned with effects in terms of sustainable attitudes and behavioral patterns, and the

*pluralistic tradition* (3) centers on being a “catalyst of processes” (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 81). Öhman and Östman further consider the traditions to handle the fact-value relation in educational practice differently:

(1) leaving values out of the rational discussion about sustainability issues, (2) deriving sustainable values from scientific knowledge and using education to transfer these values and (3) using pluralistic conversation to justify moral judgements and establish the relation between facts and values. (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 81)

These three traditions are furthermore understood to relate to different perspectives on the democratic role of education and to create varying conditions for students’ constitution as democratic citizens (Öhman & Östman, 2019). In terms of the fact-based tradition, the democratic process is thought of as coming *after* education as it aims to “provide objective facts as basis for opinion-making” (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 81). In the normative tradition, the democratic process is considered to happen *before* education, and this tradition is thought of as coordinating public will with political consensus (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 81). The pluralistic tradition is understood as seeking to provide an “arena for democratic communication between autonomous subjects,” with the democratic process considered to happen *in* education (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 81). Accordingly, the conceptualization of these traditions establishes them as dichotomous in some regards. Some assumptions at the core of this described division, privileging the so-called “pluralistic tradition,” are, however, questioned by other scholars in both the Nordic and wider contexts (e.g., Kopnina, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Pedersen, 2019b; cf. Callicott, 1990; Eckersley, 2002; Fien, 2000). I will now turn to a wider discussion of so-called “pluralistic” and “normative” approaches in ESE.

As previously acknowledged, there are tensions between what are understood as either normative or pluralistic traditions and approaches in and to ESE. Another, related, distinction (and tension) is the one between instrumental and emancipatory approaches (Wals, 2012). These debates go back decades, although it is sometimes called into question whether such sharp divisions between these traditions and approaches should be made in the first place. Core concerns in these debates are the understanding of what education is and what it can (and should) achieve. In an early critique of what could be framed as normative ESE or ESD, Jickling (1992) distinguishes between education *for* sustainable development and education *about* sustainable development, claiming that education should never be “for” anything. Whilst Jickling states that education for any cause is not true

education, and that one should instead prepare students to come up with solutions, Wals argues that education always needs to reflect on the kind of education it is and its purpose, since otherwise it is not useful (Jickling & Wals, 2012).

Research on ESE is dominated by calls for pluralistic, emancipatory, and transactional forms of education encouraging open discussion, deliberation, critical dialogue, multiple perspectives, and co-creation of knowledge (cf. Kopnina, 2012; e.g., Jickling & Wals, 2008; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019; Lundegård & Wickman, 2012; Scott, 2002; Stables & Scott, 2002; Stevenson, 2006; Wals, 2012; Öhman, 2008; Öhman & Östman, 2019). Some who advocate for pluralistic or emancipatory approaches in ESE are critical of what are understood as “normative approaches.” A central question brought forward by such critics is whether schools should be able to “impose certain pro-environmental behaviour” on students, as well as whether it is desirable to “force students to prioritise care for the environment over freedom of choice” (Östman et al., 2019, p. 41). Such questions make visible how these ESE scholars perceive (openly) normative approaches to ESE, with some even expressing concern about what they interpret as ESE (or perhaps more often ESD) becoming a political instrument and education turning into “indoctrination” (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; e.g., Franck, 2017; Jickling, 1992, 2003; Jickling & Wals, 2008). Jickling (2003, p. 21), for example, is worried about education being used as an “instrumentalist and ideological tool” through which educators “implant” the guiding principles of sustainable development into their students. Whereas Ideland and Malmberg (2015) criticize the perceived aim within ESD to create “eco-certified children,” Lindgren and Öhman (2019, p. 1200) are skeptical of an education that “serves a specified end.”

Scholars embracing a “pluralistic approach” to ESE emphasize the importance of presenting different perspectives and not prioritizing one perspective over another. However, both Pedersen (2019b) and Kopnina (2012) point out that encouraging plural interpretations of ESD, from a human-centered perspective, risks leading to underprivileging ecocentric, non-anthropocentric, and non-speciesist perspectives. For instance, Kopnina (2012, p. 707) states that pluralistic perspectives might not be truly democratic since the discourse on sustainable development is often dominated by the perspectives of political and corporate elites. Thus, Kopnina (2012) asks how one can expect pluralistic perspectives to enable students to develop ecocentric values given the influence of industrial capitalism for shaping the discourse of development, arguing that ecocentric perspectives may not be addressed at all. Moreover, Kopnina (2012, p. 708) addresses a risk with moral pluralism or environmental pragmatism, part of the

pluralistic tradition, in that they tend to be conservative and “take too much as given,” working with existing structures and discourses rather than against them, which risks a lapse into “indecisive relativism” (p. 710; cf. Callicott, 1990). Contrarily, Öhman and Östman (2019) reject the argument that the pluralistic tradition implies relativism, stating that this critique is only relevant if one believes in universal values based on something outside of human practice. Instead, they consider the question of relativism to concern whether students understand the seriousness of sustainability problems, find them relevant, and are emotionally concerned (Öhman & Östman, 2019).

A core emphasis in the “pluralistic tradition” is on students expressing their own experiences and opinions, and, in this sense, Öhman and Östman (2019, p. 79) consider the pluralistic tradition to turn the classroom into a “democratic arena for negotiations on how to realize a sustainable future.” Rudsberg and Öhman (2019) consider argumentative discussions to constitute an important way of facilitating learning about complex sustainability issues with ethical and political implications. Drawing upon three different classroom studies of argumentative discussions about sustainability issues in upper secondary schools (e.g., Rudsberg, Öhman & Östman, 2013; Rudsberg & Öhman, 2015; Rudsberg, Östman & Aaro-Östman, 2017), Rudsberg and Öhman (2019, p. 175) argue that students learn how to participate in deliberations on crucial questions about the future by learning how to take a stand and formulate valid arguments, in addition to learning more about specific issues (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2019, p. 183). Ojala (2013), however, criticizes deliberative approaches focused on “rational” discussions and argumentations, for often lacking sufficient insight into how emotions influence learning and deliberation, and for considering emotions as disrupting, irrational forces. Nevertheless, the learning taking place in argumentative discussions is understood by Rudsberg and Öhman (2019) as a collective and communicative process. They do, however, see a risk with argumentative discussions in that students may use incorrect data, preconceptions, or pure guesses that may not be noticed by other students (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2019). Another identified risk is that in strivings for consensus students may reduce the diversity of the discussion (Öhman & Öhman, 2013). Considering these risks, they see the role of the teacher as important in challenging common views and introducing alternatives, as well as deepening and nuancing discussions (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2019, p. 183; Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; Öhman & Öhman, 2013). These identified risks resonate with the worry among those critiquing certain forms of pluralistic approaches, because

some perspectives may be lacking if teachers are not able to introduce them (e.g., Kopnina, 2012; Pedersen, 2019b).

Since teachers' ability to introduce marginalized perspectives is crucial if plural perspectives are to be present in the classroom, the possibilities for teachers to do so need to be considered. Drawing upon a focus group study with teacher instructors, Sjögren (2016, p. 97) concludes that it seems impossible for teacher instructors to manage sustainable development in education without being subjective and normative. Although the teacher instructors in Sjögren's (2016, p. 96) study agreed on the normative character of ESD, they still seemed to consider the non-ideological and neutral teacher as an ideal, expressing discomfort at the idea of stepping out of this role. This ideal appears, for instance, in regard to teaching topics concerning human-animal relations. In her ethnographic work in upper secondary schools, Pedersen (2010a, pp. 46-49) acknowledges that teachers of animal welfare-related topics avoid promoting their own views on human-animal relations, especially if these views have an animal-rights focus. She makes visible how both students and teachers with a commitment to animal rights stress the importance of showing students "different perspectives" and letting students chose their opinions freely (Pedersen, 2010a, pp. 46, 54). This is in line with an interview study carried out by Weber et al. (2022) of seven biology upper secondary school teachers in Germany who all engaged in teaching topics of sustainable nutrition. The only participating vegan teacher saw a high risk of indoctrinating the students if she disclosed her veganism in class, stating that she needed to remain objective and not "dictate" her opinions to the students (Weber et al., 2022, p. 9). Similarly, a teacher, interviewed by Gunnarsson Dinker (2021), who identified as a vegetarian avoided raising the issue with students since she did not want to influence them. Miller (2015) also points out that a teacher's degree of freedom when addressing human-animal relations in courses is very much impacted by their position regarding gender and race, as well as their position in the university hierarchy. Such factors can impact how one comes across due to existing prejudice and therefore also impact the related risks of challenging prevailing norms in education and society at large, suggesting that the risks are greater for some educators than others. Drawing upon contemporary events, including Brexit, the Catalan referendum for independence, and protests in Chile, Sant (2021, p. 194) acknowledges challenges and risks facing democratic educators in politically polarized classrooms, emphasizing the knowledge of teachers in terms of what pedagogical endeavors to pursue and what risks to take. Sant (2021, pp. 194-5) furthermore states that some teachers may at times become an active part

of political struggles and that “teaching politics involves situated forms of freedom and responsibility that can only be determined from every teacher-student encounter.”

Pedersen (2010a, p. 55) points out that it is primarily underrepresented standpoints that risk being understood as “biased.” Contrary to how some teachers engaged in marginalized struggles often seem to act, teachers in Pedersen’s (2010a, p. 55) study representing more dominant views seemed more likely to assume that their views were taken for granted and mediate them in the classroom. Drawing upon Fien, Pedersen (2010a, p. 55) acknowledges that this coheres with a liberal orientation to education that claims neutrality in teaching students about a range of values and how to clarify their own standpoint in relation to them but fails to make visible how school curricula and practices reproduce dominant patterns of power and control in society. Hence, it does not acknowledge the hidden curriculum of values that shapes what is seen as the “neutral” position (Pedersen, 2010a, p. 55). Such a critique can be understood as relating to how pluralistic approaches are sometimes conceptualized and engaged with. Furthermore, Lindgren (2020) acknowledges that it seems impossible to take a neutral or non-political position in relation to animal consumption and education. Although previous research addresses specific challenges for vegan teachers, Weber et al. (2022) also draw upon previous student thesis findings in Germany suggesting that vegan teachers can be perceived as more authentic than other teachers. Franck (2017, p. 14) draws upon Biesta in stating that it may not be desirable for teachers to always refrain from “giving, hints, clues and suggestions as to how the subjects treated could be interpreted and developed,” as long as students are provided space and opportunity to respond and take a stand in response. He develops the concept of “education *from* sustainability,” which he considers a response to the question regarding a need for the transmission of values in education. In understanding children as independent subjects with the capability of moral discernment, Franck (2017, pp. 14-5) suggests that students and teachers should act together as equals in communicative and democratic knowledge processes and that the “transmission” of values should take place between the participants, rather than just from teachers to students, in such processes.

Sceptics of normative pedagogy are sometimes concerned about the risk of causing discomfort among students, with guilt, in particular, often considered. For instance, Ideland and Malmberg (2015, p. 180) map out how an “eco-certified child” is constructed through connecting personal guilt with global threats by focusing on individual activities, framing these as capable of “rescuing the flock

and the planet.” They connect this to a neoliberal ideology in ESD, putting the responsibility on the individual while ideological standpoints and conflicting interests are made invisible and the political project of sustainable development rendered apolitical (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015, p. 181). Hence, Ideland and Malmberg (2015) are critical of the focus on the individual, as well as the risk of causing discomfort in students. This can be closely connected to discussions on working with animal issues in schools. Saari (2021, p. 190) states that the idea of preserving the “innocence” of students (e.g., Tammi et al., 2020) is sometimes used as an argument against working with animal issues in schools, but she acknowledges how many young people often navigate these questions with “open curiosity.” Hence, avoiding certain issues might be more about the discomfort of adults in dealing with these questions (Saari, 2021). In pedagogical practice, such problems may be tackled by engaging with adults as well as children and youths. One organization in Saari’s (2021) semi-structured interview study with representatives from organizations working with humane education aimed to work with parents, students, and teachers for this reason. According to Saari (2021, p. 189), this is potentially an important strategy, since “animal issues often take us into the uncertain terrain of navigating boundaries between home and school, values, habits, and beliefs.” Furthermore, previous research suggests that possible discomfort might be an inevitable aspect of education that aims to create space for reflecting upon (and changing) social norms and practices (Twine, 2014; cf. Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Martin, 2014; Martusewicz, 2014; Rowe, 2013; Winks, 2022; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012;). This will, be more thoroughly discussed in relation to working with videos from animal industries in education later in this overview.

In addition to what is perceived as a problematic way of impacting students, the risk of damaging EE and other associated forms of education in the case of public push back is raised (Jickling in Jickling & Wals, 2012). This debate is highly relevant today in a political climate in which public push back against certain issues has increased: in the US, states are banning certain topics and books, especially related to critical race theory and gender studies, and in Sweden some voices want to stop norm-critical pedagogy and “drag story hours” in libraries. In line with the developments in the US, a school recently blocked younger students from borrowing the book “Gender Queer” by Kobabe (2019) after complaints from parents. Hence, research contributing insights on possibilities and challenges for working with normative pedagogy in ESE is crucial. Furthermore, it seems as though ESE/ESD and CAP are normative in themselves but that teachers often

lack tools to handle this normative character in relation to a presupposed objective and neutral teacher position, which risks further marginalizing some perspectives in ESE. This, in combination with a tendency to favor some forms of pluralistic approaches that are sometimes accused of being anthropocentric (Kopnina, 2012; Pedersen, 2019b), calls for research on possibilities to engage with human-animal relations in ESE, a discussion to which I will now turn.

## Nonhuman animals and education

Here, I map out how nonhuman animals are present in education, and I will specifically focus on Western education, due to this project being situated within the Swedish context. Education, especially in Western countries, has a long history of centering the human. Wallin (2014, p. 149) explains this in terms of education stemming from an “anthropocentric arboreal root” in its task of producing *human subjects* (emphasis in original). With reference to Agamben, Wallin (2014, p. 157) stresses that the general idea of education is established upon the production of what it means to be human. In line with Cudworth and Hobden (2014, p. 754), “being human,” according to the Western Enlightenment canon, involves a distancing from nature as well as from certain groups of humans who are associated with nature. Thus, being “human” becomes the same as not being “animal” (Gålmark, 2005). However, the “human subject” aimed to be produced in education does not correlate with all human positions but needs to be recognizable in terms of being “rational” and “civilized” in specific ways (Wallin, 2014, p. 148). Only some humans fit the frame of the “rational human subject,” founded on whiteness, maleness, hetero-cisness, able-bodiedness, and middle-classness, which can be embodied to varying extents by different persons, in terms of both their physical appearance and how well they are able to perform specific modes of being “rational.” The association with nature and nonhuman animals has historically been used, and still is today, to legitimize oppression and exploitation of groups of humans tied to the animal Other and the nonhuman world (e.g., Best, 2009; Crary, 2018, 2019; Deckha, 2010, 2012; Ko & Ko, 2017; Ko, 2019; Lloro-Bidart, 2018a; Rowe, 2016; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; Wolfe, 2003a). The separation between the human and the nonhuman, however, is artificial, and the various forms of oppression, subordination, and violence affecting human and nonhuman animals are inherently entangled (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 265).

According to Repka (2019, p. 100), an “obsession with homogeneity” in schools creates discrimination rather than collaboration, despite schools being very diverse places. This industrial emphasis on social homogeneity results in the marginalization of students who do not fit into the preestablished criteria of dominant groups (Repka, 2019, p. 107). In Repka’s (2019, p. 107) view, this results in schools undermining students who do not fit a dominant Western viewpoint of what success or education means (cf. Mapes & Ascher, 2023), downplaying kindness, empathy, collaborative skills, and critical thinking, while focusing on standardized tests and furthering individualism. Moreover, Wallin (2014, p. 157) acknowledges that in line with anthropocentrism, life itself is reduced to its use value for human infrastructure, and education reproduces anthropocentrism as “common sense.” Anthropocentrism relates to speciesism as well as “human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2008, p. 11), the idea that humans are exceptional compared to other species and exist outside of a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies. This idea is often related to, result in, or overlap with “human superiority,” meaning the idea that humans are not only distinct from (and exceptional to) other species but also superior and have the right to exploit them in a multitude of ways. Speciesism is intimately connected with other forms of oppression, and, according to Repka (2019, p. 100), the prevalence of speciesist narratives in schools facilitates discrimination, turning schools into a “concentrated site of multiple, interrelated oppressions.” The capitalist and industrial model of schooling focused on conformity, competition, and single-issue activism, instead of total liberation, teaches the values of speciesism along with racism, ableism, sexism, classism, and discrimination toward the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as other forms of oppression (Repka, 2019, p. 106).

Although education has a long tradition of being human centered, nonhuman animals have been present in education in a multitude of ways for a very long time (for critical analyses of nonhuman animals and education see, for example, Andrzejewski, 2003; Andrzejewski, Pedersen & Wicklund, 2009; Cole & Stewart, 2016; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Kahn, 2003; Pedersen, 2010a, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019ab, 2024; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021; Sallaway-Costello et al., 2021; Selby, 1995; Sjögren, 2014, 2016; Solot & Arluke, 1997; Truman, 2016). Pedersen (2019a, p. 8) describes education in terms of “a set of machines” that produce profoundly unsafe realities for nonhuman animals through their multiple connections with the “animal-industrial complex” (Noske, 1997; developed in Twine 2013; cf. Repka, 2019), but remarks that education is still a largely overlooked area in this regard. The way nonhuman

animals are used in education impacts society's relationships with nonhuman animals in general (Pedersen (2019b, p. 1), and within a Western tradition, children and young people are expected to not only accept but play an active part in extensive animal (ab)use, seen as a normal and given part of society (Pedersen, 2011, p. 43). Human's relations with other animals permeate human social life, culture, and education, and these relations are asymmetrical and imbued with power (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 415). Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 415) further acknowledge that nonhuman animals are classified, displayed, studied, and represented, as well as confined, manipulated, consumed, and killed, both within education and in other sectors of society. Hence, students are taught to control, utilize, or dominate other species, explicitly and implicitly (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 415). Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork in schools, Pedersen (2010a) makes visible how schools produce a wide range of meanings about nonhuman animals and human-animal relations, which may improve the conditions for nonhuman animals in human society but often reproduce utilization and exploitation.

According to Wallin (2014, p. 149), any notion of nonhuman animals other than as resources for us to exploit is therefore unthinkable within educational imagination, and this becomes painfully clear in previous research. In the book *Our Children and Other Animals* (2016), Cole and Stewart address how the education system normalizes and promotes anthropocentrism. Using a concrete example from primary school, Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) makes visible how a children's book containing the slaughtering of a pig normalizes the slaughtering of nonhuman animals. In the pedagogical situation studied, the teacher did not deal with students' feelings of confusion and discomfort in relation to the slaughter but instead focused on the "products" made from the pig's body, framing the act of slaughter as normal. The content of secondary and high school textbooks has also been explored. Starting from a content analysis of 39 Portuguese textbooks, Fonseca (2023) explores how "factory-farmed animals" are represented within the themes of environment and sustainability, animal welfare, and food and health. According to the study, nonhuman animals are consistently classified as consumable, and the suffering and agency of nonhuman animals are never dealt with (Fonseca, 2023). Sjögren (2016) explores how teacher instructors relate to the question of how it is possible to encounter the nonhuman Other in sustainability education. In similarity to the study by Fonseca (2023), "domesticated animals" were reified as commodities in terms of food, and often as "absent referents" (Adams, 2010) in the focus group conversations (Sjögren, 2016, p. 112). Sjögren

(2016, p. 113) further detects a meat norm (Gålmark, 2005), for example in the non-consideration of the suffering of nonhuman animals when addressing “human-nature” in sustainability education. Sjögren (2016, p. 126) furthermore identifies a conditional care for some individual nonhuman animals but an inability to care for the multitude and those radically different from humans. The boundaries of the relations addressed by Sjögren (2016, p. 126) “are significant for the painful, and political, question of who gets to live and who dies through the imaginaries of sustainable futures.” Nonhuman animals were further not prioritized when content was being selected for courses (Sjögren, 2016, pp. 112-3). Hence, the (educational) socialization of nonhuman animals as resources that exist for human exploitation begins early in education and continues throughout the school years.

Nonhuman animals are also physically present in education. Pedersen (2010d) draws upon ethnographic field studies of school visits to museums and addresses how the natural history museum invites a conventional zoological gaze of “exoticism,” along with other issues of power inherent in human-nonhuman animal relations. The study makes visible a species-coded hidden curriculum creating and upholding boundaries between humans and nonhumans by delimiting and separating human and animal subject positions. However, Pedersen (2010d) also shows that students’ own imperative frameworks often operate in the opposite direction, enabling reflections on mortality that result in self-identification with the displayed nonhuman animals, hence reflecting the uncontrollability of education (Biesta, 1998; Britzman, 2003). Moreover, Solot and Arluke (1997) address how nonhuman animals are used in dissection in a middle school, showing how students use emotional management strategies to handle initial feelings of unease in relation to the ethical and emotional dimensions involved, with their initial reactions gradually developing into more positive feelings. According to Solot and Arluke (1997, p. 51), dissections may be harmful since they risk imparting a “callous attitude” toward nonhuman animals, nature, and the natural world, as well as discouraging students, especially girls, from pursuing any type of science. This correlates with Pedersen’s (2010a) ethnographic work in Swedish upper secondary schools. One example was when students in ethology were asked to analyze their own behavior in ethological terms and by doing so control their spontaneous feelings about nonhuman animals, thus turning ethological science into an emotion management strategy and desocialization tool (Pedersen, 2010a, p. 38). Nonhuman animals are also present almost daily in schools as “food,” such as meat. The issue of meat consumption is generally seen

as a private affair (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019). Meat consumption is therefore often framed as having nothing to do with politics or education, despite growing evidence that numerous environmental and other problems are caused by industrialized meat production (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2018). Spannring and Grušovnik (2019) acknowledge that both living and learning in a carnistic society means that one is socialized into the belief that eating meat is “normal, natural, and necessary” (Joy 2010, p. 96, quoted in Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019, p. 1191). This further translates into educational institutions, where children learn to like meat through “repeated exposure,” as is often also the case for families, advertisements, and toys (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019, p. 1191; cf. Rice, 2013).

Furthermore, institutions of higher education collaborate with agri- and pharmaceutical businesses (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; cf. Noske, 1997). One example is the veterinary program in Sweden, and Pedersen (2015, p. 52) shows how a combination of visits to slaughterhouses and theoretical lectures on species-specific animal breeding, transport, and slaughter techniques teaches students how to avoid costly obstacles in the slaughter process, ensuring the slaughter machinery runs smoothly. Hence, she makes visible how this turns into a “parasitic pedagogy” (Pedersen, 2015, p. 52). Similarly, Linné and Pedersen (2017, p. 113) explore study visits to farms and acknowledge how such events are used as a countermove to emphasize a romanticized notion of the milk industry that contrasts with the current development of internalization, rationalization, and streamlining. During such study visits, selected areas of the dairy industry are shown, and only certain information is provided, presenting a partial picture of the dairy industry. In Saari’s (2021) exploration of nonhuman animals in educational policies, focused on the dimensions of curriculum, sustainability, and consumption, she acknowledges that the location of some animals within educational policies related to “consumption” makes visible the societal positioning of these animals as resources in accordance with “meat culture” (Potts, 2017). In her research, Saari (2021) states that the milk industry considers children to be an important target group to ensure future consumers. In addition to educational material provided by the dairy industry, schools are provided monetary compensation from the European Union for serving milk in schools<sup>3</sup> through the

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<sup>3</sup> Saari (2021, p. 116) notes that 105 million euros (out of the 250-million-euro annual budget) were allocated to cow’s milk subsidies in the 2019/2020 school year. This is a 5 million increase compared to 2018/2019 and took money away from the allocated budget for fruit and vegetables (Saari, 2021, p. 116).

school fruit, vegetable, and milk scheme (European Commission, n.d.). To receive these funds, schools are obligated to display adverts for milk products and teach students about “sustainable food” (The Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2025b), implying that milk is sustainable, despite the industry having severe impacts on the climate as well as, of course, the cows, bulls, and calves exploited. Children’s health is furthermore used as an argument for school schemes promoting the consumption of cow’s milk, contributing to the growth of the dairy industry (Saari, 2021, p. 119). Increasing production has further caused intensified manipulation and control of animal bodies, leading to institutional and epistemic violence against nonhuman animals, along with environmental destruction (Saari, 2021, pp. 119, 144). The merits of cow’s milk from a health perspective, however, are debated (Saari, 2021; Desaulniers, 2015; Montford, 2020). In addition to reproducing speciesism, the continued promotion of cow’s milk consumption in schools is presented as dietary racism (e.g., Saari, 2021; Cohen, 2017; Deckha, 2018; Montford, 2020; Repka, 2019; Stănescu, 2018) and colonialism (e.g., Cohen, 2017; Montford, 2020; Repka, 2019).

In conclusion, policy narratives create educational spaces that reproduce educational violence against other animals and legitimize narratives that present nonhuman animals as a resource for human exploitation (Saari, 2021), while education, with its links to the animal-industrial complex, produces narratives that reproduce speciesism and anthropocentrism, as previously mapped out. Since the animal industry directly targets schools, providing educational material and promotional products (cf. Deckha, 2024; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Linné & Pedersen, 2016; Rowe, 2013; Saari, 2021), Deckha (2024) states that advocacy against industry discourse also needs to reach children, and Saari (2021) maps out openings for introducing nonhuman animals as stakeholders in education. Some of these possible openings will be addressed during this overview by first considering nonhuman animals and ESE and then accounting for critical approaches to teaching human-animal relations.

## Nonhuman animals and environmental and sustainability education

In an overview of nonhuman animals in environmental education research, Spanring (2017) suggests that an “animal turn” has taken place based on the increased interest in human-animal relations within the field over the past few decades. Whether the development Spanring (2017) refers to should be framed

in terms of a “turn,” and hence a new development, might be called into question since nonhuman animals have been considered within environmental education before (e.g., Selby, 1995). For example, nonhuman animals have played a central role in humane education (e.g., Selby, 1995; Unti & DeRosa, 2003; Saari 2018, 2021; Weil, 2014), which originates in a practice of educators from animal protection organizations going into schools to teach students about responsible pet care (Ortiz, 2011). However, humane education has transitioned into broader intersectional social justice education, encompassing animal rights, human rights, and environmental sustainability, and it is used in a variety of settings, such as animal shelters, schools, higher education institutions, and social work (Saari, 2021, p. 5; cf. Ortiz, 2011). Saari (2021) acknowledges that humane education offers diverse ways of practicing empathic imagination and acknowledging the intrinsic value of other beings. Deckha (2024, p. 185), however, criticizes humane education as a concept for its liberal and colonial roots (e.g., Feuerstein, 2019; Boggs, 2013), which she argues impede its anti-anthropocentric potential, and therefore advocates specifically for *critical* humane education, drawing upon CAP (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al., [Eds.], 2019). CAP and related critical pedagogies will be considered in more depth later in this overview.

Related to the initial understanding and practice of humane education focused on “pet care” is the dominant strand within the study of child-animal relations that consider “pets” to have a positive effect on children’s socio-emotional skills and wellbeing (e.g., Bosacki, Tardif-Williams & Roma, 2022; Daly & Morton, 2006; Vidovic, Stetic & Bratko, 1999; cf. Daly & Morton, 2003). However, Tammi, Hohti, and Rautio (2020, p. 3) consider it important to conduct a deeper examination of the productions and practices of care due to the existence of an “anthropocentric hierarchization of species,” which they find to be “noninnocently entangled” with “affective economies” (Ahmed, 2004), such as the pet industry, as well as assemblages of biopower. This relates to how nonhuman animals have historically been present in environmental education, since the prevailing idea that caring about the natural environment and nonhuman animals demands a connection to nature that can be achieved by experiencing it (and its inhabitants). This can be referred to as the “biophilia hypothesis” (Wilson, 1984), which has created a foundation for some types of environmental education. This hypothesis is present when zoos are used as educational sites based on the idea that up-close-and-personal experiences with nonhuman animals will evoke a desire to care about the environment, endangered species, and ecosystems (cf. Sjögren et

al., 2015, p. 598; Brando & Lynning Harfeld, 2014, p. 64). Zoos are used both as informal education sites and in formal education through study visits. According to Sherman, Terry, and Bowers (2024, p. 157), zoos that demonstrate a commitment to animal care and engage guests in conversations about animal wellbeing can contribute to fostering an audience “with the skills to think critically about the wellbeing of those with needs different from their own.” In a similar vein, in a study about the role of emotions at zoos, Warren (2022, p. 91) states that participants considered feelings toward nonhuman animals they encountered to be a motivation for pro-environment behaviors, such as financial donations, reducing waste, recycling, and choosing environmentally friendly products. However, critiques question what kind of encounters and human-animal relations can be enabled through zoo visits; Sjögren et al. (2015, p. 598) consider zoos to represent the captivity and confinement of unhappy, captive, meant-to-be-wild animals for the human gaze. Nonhuman animals are also present in zoos for human consumption through animal-derived food (Brando & Lynning Harfeld, 2014), and Pedersen (2018) acknowledges that the breeding and killing of nonhuman animals, as food for other animals or as “surplus” animals, is a part of the zoo economy. Furthermore, Pedersen (2019a, pp. 70, 67) notes how few oppressive practices at zoos seem beyond justification under the disguise of “saving a threatened world,” and addresses how students in a caretaker program in an upper secondary school are taught that they can be part of this. This argument, however, is delivered in a manner that does not allow for critiques of nonhuman animals’ place behind bars (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 68). Understood in this way, zoos reproduce rather than interrupt anthropocentrism and animal exploitation.

Encounters between nonhuman animals and students are also common within (other forms of) outdoor education. However, Bayer and Byrd Finley (2023, p. 11) note that access to “the outdoors” is unequally distributed, with regard to economics, geography, historical trauma, and settler-colonial relations. For decolonizing outdoor education, the authors emphasize the importance of engaging BIPOC<sup>4</sup> communities, nonhuman animals, and more-than-human places “on equal footing” (Bayer & Byrd Finley, 2023, p. 11). Sometimes, outdoor education takes the form of common worlds pedagogies, focusing on how the “common worlds” of humans and the “more-than-human” are intrinsically co-created and relational (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019). For instance, Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019, p. 21) draw upon posthumanist, postcolonial, and

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<sup>4</sup> Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

feminist theories in exploring the ethical possibilities inherent in “messy and fraught” child-animal encounters, interactions, and relations. In one example, Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019) explore an encounter between children and deer, and in another example consider children noticing that they sometimes squash worms as they walk to draw them into a “relationship of responsibility for the life and death of others” (p. 55). According to Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2019, p. 55), ethics of responsibility is not about aiming to be “righteous, pure, and perfect” but rather comes from paying attention to one’s implication in the life and death of others. Common worlds pedagogies have been criticized, however, for not paying enough attention to power relations between humans and other animals and sometimes romanticizing child-animal relations. For example, Saari (2021) addresses the generalization and romanization that risk forcing the presence of nonhuman animals and overlooking how the subjectivity and agency of nonhuman animals are “severely restricted” and already “predetermined” (Saari, 2021, p. 143; cf. Saari, 2025). Nonetheless, Saari (2025, p. 5) considers the notion of “common worlds” to be a fruitful conceptual tool if approached critically, since it can enable a focus on how relationality can inform pedagogies and a questioning of what these “common worlds” could or should look like in terms of “flourishing.”

Going back to the consideration of the so-called “animal turn,” Pedersen (2019b, p. 9) indicates that it can be perceived as a “turn” in the sense that the animal subject is introduced as a new stakeholder, particularly within the research field of ESD. This new presence is one in terms of *subjects*, in contrast to the more common presence of nonhuman animals in education as objects for human use, as in several forms of education, including some forms of environmental education, as previously described. If this section started at the beginning of the so-called “animal turn,” it might be possible to say we are now “after the animal turn” (cf. Russell & Spanring, 2019). In exploring environmental education after the “animal turn,” Russell and Spanring (2019) map out two main approaches to nonhuman animals. One, as previously addressed, is the “critical bent” focused on disrupting anthropocentrism and speciesism (Russell & Spanring, 2019, p. 1138). The other is constructive and reconstructive and centers on recognizing and attending to humans’ “co-existence with the more-than-human,” aiming to find ethical and sustainable ways to co-exist in “multispecies communities” (Russell & Spanring, 2019, p. 1138). If one were to conceptualize it this way, then the constructive and reconstructive approach concerned with including the “more-than-human” is commonly related to theoretical and methodological approaches

anchored in posthumanism and new materialism, often favoring pluralistic approaches to ESE. For instance, Lindgren and Öhman (2019) advocate for a “pluralistic approach” to ESE, and, in line with Kopnina and Cherniak (2015), they see a need for educational (pluralist) perspectives recognizing an “animal vantage point” (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1201). Kopnina and Cherniak (2015) argue for combining the perspectives of animal welfare, animal rights, and deep ecology within EE and ESD to enable attention on individual animals (animal welfare and animal rights), as well as a recognition of the intrinsic value of the “environment” (deep ecology). Doing so they aim to enhance the democratic practices of EE/ESD through adopting an “inclusive pluralism,” which includes nonhuman animals. While Kopnina and Cherniak (2015) argue for a more “inclusive pluralism” that embraces representation of nonhuman species and recognizes their interests, Lindgren and Öhman (2019) promote a “critical pluralism.” Instead of arguing for “another position in the human-nonhuman dichotomy,” Lindgren and Öhman (2019, p. 1201) consider a “critical perspective on taken for granted discourses” to be needed. Their ambition with this “critical pluralist approach” is to “resurrect a pluralism that recognizes animal “difference,” considering it a risk to give moral recognition to other animals based on “human sameness” (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1201). Starting from posthuman theory, mainly drawing upon Braidotti’s posthuman/nomadic subjectivity and Plumwood’s ecofeminist dialogical interspecies ethics, they explore how the agency of “non-living animals” (as meat or in dissection, as well as in regard to animality in literature) can influence how humans act in political and ethical life (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1201).

Lindgren and Öhman (2019) want to stay in conflicts embedded in different educational settings when nonhuman agency reveals political and ethical dimensions but refrain from starting in moral or animal rights arguments. Like Ideland and Malmberg (2015) and Jickling (1992), for instance, they are skeptical of education that “serves a specific end” (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1200). To use the words of Haraway (2016), they can be understood as wanting to “stay with the trouble” and not take a stance in relation to nonhuman animals. Aslanian and Moxnes (2021, p. 19) also argue for “staying with the trouble.” They analyze the case of a Norwegian kindergarten that took part in displaying a moose head and slaughtering a cow at a small farm in the local community. Although they claim to draw upon CAS, Aslanian and Moxnes (2021), like Lindgren and Öhman (2019), refrain from embracing the explicit aim of animal liberation, which is a core commitment of the field of CAS. When carrying out their study, they promised the head teacher that “data from the event would not be used to shed an overtly

negative light on their practice” (Aslanian & Moxnes, 2021, p. 20). Bruckner and Kowasch (2019) give examples of similar pedagogical activities as engaging with what they call “meat pedagogies” in ESD, such as field trips to a slaughterhouse and a butcher, carried out in collaboration with farmers. Similar to Lindgren and Öhman’s (2019) desire not to start in moral or animal rights arguments, Bruckner and Kowasch (2019, p. 802) are critical toward what they perceive as “judgement and moralizing” in ESD engaging with meat and sustainability.

On the contrary, Pedersen (2019b) criticizes educational research and practice that speaks positively about including more-than-human relations in education but, at the same time, eschews the idea of moralizing about human-animal relations. She has termed this trend “enlightened distance” to anthropocentrism, and she considers the articles mentioned by Lindgren and Öhman (2019) and Bruckner and Kowasch (2019) to belong to it. The problem she maps out is a failure to stand *with* nonhuman animals, as she considers animals to be marginalized in these approaches (Pedersen, 2019b). According to Pedersen (2019b), this makes these pluralistic approaches “*more human*” instead of “more-than-human” as they intend and claim to be (p. 7, emphasis in original). From a conventional anthropocentric perspective on education as a democratic and anthropocentric project, focusing on the multiple voices of *human* actors, these pluralistic perspectives make sense (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 9). From a non-anthropocentric perspective, however, the ignorance of the perspectives of nonhuman animals becomes problematic (Pedersen, 2019b). Drawing upon MacCormack’s (2013) non-anthropocentric educational ethics in terms of a “gracious pedagogy,” Pedersen (2019b, p. 8) considers it insufficient to replace one form of human subjectivity (human supremacy) with another (posthumanist, nomadic subjectivity). As an alternative approach, she suggests “[s]tanding with the animal,” which she argues can be translated literally and figuratively to “staying away from the animal” (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 8; cf. MacCormack, 2013). Similarly, Wallin (2014, p. 146) suggests an anti-speciesist “dark pedagogy” that embraces new images and machines of disidentification, enabling it to withdraw from the presumption that there only exists one life, one that is human.

Above, I have contrasted the “critical bent” of engaging with human-animal relations in ESE against a constructive and reconstructive approach (Russell & Spannring, 2019). While this can be fruitful for pointing out differences and tensions, Pedersen (2023) considers the field to be more complex and entangled than Russell and Spannring (2019) suggest. Starting from close, comparative readings of previous literature, Pedersen (2023) examines experiences and

reflections by teachers, as they are expressed in the literature, in order to explore the premises of, and approaches to, “post-anthropocentric pedagogies” in higher education. She maps out three key pedagogical characteristics that post-anthropocentric educators seem to share: a passion and commitment to critical inquiry, innovative ways of connecting theoretical subject matter to life outside university, and the embrace of risk-taking in the teaching and learning process as a necessary part of the reflective practice of being a teacher in higher education (Pedersen, 2023). One important aspect that Pedersen (2023, p. 5) discusses in relation to the field is different expectations of what education can achieve; she refers to contributions, such as Dolby (2017) and Ortiz (2011) who put forward “reflection” and deep thinking to “bring about new mindsets and, ultimately, behavioural change.” Pedersen (2023, p. 5) also points out that the possibility of achieving social transformation is brought forward by several authors, such as those working with “total liberation pedagogy” (see, for instance, Kahn & Humes, 2009). I will now turn to discussing different critical approaches to teaching human-animal relations, including total liberation pedagogy among others.

## Critical approaches to human-animal relations in education

There are a multitude of names for critical approaches to teaching about human-animal relations, such as critical animal pedagogies, ecopedagogies, (critical) humane education, interspecies education, and total liberation pedagogies (cf. Russell & Spanring, 2019), some of which have already been discussed. These pedagogies have strong connections to other forms of critical pedagogies, such as queer, feminist, decolonial, anti-racist, anarchist, human rights, and other social justice pedagogies.

Kahn and Humes (2009) use the term total liberation pedagogy, which they map out by drawing upon interviews with nine educators working with critical perspectives on human-animal relations in formal and non-formal education. Total liberation pedagogy understands oppression as systematic and complex, and its aim is to “work *intersectionally across and in opposition to all oppressions* (including those of nonhuman animals) and *for ecological sustainability*” (Kahn & Humes, 2009, pp. 181-2, emphasis in original). This pedagogy aims to overthrow speciesist relations across society and is not limited to destabilizing human power only in the abstract (Kahn & Humes, 2009, p. 182). This can also be understood as a core aspect of CAP (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019), and the two terms are

sometimes used interchangeably, such as in a pivotal anthology by Nocella II et al. (2019). There are, however, some critiques raised against “total liberation” pedagogy by Indigenous scholars and activists who state that it appropriates decolonial and Indigenous knowledge without properly acknowledging, engaging with, or being accountable to Indigenous politics (Belcourt, 2020). Belcourt (2020, pp. 19-20) furthermore acknowledges the lack of analysis of settler colonialism within the field of CAS, as well as the mainstream animal liberation movement, urging us to “tend to the incommensurabilities and interconnectedness of Black, brown, and animal life,” pointing to race as a key analytical tool to understand the machinations of speciesism and anthropocentrism (cf. Deckha, 2012).<sup>5</sup> Sceptics might, further, argue that there is no such thing as “total liberation,” and that even if it were possible, the educational system is the least likely place for it to be achieved (Pedersen, 2023, p. 6). The notion of total liberation that comes to the fore in the literature, however, suggests that this is a specific approach to understanding how human, nonhuman, and ecological liberation are intertwined and how the struggle against speciesism should be tied to other social justice struggles against colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy (Parson, 2019). Hence, total liberation can be understood as a commitment and starting point for both analysis and practice, rather than the reflection of a belief that total liberation is achievable.

Entangled oppressions, especially between humans and other animals, have been addressed within the field of ecofeminism, which inspires some of the critical pedagogies addressing human-animal relations. Ecofeminism has made early contributions to the field of intersectionality (Twine, 2010) and could be seen as an “intersectionality-like” movement, similar to the environmental justice movement (Lloro-Bidart & Finewood, 2018 p. 3), contributing especially by mapping out the entangled oppression of women, nonhuman animals, and nature (e.g., Adams, 2010; Donovan & Adams, 2007; Adams & Gruen, [Eds.], 2014; Gaard, 2002; Kheel, 2008; Plumwood, 1993). Pedersen (2010a, p. 6) points out that ecofeminist thought has made the links between anthropocentric and androcentric world views clear. There are, however, calls for feminist theory engaging with the entangled oppression of humans and nonhuman animals to be more thorough in including work on how race and culture structure species-based

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<sup>5</sup> Possible points of tension and alliance between Indigenous scholarships and struggles and CAS will be discussed in more depth in relation to critical (pedagogical) approaches engaging with animal production and consumption.

oppression (Deckha, 2012; Ko & Ko, 2017; Ko, 2019), which overlaps with the previously noted critiques levelled by Indigenous scholars and activists.

Intersectional approaches are often advocated for and used when it comes to teaching about human-animal relations from a critical perspective (e.g., Andrzejewski et al., 2009; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Lloro-Bidart, 2018ab, 2019; Oakley, 2019; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; White, 2019). Russell has contributed, for instance, many insights in this regard, and in her university-level courses she aims to create space for students to address how anthropocentrism and speciesism intersect with racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and sizeism (see, for instance, Russell, 2019). In a concrete example Russell and Semenko (2016) build on an activity called “Animal Adjectives” (Selby, 1995), deconstructing different ways in which other animals are represented. By focusing on insults and grouping these in accordance with their targets (e.g., women, men, racialized people, fat people), the undertones, which were often sexist, racist, homophobic, ableist, and speciesist, could be unpacked by students. White (2019) has used a similar activity in a higher education course on human geography, in which students were asked to consider how human bodies are animalized using references to nonhuman animals. White (2019, p. 130) states that the activity resulted in an uncomfortable mixture of laughter and realization when students critically explored how these adverts explicitly drew on a human-centric and male gaze. At least one student stated that they considered transitioning to vegetarianism or veganism due to not wanting to support “such patriarchal, unethical and unquestioned systems” (White, 2019, p. 131). Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016) furthermore suggest a “species inclusive intersectionality education” that should be approached as a process, including several steps and phases of critical exploration of discourses of species and the institution of speciesism (Wolfe, 2003a). Although they see pedagogical potential in unpacking the shared logics and operations of various forms of oppressive ideologies, they also find it ironic that a critique of speciesism “seems to require validation and support by appeals to other, anthropocentric social justice causes that target the liberation of humans” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420).

Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, 2019) use the term CAP, which is an emerging and rapidly expanding field of educational theory and practice (for a more extensive overview, see Horsthemke, 2018; see also Pedersen, 2010a for a comprehensive overview of interdisciplinary fields that inform CAP). In mapping out a theoretical basis for CAP, they weave together scholarship on nonhuman animals in education with pedagogical practice. Following non-anthropocentric

pedagogical ethics in terms of a *gracious pedagogy*, as developed by Patricia MacCormack (2013), Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 417) state that CAP needs to be guided by abolitionist imperatives in education on “respectful non-intervention in animal life.” Since MacCormack (2013, pp. 13-15) believes that all human perceptions of the nonhuman will inevitably be anthropocentric, she advocates for the absolute cessation of interaction with nonhuman animals at an actual pedagogic level and calls for a “silent activism” of leaving nonhuman animals alone. Miller (2015) uses a different approach in her teaching, engaging with living nonhuman animals, such as possums, snakes, pit bulls, raptors, ferrets, and rats, in the classroom. Employing such methods, Miller (2015) emphasizes the importance of using a carefully constructed intellectual framework to provoke thought and contextualize the potential sympathy evoked in students. According to Miller (2015, p. 114), these “animal guests” enable students to learn *from* instead of only *about* nonhuman animals. Additionally, Lupinacci (2019, pp. 83-4) urges us to learn from stories not only of how humans act in defense of nonhuman animals, although those are needed as well, but also of how the more-than-human world resists exploitation and captivity (cf. Hribal, 2011) to enable students to consider that diverse species have agency, thinking skills, and emotions. According to Lupinacci (2019, p. 85), these stories function as a springboard for confronting how humans understand themselves in relation to other beings, enabling students to consider interspecies equity.

Although Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016), like MacCormack (2013), advocate for leaving nonhuman animals alone, they also point to possibilities in learning more about how nonhuman animals exploited by humans live and die. For example, they invite students to scrutinize the actual life circumstances of nonhuman animals in the food production system and compare this to messages communicated by the animal industry (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 418). Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016) also acknowledge the possibility of reflecting on and sharing ethological insights about animals’ own feelings toward their environments, humans they encounter, and species kin (e.g., Balcombe, 2006; Bekoff, 2002). Another example is study visits to farms, animal shelters, and sanctuaries, where workers are interviewed about their emotional responses to the animals and how they feel about their confinement and killing (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016). Through these and other activities, they aim to enable an alternative affective human-animal education that helps to both critically address human-animal relations and create space for intersubjective relationships with other animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; cf. Sjögren, 2014). The

paradox of focusing on nonhuman animals and the possibilities for creating intersubjective relationships while advocating for an abolitionist approach, like in the case of MacCormack, reflects the complexities of developing theoretical approaches into concrete pedagogical practices to be introduced in education. It is a paradox addressed by Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 426) themselves, and it is important to acknowledge that the primary focus of their suggested activities is how *human* practices and thought regimes impact nonhuman animals (cf., Pedersen, 2019b), and they stress the importance of critically examining anthropocentric bias. Drawing upon insights from empirical studies in primary schools, Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) states that the approach proposed by MacCormack (2013) needs to be balanced against an approach to CAP that is more contextualized and embodied to better cater to younger ages, for example one based in the pedagogy of place and ethics of care. Hence, the extent to which it is understood as possible, or desirable, to achieve an “absolute cessation of interaction with nonhuman animals” (MacCormack, 2013, p. 14) in education differs among the different approaches.

Common to the critical approaches to teaching human-animal relations is a normative starting point aiming to disturb, disrupt, and educate against speciesism (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; 2019; Kahn & Humes, 2009, p. 182). When it comes to these explicitly critical approaches, I would say that most of them share the aim of social change, although there are differences with regard to what is considered achievable in education. For example, Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2019, p. 58) acknowledge that it is unlikely that education alone will change the world, but that CAP, in addition to other efforts, can be part of working for a new antispeciesist, nonviolent, and postanthropocentric world order. Enabling reflection and critical thinking are also emphasized but rarely framed as end-goals in themselves. Rather, they are understood as linked to possibilities for enabling material change. Transparency about this aim is also common practice. For example, Andrzejewski (2003) considers it important to openly identify the values on which her class is based and communicate this starting point to students in the beginning of her course on animal rights. Additionally, the position of educators themselves is often openly communicated (e.g., Lupinacci, 2019; Miller, 2015), and White (2019, p. 132) shares his own experiences, privileges, and journey to veganism and animal rights as a pedagogical resource (cf. Twine, 2014; Russell, 2019). As previously acknowledged, however, the risks associated with being open about one’s own position are closely tied to gender, race, class, and position in the university hierarchy, as well as other factors (e.g., Miller, 2015). Still, a “boldness”

in terms of standing up for the struggle against speciesism and other oppressions, as well as in terms of an openness to taking risks when it comes to engaging with a multitude of teaching methods that by some may be labelled as controversial, clearly comes to the fore in the literature.

Within this branch of scholarship on critical pedagogies engaged with human-animal relations, there is also a commitment to the students present. A preparedness to meet the students where they are and facilitate a productive learning environment for diverse student groups is emphasized. For instance, Russell (2019) urges educators to “start where the students *are*, not where we might wish them to be” (p. 38, emphasis in original), Andrzejewski (2003) acknowledges the importance of knowing students, and White (2019, p. 124) aims to create an open and “safe” space within the classroom to encourage students to actively participate. This can be related to using a multitude of approaches, and Russell (2019) strives toward “polyvocality” in course materials. Such an ambition could further be seen as exemplified in the multitude of possibilities pointed out by Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, 2019). There is also an openness in terms of what works (e.g., White, 2019; Russell, 2019) as well as learning with and from students (e.g., Andrzejewski, 2003; Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014). This commitment to students is especially interesting and important in relation to the experiences of vegan students. For example, Pedersen (2010a, pp. 53-4) acknowledges how a vegan student, with a background in the animal rights movement, in her study stated that she had experienced teachers trying to “convert” and “brainwash” her, saying her viewpoint was wrong, and that other students had similar experiences. The situation of vegan children in English secondary schools is explored by Marshall (2023), focusing particularly on their ability to challenge the omnivore norm. This work contributes with insights into the experiences of young vegans and the personal impacts of attending secondary school as a vegan child. Overall, the children’s experiences were negative, especially when it came to challenging the pervasive norm of animal consumption within schools with limited opportunities of doing so. If challenging these norms, nevertheless, the personal costs were high impacting both their decisions and identity, and Marshall (2023) connects this to a wider school culture. In similarity to Pedersen (2010a), Marshall (2023) acknowledges the role of the hidden curriculum (cf. Fien, 1994) in reproducing a widespread support of overriding norms, such as the omnivore norm.

In relation to the primary school level, Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) draws upon a critical human-animal ethnographic study carried out in three Swedish primary

schools between 2012 and 2017. She explores what is taught about animal ethics in primary school and how this pedagogy is carried out. In similarity to Marshall (2023), Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) focuses on possibilities for challenges speciesist norms in exploring whether the messages about animal ethics articulated by the schools were challenged by the students. Gunnarsson Dinker (2021, p. 403), like several other contributions previously brought up, makes visible how educational institutions maintain and teach that humans are superior to other animals, regarding these as existing for human control, domination, use, or “stewardship.” Nevertheless, Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) acknowledges how children’s questioning of hierarchies in combination with their interest in, and identification with, nonhuman animals can contribute to posthuman and critical animal pedagogies. Palmer and Pedersen (2017) address possibilities for engaging with human-animal relations in preschools by drawing upon experiences from preschool teacher education using a natural history museum as an arena for CAP. They encourage preschool educators to invite children to engage in “difficult questions” related to human-animal relations, and to stay in the ethical dilemmas arising together with the children (Palmer & Pedersen, 2017, pp. 47, 53-4). Palmer and Pedersen (2017, p. 55) call for “pedagogical civil courage” in taking a clear stand against violence, power abuse, and oppression no matter who is affected, reflecting upon how pedagogical institutions risk reproducing structural speciesism and how one can be part of challenging such reproductions.

Associated with the commitment of these critical pedagogies to disturb and disrupt speciesism, and their commitment to students, is a related commitment to provide students with tools to take action in various ways. For example, Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 426) map out a “vegan education” (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023) suggesting that introducing “vegan knowledge” in schools is important for showing students that veganism is a viable option and inspire action. Andrzejewski (2003) also acknowledges the importance of enabling action. By relating action to hope, Andrzejewski (2003, p. 25) addresses the importance of providing specific and powerful possibilities for students to take immediate and long-term action. This is pointed out as particularly important for students to be able to handle the possible distress associated with working with videos and footage depicting animal suffering in education (Andrzejewski, 2003, p. 25). While some scholars address grades as a constraint of the formal educational system (e.g., Repka, 2019), highlighting the importance of enabling students to “take risks” beyond the focus of attaining high grades (Dolby, 2017, p. 86), others use the grading system in their pedagogies. For instance, Schatz (2019)

explores the grading system as a possible tool for encouraging a connection between theory and practice by offering students in an undergraduate university course one to six extra credits on their final paper if they chose to go vegetarian or vegan for the remaining semester. The task was voluntarily and only amounted to at most a third of a letter-grade on the students' final paper. Schatz (2019) states that most of the students seemed to find themselves empowered by this hands-on experience.

Several critical pedagogical approaches to human-animal relations in ESE, and education more broadly, focus on animal production. In one of Russell's (2019, p. 44) courses, the relationship to "food animals" was the topic that generated most discussion, and she relates this to the students eating meat. Learning more about the conditions of these animals and human workers in factory farms resulted in shock and engagement, and several students claimed to have changed their eating habits, exploring vegetarianism and veganism (Russell, 2019). This engagement in discussions around "food animals" is contrary to the experience of Darst and Dawson (2019). Drawing upon their own and colleagues' teaching experiences, and reviewing the research field, Darst and Dawson (2019) consider that engaging with meat consumption from a perspective anchored in animal rights, primarily focusing on the suffering of "farmed animals" rather than environmental aspects, risks causing silence and unwillingness to engage in discussion. They further address risks of denial and tension, which they relate to the "meat paradox" (Bastian & Loughnan, 2017; Loughnan, Bastian & Haslam, 2014; cf. Chiles, 2017). In Darst's own experience, addressing the source of this denial directly caused silence rather than discussion, which they relate to a presumed discomfort among the students (Darst & Dawson, 2019, pp. 228-30). Considering different ways to avoid such reactions, Darst and Dawson (2019) suggest addressing meat consumption indirectly, such as by starting with its negative consequences for the environment, surrounding communities, and human health, pointing to the topics of food waste and food apartheid as good examples.

In contrast, Lloro-Bidart (2019, p. 55) sees a problem in the lack of CAS perspectives within Critical Food Studies and Critical Food Studies Education if animal oppression is not addressed. Additionally, she points to how some work based on perspectives anchored in animal advocacy or liberation does not engage with social justice issues connected to humans. She therefore urges educators committed to teaching and enacting food justice to include other animals in their pedagogies and those educators committed to animal liberation to also include other social justice issues by using intersectional approaches. Drawing upon

student coursework, and post-course ethnographic interviews with students enrolled in her Critical Food Studies course, Lloro-Bidart (2019) suggests that students can understand systemic oppressions in food systems as linked by engaging with intersectional approaches, enabling more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of food systems by addressing their classist, racialized, speciesist, and environmentally damaging nature. According to Lloro-Bidart (2019), such approaches can potentially enable students to overcome some of the barriers of the meat paradox, as previously brought up in relation to the work of Darst and Dawson (2019). Since, eating meat often becomes an emotionally loaded factor when it comes to identity formation, social distinction, and social belonging, Spannring and Grušovnik (2019, p. 1191) consider it important for education seeking to critically address the meat norm to attend to the development of emotional self-awareness, expression, and management, enabling students to explore the connection between emotions and decision-making (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019, p. 1195).

That there are strong emotions connected to meat consumption becomes evident in a focus group study with Swedish upper secondary students that centered around their responses to a vegan month at their school, initiated to emphasize the environmental consequences of the consumption of animal-derived food (Lindgren, 2020). The initiative caused fierce resistance from some students, reactions that were closely related to both political and gendered aspects of animal consumption, as reflected in framings of the initiative as being feminist, leftist, and in violation of the “neutrality” of the school (Lindgren, 2020, pp. 693-4). This resonates with a study by Bohm et al. (2015, p. 108) on Home and Consumer education in Sweden, drawing upon recorded, and in some cases video-taped, lessons including fifty-nine students and five teachers from five different schools, which drew the conclusion that the centrality of meat was “so dominant that even conscious questioning ended up strengthening it.” However, Gunnarsson Dinker (2023) acknowledges there are some schools only serving vegan food. She gives eight examples from across the world, stating that some of these schools have their own vegan policy and pedagogy, while veganism for others is restricted to the food being served (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023, pp. 3-4). Relatedly, Dolby (2020) recognizes school lunch as a possible avenue for social change and teaching about humans’ relationships with other humans, nonhuman animals, and “the environment” by drawing upon an exploration of innovative community, school, and university-based programs. Similarly, Gunnarsson Dinker (2023) calls for school meal to be integrated into pedagogical work. She acknowledges this as a

possibility for engaging with veganism in relation to health, environment, and nonhuman animals. According to Gunnarsson Dinker (2023) potential meal changes should be carefully established with students. Moreover, she suggests that students should be provided “intersectional broad knowledge of the varied history and cultural roots of veganism” (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023, p. 6). Gunnarsson Dinker (2023) further sees “vegan education” as a possibility to engage with sustainable development in schools.

Videos and images from inside animal factories are used and suggested by several scholars as a tool for addressing animal production in education. Rowe (2011), for example, considers it necessary to watch the process of “animals-becoming-meat” to create awareness of the suffering within animal industrial farming and situates the importance of this from an educational perspective within a “pedagogy of visual disturbance.” According to Martusewicz (2014, p. 38), experiencing suffering oneself when witnessing violence experienced by others is “necessary for its interruption.” When White (2019, p. 131) uses video clips depicting “human-on-animal violence,” his students often close their eyes or try to look away or down, while others sit in silent attentively watching with a look of horror on their face. Nevertheless, he finds such video clips helpful since they enable students to comprehend how humans and nonhumans are entangled in a “web of suffering and violence” due to capitalism (White, 2019, p. 131). Russell (2019) also reports positive experiences, stating that images and videos that draw attention to the conditions in factory farms were positively received by all but one of her university-level students. Students found the use of images, especially videos, to be “pedagogically powerful” (Russell, 2019, p. 46). This echoes the experiences of Tallberg, Välikangas, and Hamilton (2022), who explore the potential of using the documentary *Dominion*,<sup>6</sup> from 2018, in teaching animal ethics in food systems as part of a business course at university level, acknowledging the potential of using documentaries about animal industrial farming in education to create an affective and embodied form of knowledge with the potential to enable compassion. These positive experiences of showing animal suffering to change people’s attitudes and behavior is also in line with empirical work within the field of CAS outside the field of education (e.g., Fernández, 2021; Håkansson, 2023; see Fernández, 2020, for an overview). Still, some address the risk of othering

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<sup>6</sup> *Dominion* is a 2-hour documentary based on undercover activist footage from six animal industries that has been shown globally on tens of thousands of street activist screens in public spaces (Tallberg et al., 2022, p. 61). *Dominion* (2018) is free to watch online: <https://www.dominionmovement.com/watch>.

nonhuman animals causing “compassion fatigue” (Aaltola, 2014) or negative reactions, fostering resistance toward animal rights (Mika, 2006), and according to Corman and Vandrovcová (2014, p. 136) students may experience negative emotions that can be disengaging if not handled in a sensitive manner. Similarly, Martin (2014, pp. 85, 99, drawing upon Pachirat, 2011) acknowledges that showing “disturbing images of farmed animals” does not necessarily lead to learning or transformation, while also pointing to possibilities for transformation if ethical revelation and responsibility are evoked. Relatedly, Corman and Vandrovcová (2014, p. 145) find it crucial to mediate the students’ experience of witnessing through photos or films to “inspire critical thinking and to support students in their protest against violence.” They also suggest teaching stress management strategies in addition to offering possible solutions (Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014, p. 154). Fonseca and Vizachri (2023) addressed food and nonhuman animals in carrying out a study that focused on teachers’ views on “food animals” for sustainability education based on a survey of 416 participants in Portugal. The survey focused on the teachers’ understanding of the role of diet in tackling environmental challenges and natural resource management, the health benefits of “traditional” versus plant-based diets, and the impacts of factory farming on nonhuman animals and animal sentience. The study suggests that most teachers’ views seem to conflict with traditionalist and instrumental portrayals of animals in national core curricula. The authors find it important to highlight “animals as beings with intrinsic value and important stakeholders for tackling environmental degradation, food insecurity, climate change, and speciesism” (Fonseca & Vizachri, 2023, p. 14).

In relation to addressing animal consumption in education, some important insights can be drawn from critiques and thoughts from (and in relation to) Indigenous scholarship and activism, since veganism and animal rights are sometimes understood to be in tension with Indigenous worldviews. For instance, Plumwood distinguishes between ontological ethical veganism and contextual ethical veganism, stating that ontological ethical veganism that does not recognize animals as food under any circumstances is a form of imperialism against Indigenous peoples (Struthers Montford & Taylor, 2020). However, Struthers Montford and Taylor (2020, p. 129) question the distinction between ontological and contextual veganism and argue that Plumwood’s contextual ethical veganism is not contextual enough, highlighting that Indigenous people often eat meat derived from industrial animal agriculture or hunt without it being necessary for

subsistence in contemporary settler-colonial contexts. Similarly, Robinson (2020) criticizes the projection of white imperialism onto vegans and veganism:

When veganism is constructed as white, Indigenous people who eschew the use of animal products are depicted as sacrificing our cultural authenticity. This presents a challenge for those of us who view our veganism as ethically, spiritually, and culturally compatible with our Indigeneity. (Robinson, 2020, p. 107)

According to Robinson (2020, p. 112), dominant white discourse portrays Indigenous cultures as “embedded in the pre-colonial past,” stating that such a perspective needs to be replaced since Indigenous cultures are living traditions that are responsive to changing environmental and social circumstances. Robinson (2020) maps out an Indigenous veganism by bringing postcolonial and ecofeminist interpretations to Indigenous stories. According to Robinson (2020), meat, as a symbol of patriarchy (cf. Adams, 2010) shared with colonizing forces, creates more close ties between Indigenous culture(s) and white colonial culture than veganism, which is far from hegemonic. Some Indigenous scholars have further argued that veganism, rather than meat consumption, may be more in line with traditional Indigenous worldviews (Struthers Montford & Taylor, 2020, p. 129).

I will end this overview of critical approaches to human-animal relations in education by considering previous research that explores possibilities for introducing nonhuman animals as stakeholders and test pedagogical approaches in practice below the level of higher education. Saari (2021) argues for educational reform and explores how nonhuman animals could be introduced as stakeholders in education, advocating for interspecies sustainability and animal-inclusive education. She draws upon semi-structured interviews with representatives from nine organizations working with humane education in diverse contexts across various geographical locations (Saari, 2021, p. 179). Not all of the organizations embraced a critical and openly normative approach to human-animal relations. Nevertheless, one organization emphasized the importance of addressing and providing accurate information about the ways in which nonhuman animals are exploited, since information tends to be excluded or misrepresented in formal education (Saari, 2021, p. 188). Strategies suggested by the organizations included connecting animal issues to other questions, such as environmental problems, or starting from the lived experiences of learners, focusing on localized action, and working with open-ended self-paced inquiry (Saari, 2021, pp. 189-90). Identified challenges include constraints within formal education, such as governmental or regional restrictions and the formal curriculum, as well as low general knowledge

of the field. Other challenges were the presence of teaching material produced by animal industries, the overall disregard for animals (and animal issues), and teachers' heavy workloads (Saari, 2021, pp. 195-6). Several organizations found it challenging to integrate humane education into formal education, although higher education was perceived as less challenging, and some even considered it to be unrealistic (Saari, 2021, p. 197). Based on a speculative fiction workshop carried out over two months in 2022 in a Finnish secondary school, Tammi, Hohti, and Saari (2024) point to possibilities and obstacles for multispecies storytelling within a neoliberal institutional setting. They highlight time and individual student constraints as barriers, but argue that it is also possible (at least sometimes) to create space for collective world making and imagination (Tammi, et al., 2024). Saari (2025) develops a framework for multispecies justice-oriented education by drawing upon the same project. The workshops were enabled through collaboration between the researchers, a teacher, students, and a speculative fiction author, and Saari (2025) sees potential in building and expanding such communities of practice by working more closely with teachers and young people to make content and methods more relatable and relevant. Although not all these studies are explicitly critical in the same sense as previously addressed contributions, they provide important insights on possibilities for engaging with human-animal relations in ESE by drawing upon empirical work within educational levels below university. Openly accessible resources and other materials, as well as teacher training, are highlighted as important to the introduction of animal-inclusive education (Saari, 2021, p. 189). Considering that animal issues are largely overlooked in education (Weil, 2016), Saari (2021, p. 180) states that organizations could play a crucial role in developing animal-inclusive education. However, wider educational reforms are called for (Saari, 2021, p. 197).

## Summary and contribution

Previous research within the fields of CAS and CAP has explored how nonhuman animals are currently present in education, pointing to their overwhelming presence as objects and the risk this presents of reproducing and reinforcing speciesism (e.g., Cole & Stewart, 2016; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2010ad, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019, 2024; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021; Sallaway-Costello et al., 2021; Sjögren, 2014, 2016; Solot & Arluke, 1997; Truman, 2016). The views of teachers on “food animals” in sustainability education (Fonseca & Vizachri, 2023) and teacher

educators' thoughts on including nonhuman animals in sustainability education (Sjögren, 2014, 2016) have also been explored. Previous research indicates that although ESE/ESD and CAP are normative in themselves, teachers often seem to lack the tools to handle this normative character (cf. Sjögren, 2016; Pedersen, 2010a; Weber et al., 2022) and that it sometimes is unclear how ESE should be introduced at all (cf. Bursjö, 2014; Madsen, 2013; Wiklander, et al., 2024). In this regard, my project contributes further insights by exploring whether the normativity of CAP and ESE is also a challenge for the teachers in my empirical material, how this comes to the fore, and how it could be handled by addressing possibilities and challenges of working with openly normative pedagogy from different (sometimes overlapping) positions (teacher, student, scholar, and activist).

Providing insights regarding how the normative character of CAP can be embraced within ESE seems especially urgent considering current societal pushback against a multitude of critical approaches within education, as previously discussed. Such insights also constitute a contribution to the field of ESE when it comes to decades-long debates on normative (and pluralistic) approaches to ESE. In relation to this, a major part of this overview has been dedicated to reviewing different approaches to ESE in general, and nonhuman animals and ESE in particular, by contrasting critical and less critical, or uncritical, approaches and establishing a dialogue between them. I have discussed the three selective traditions of ESE, consisting of the fact-based, normative, and pluralist traditions, commonly referred to in the Nordic context (e.g., Öhman & Östman, 2019) in a manner that shows the inherent complexity of this division, and, in particular, I have discussed tensions between different approaches to ESE, as well as to nonhuman animals and ESE, related to these traditions.

In terms of possibilities of working with ESE in schools, some empirical contributions have addressed the possibilities and challenges of working with specific types of “pluralistic approaches” (e.g., Rudsberg et al., 2013; Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010, 2015, 2019; Rudsberg et al., 2017; Öhman, 2011; Öhman & Öhman, 2013). In contrast to critical and openly normative approaches to teaching ESE (and human-animal relations), this vein of empirical research is less explicit in terms of the position and stance of researchers and the approach of scholars. As a result, ideological starting points are not commonly addressed (cf. Knutsson, 2013), presenting a risk of the ideological impacts on choices of theory and method, as well as insights drawn, being made invisible. What can be detected, however, is a presumed neutrality and objectivity that can be linked to a liberal

form of education (and education research) that does not critically address the so-called “hidden curriculum” (Fien, 1994; cf. Pedersen, 2010a, 2019b). When it comes to openly normative approaches to ESE, there are critical reviews of how ESD is framed, and several contributions seem to connect pedagogical approaches concerned with the possibilities for individual behavior changes and action to neoliberal discourse and ideology (e.g., Ideland & Malmberg, 2015) in a manner that does not allow for much complexity or other interpretations. Some of these contributions assume a risk of “indoctrinating” students if normative approaches are used in ESE (e.g., Jickling, 1992, 2003; Jickling & Wals, 2008; Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010). The result of this research seems to be a rather dichotomous understanding of different approaches to ESE. Drawing upon previous research, in combination with carrying out ethnographic fieldwork, this thesis contributes insights on working with openly normative approaches to ESE in the form of CAP. This creates a starting point for testing some of the divisions mapped out between different approaches to ESE, as well as putting the critique of openly normative approaches in conversation with insights from empirical cases.

There exist several theoretical contributions providing guidance on how critical pedagogy addressing human-animal relations can be introduced in education (e.g., Andrzejewski, 2003; Andrzejewski et al., 2009; Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Kahn, 2003, 2011; Kahn & Humes, 2009; Kopnina & Chorniak, 2015; Linné & Pedersen, 2014; Lloro-Bidart, 2018ab, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; MacCormack, 2013; Ortiz, 2011; Pedersen, 2010ab, 2019ab, 2021; Repka, 2019; Rowe, 2011, 2013, 2016; Russell, 2019; Saari, 2021, 2025; Schatz, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; White, 2019) as well as empirical work providing insights on the possibilities and challenges of doing so in practice, within ESE and beyond, especially in higher education (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2018ab, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; Oakley, 2019; Pedersen et al., 2019; Linné & Pedersen, 2014; Pedersen & Palmer, 2017; Rice, 2013, 2017; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; Schatz, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; White, 2019; cf. Flynn, 2003). The majority of these empirical contributions draw upon research carried out within the researchers’ own teaching practices and courses. This may result in a bias in favor of the practices analyzed or present an obstacle to taking a step back to critically reflect on the opportunities and pitfalls present. On the other hand, this research often includes in-depth explanations of how different considerations are balanced and any compromises made, as well as self-critical reflections of the researchers’ own positionality and the pedagogical practices carried out. Due to CAP not being common practice in most parts of the educational system, research conducted on

the initiative of scholars working with such pedagogical practices provides valuable insights for this thesis to draw upon.

When it comes to educational levels below higher education, contributions are, however, somewhat fewer. In relation to the primary school level, Gunnarsson Dinker (2021) makes visible how children's questioning of hierarchies in combination with their interest in, and identification with, nonhuman animals can contribute to posthuman and critical animal pedagogies. In terms of preschool education Palmer and Pedersen (2017) encourage preschool educators to invite children to engage in "difficult questions" related to human-animal relations. School lunch as a possible avenue for addressing human-animal relations has also been explored (Dolby, 2020; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023), and the use of educational programs and activities carried out by external actors visiting schools has been studied through an interview study, acknowledging that organizations could play a crucial role in developing animal-inclusive education (cf. Saari, 2021). Possibilities for multispecies justice education, moreover, has been explored by drawing on workshops in a Finnish secondary school, addressing the possibilities and challenges of such an education being introduced within formal education settings (Saari, 2025; Tammi et al., 2024). Saari (2025) sees potential in collaborations between different actors and, in particular, suggests working more closely with teachers and young people. This project embraces all the forms of collaborations suggested, by including teachers and students in upper secondary school, animal rights activists, and scholars in a collaborative project discussing, developing, and introducing CAP. There seems to be a need for more ethnographic work on what happens when critical pedagogical approaches to human-animal relations are introduced in practice in different ways within formal education, especially below the level of higher education, and this thesis constitutes a contribution in this regard.

Thus, building on previous research, this project contributes experiences of ethnographic fieldwork from workshop discussions in which CAP is explored and developed as well as classroom situations when CAP is introduced within a number of different subjects based on diverse teaching materials and practices. Hence, this thesis provides insights on a multitude of ways of engaging with CAP in practice. Moreover, in exploring possibilities for interspecies sustainability in education today, this thesis seems to pick up where Saari's (2021) ends; according to Saari (2021, p. 77), embracing "interspecies sustainability" (cf. Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016) allows us to "imagine what educational policy

and practice could look like, offering possibilities to imagine where we could be headed.”

## Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I sketch out my theoretical framework, starting from critical animal studies (CAS) and its subfield critical animal pedagogies (CAP; e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019), or more specifically animal standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), reading it with and through feminist affect theory (Ahmed, 2010ab, 2014ab, 2023; cf. Twine, 2014), feminist philosophy (Butler, 2004, 2015, 2020), educational philosophy (Biesta & Säfström, 2011; Biesta, 2022), and poststructuralist theory and pedagogy (Britzman, 1995; Ellsworth, 1989; Kumashiro, 2000). For me, doing research in the field of CAS is less about adopting a specific theoretical framework and more about using theoretical perspectives that enable an analysis in line with the commitments of CAS. Rather than being “true” to a specific theoretical strand, I seek (with respect to ontological and epistemological differences) to combine different theoretical perspectives and pedagogical approaches to enable an in-depth analysis of the potential for CAP to achieve more sustainable and ethical ways of living together with other animals. In terms of combining different theoretical strands, it should be noted that CAS is not easily defined since it is a diverse field and, according to Pedersen and Stanescu (2014, p. 263), “[t]he future(s) of CAS can never be enclosed or concluded.” Rather, different approaches to CAS should be understood in terms of “one of many possible beginnings, continuations, interventions or catalyzers for action” (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 263). Hence, CAS is a field in development and constant motion, but with a particular focus on enabling action in solidarity with nonhuman animals. I take note of this emphasis on action in this thesis and seek to contribute to the development of CAS by combining it with other theoretical strands and applying them to empirical contexts in upper secondary education. Hence, I aim to contribute to theoretical development by combining theories, applying and testing them on empirical material, and potentially transforming them in encounters with practice.

As a theoretical point of departure, CAS and CAP combine well with various strands of feminist theory, since there are strong links between feminism and animal advocacy:

Both animal and feminist politics are similarly targeted against dispassionate, institutionalised scholarship based on a rationalist, liberal interpretation of (hegemonic) masculinity, and both seek to expose and overthrow the routinised and naturalised forms of practice based on oppression and abuses of power. (Taylor & Twine, 2014, p. 4)

This makes the fields of CAS and feminist theory explicitly critical (Taylor & Twine, 2014). The “critical” in CAS refers to more than an alignment with critical theory in terms of the research carried out. CAS scholars put this critical stance into practice in our everyday lives through veganism, and usually also by engaging in animal liberation movements in different ways. Hence, the understanding that theory cannot be separated from practice, inherent to critical theory, is embraced in a literal sense. Work within the field of CAS therefore applies critical theory in a manner that seeks to “liberate nonhuman animals from the circumstances that enslave them” (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 262, adapting Horkheimer’s, 1982, definition of critical theory, applying it to the field of CAS; cf. Best, 2009). Thus, theory used within CAS must help to understand and change the material conditions of nonhuman animals and destabilize “normative constructions of the human” (Taylor & Twine, 2014, p. 6). This is directly connected to CAP, since a core part of CAP is drawing upon CAS<sup>7</sup> to explore the material (and discursive) conditions present in educational institutions for nonhuman animals, as well as whether these institutions are part of reproducing animal exploitation, anthropocentrism, and speciesism (cf. Pedersen et al., 2019, p. 317) or whether they can be used to counter this through the introduction of CAP (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al., [Eds.], 2019). In this project, this comes to the fore in three different, but overlapping, ways. First, CAS and CAP are used as theoretical lenses through which the participants and I developed CAP practices and introduced them in practice in schools. Second, the project aims to create a platform for developing and introducing CAP in upper secondary schools that will continue to be developed beyond the project. Third, I use CAS to analyze my empirical material, providing insights for how one could work with CAP in practice in a manner that I hope will be helpful for others seeking to carry out similar work.

For my theoretical framework, this means that I have chosen perspectives and combined them with the ambition to create a theoretical point of departure that

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<sup>7</sup> CAP and CAS are sometimes used interchangeably in the thesis, but more often CAP refers to the pedagogical practices and CAS refers to a theoretical starting point and critical perspectives (which are used within CAP).

enables me to stand firmly in solidarity with nonhuman animals and be attentive to their lives (and deaths) while carrying out my analysis. Hence, the use of theory in this project, similarly to the field of CAS, is intimately tied to action (Best, 2009, p. 19; Nocella II et al., [Eds.], 2019, p. 1). This means that I employ *engaged theory*, i.e. “theory intended to support social change directly or indirectly” (Garry, 2008, p. 99, quoted in Taylor & Twine, 2014, p. 6). For this project, I therefore employ theoretical perspectives that enable a nuanced analysis of the (im)possibility for nonhuman animals to be approached as subjects in upper secondary school and a critical analysis of human-animal (power) relations. A theoretical framework anchored in critical theory is crucial to explore whether speciesism and anthropocentrism are reproduced in my empirical contexts, considering possible (asymmetric) power relations among and between humans and nonhuman. To create a suitable starting point to explore the cracks, disruptions, interruptions, and openings, I combine CAS with theoretical perspectives that are anchored in feminist philosophy, educational philosophy, feminist affect theory, and poststructuralism, although most of the scholars I draw upon are also to some extent drawing upon critical theory. I embrace a power-sensitive analysis that can pinpoint obstacles and challenges as well as possible openings and provide insights into potential ways to approach CAP in schools. In this regard I consider the particular conditions upper secondary education provides for working with CAP as well as how these conditions relate to broader structures and hegemonic narratives in society.

The thesis explores this more concretely by focusing on possibilities for *interspecies sustainability* to be envisioned and enacted in ESE through the introduction of CAP. Interspecies sustainability connects sustainability, social justice, and interspecies ethics (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016) and starts from the notion of nonhuman animals as subjects worthy of respect and protection, in line with CAS. Bergmann (2019, p. 22) maps out a framework for interspecies sustainability, which includes eight “layers of engagement” with animal protection, and considers the levels of transformation to constitute “interspecies sustainability.” Although Bergmann’s (2019) study focuses on the thoroughbred racing industry, Saari (2021, p. 78) considers the framework useful also for educational contexts. According to Saari (2021, p. 78), the framework of interspecies sustainability offers possibilities to imagine what educational policy and practice could look like. Saari (2021) explores possibilities for educational reform with respect to interspecies sustainability, emphasizing the need to focus on nonhuman animals in ESE by pointing to the importance of understanding that

sustainable futures require humans to address and disrupt violence against other animals and focus on creating “spaces of peace” (cf. Wadiwel, 2015) within and beyond education to give rise to just multispecies coexistence, which is in line with the core commitments of CAS. In accordance with interspecies sustainability, this thesis explores possibilities for nonhuman animals to be conceptualized as subjects in ESE and human exploitation of other animals critically addressed. Moreover, I explore possibilities for ethical and sustainable human-animal relations to be envisioned by engaging with interspecies sustainability in ESE.

## Animal standpoint theory

As a starting point, CAS rejects the ontological assumption of “total accessibility of nonhuman animals for human use” (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, pp. 263-4). Hence, CAS opposes the idea of nonhuman animals as *for* humans (Wallin, 2014), inherent in anthropocentric notions of education. Accordingly, nonhuman animals are seen as subjects in CAS, since “[a]n animal is not merely a concept or a metaphor but, instead, a real, living and embodied person who requires our respect, support and solidarity” (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 263). To take this as a serious starting point, I draw upon *animal standpoint theory* in particular (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011).

In mapping out animal standpoint theory, Donovan (2006) develops (animal) care theory with feminist standpoint theory, as developed by Harding (1986, 2009) and Collins (1997) among others. Feminist standpoint theory starts from the experiences of women as a group and is intersectional to take account for differences within the group and the interconnectedness of different forms of oppressions (Collins, 1997, pp. 277-8; Harding, 2009, p. 194). A basic premise for feminist standpoint theory is the insight that what one does enables as well as limits what one can know (Harding, 2009, p. 194). This means that insights about how a hierarchically organized society functions might be more easily available from the daily activities and experiences of oppressed groups and harder to understand from a privileged position (Harding, 2009, p. 194). From this, it follows that the functioning of an anthropocentric and speciesist society might be easier to grasp from an animal standpoint than a human standpoint. Not belonging to the oppressed group oneself does not, however, mean that it is impossible to see the world from this group’s perspective, but it requires doing “the necessary work to gain a rich and nuanced understanding of what such life worlds are like, in order to think within that group’s standpoint” (Harding, 2009, p. 194). Hence, it is

possible for humans to engage in the world from an animal standpoint, but it takes a great deal of work, and it is not the same as saying that humans can ever understand completely the experiences of other individual animals. Moreover, Kahn (2011, p. 54) points out that an animal standpoint is anticipatory, since it envisions and works toward enabling a future that, in the present, is only realizable to a limited extent. Hence, those of us who embrace an animal standpoint are “left to piece together clues out of the catastrophic rubble of the past in order to map the prospects of hope” (Kahn, 2011, pp. 2-3, drawing upon Benjamin), and in this thesis I explore possibilities for creating space to do so within the context of upper secondary schools.

Collins (1997, p. 375) makes the power dimension of standpoint theory explicit in pointing out that the notion of a standpoint refers to “historically shared, *group*-based experiences” (emphasis in original). Hence, standpoint theory focuses on groups and a shared location in relation to *power*, and the shared common experiences created by this shared location, rather than the specific experiences of individuals within these groups (Collins, 1997, pp. 375, 377). Thus, paying attention to power relations and the way social structures foster inequalities resulting in groups are crucial to standpoint theory (Collins, 1997, p. 376), which correlates well with the anchoring of CAS in critical theory, as previously mentioned. In terms of nonhuman animals, some animal groups of the same or different species might share the same location in relation to power structures, but this also differs greatly across different groups. Thus, it is important to be mindful of both differences and similarities and to consider the shifting nature of oppressions when it comes to an animal standpoint. An animal standpoint could therefore be understood in terms of “multiple evolving locations” or “heterogenous and contradictory animal standpoint situations” rather than a singular universal standpoint used as a “a theory of everything” (Kahn, 2011, p. 55). The reader should therefore think in terms of animal *standpoints* throughout this thesis, although I most often use the term “animal standpoint.”

According to Donovan (2006, pp. 305-6), an animal standpoint means including the standpoints of other animals in one’s ethical deliberations. Focus is on centering the perspectives of nonhuman animals and supplement an emotional empathetic response with an ethical and political perspective (Donovan, 2006, p. 323). It is, however, not just about supplementing care with a political perspective (Donovan, 2006, p. 324). Rather, care itself can enable political analysis in that it can become a tool for such an analysis when used to reveal relationships of power (Donovan, 2006, p. 324, drawing upon Tronto, 1993). In the thesis, I relate this to

Butler's (2004) work on precarity and what is considered a livable or unlivable life. Butler (2004, 2015, 2020) connects the livability of different lives to considerations of which lives are understood to be worthy of protection, which lives are recognized, and which deaths that can be mourned, outlining how some lives are made unlivable as well as ungrievable. They further point out how discursive and material dimensions are connected in this process in pointing out how certain lives are perceived as less valuable, which can give rise to physical violence, in turn sending a message of this lesser value (Butler, 2004, p. 34). Here, Butler (2004) discusses this in terms of "dehumanization" and talks about human lives, but this line of thought is applicable also to the lives of nonhuman animals, or rather their *unlivable lives*. In this project, I read Butler with and through the perspectives of CAS and CAP, and although Butler does not develop further "the question of the Animal" (Wolfe, 2003b), they encourage going beyond an anthropocentric understanding of their concepts and including nonhuman animals (Karhu, 2017, p. 85; cf. Stanescu, 2012, p. 571). Drawing upon Butler (2004) in this regard enables an exploration of the (im)possibility for students and educators to take an "animal standpoint" (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) in ESE, since it provides tools for exploring practices of exclusion and inclusion in ascribing different values to different groups and individuals. In this regard, I also find Britzman's (1995, p. 231) poststructuralist approach helpful for asking critical questions about how practices, bodies, and meanings are structured and why (and how) some practices become "intelligible, valorized, or deemed as traditions while other practices become discounted, impossible or unimaginable."

When utilizing an animal standpoint in terms of an educational path, Kahn (2011) connects the "animal standpoint" (Donovan, 2006) to Collins (1989) "oppositional consciousness." In doing so, Kahn (2011) defines this oppositional consciousness in various, but overlapping, ways, some of which I draw upon and will account for here. For example, Kahn (2011, p. 54) understands it as the "cognitive praxis" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991) of the animal and earth liberation movements engaged in rupturing and transforming academic discourse while putting forward relevant knowledge interests held by movement members (cf. Kahn, 2006). In this project, I extend this practice beyond academia by exploring possibilities for such ruptures and transformations to be achieved in upper secondary education in a manner that can enable an "oppositional consciousness" (Collins, 1989). I do so partly by collaborating with members from the animal liberation movement, drawing upon their experience and knowledge and analyzing what happens when it is introduced in upper secondary school. Kahn (2011, p. 54)

also sees it as an attempt to enable a radical shift away from “a Western cosmological legacy informed by the history of speciesist relations,” inscribing reified notions of “humanity” and “animality” (cf. Kahn, 2007; Lewis & Kahn, 2009). “Oppositional consciousness” is in this thesis primarily understood in terms of engaging in critical reflections that reveal and oppose a hegemonic understanding of nonhuman animals existing as resources for human exploitation. A possible strategy for introducing and engaging with an animal standpoint is counter-storytelling, which has the potential to strengthen marginalized traditions of resistance by drawing attention to those that are victims of systemic oppression and provide a greater understanding of these oppressions from the perspective of those oppressed (Kahn, 2011, p. 55, drawing upon Yosso, 2006). By emphasizing subjugated knowledge that is pluralist and partial, standpoint theory can be understood to increase the possibility of an “objective understanding” of society (Kahn, 2011, p. 55, drawing upon Harding, 2004) and enabling an “oppositional consciousness” (Collins, 1989).

In this thesis, I explore possibilities for enabling students to take an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) by developing an “oppositional consciousness” (Collins, 1989) in a manner that creates space for addressing (and resisting) speciesism and critically viewing society from such a standpoint (cf. Linné & Pedersen, 2014, p. 278). Hence, possibilities for CAP to address, disturb, and disrupt exploitative human-animal relations and enable a re-thinking, re-learning, and re-intervention of how to live together with other species (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al., [Eds.], 2019) are explored by drawing upon animal standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). I further connect possibilities for an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) to be taken to opportunities to create space for students to operate in the tension between “what is” and “what is not” (Biesta & Säfström, 2011). According to the work of Biesta and Säfström (2011, p. 541), this tension arises from the confrontation between the two—“[i]t concerns the way in which ‘what is’ is interrupted by an element that is radically new rather than a repetition of what already exists.” They find it crucial to stay in this tension to be responsible for the present (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 541). According to Linné and Pedersen (2014, p. 282), the space for productive encounters between critical animal theory, politics, and practice is expanded when the gap between “what is” and “what is not” is minimized, which they further relate to creating an educational context in which students do not only learn *about* nonhuman animals but also *with* and *for*

them, and this thesis explores the (im)possibility of creating such an educational context through engaging with CAP in ESE.

When taking an animal standpoint, it is also crucial to consider specific circumstances and political contexts when seeking ethical clarity rather than getting lost in abstract and hypothetical examples (Donovan, 2006, p. 211). Therefore a “political ethic-of-care response” should include an analysis of the political and economic context (Donovan, 2006, p. 323). This is in line with Biesta’s (2022, p. 50) educational philosophy, according to which he argues for education that makes possible encounters with “what is real” rather than the conceptual. In this way, educators can enable students to encounter themselves as subjects (Biesta, 2022, pp. 50-51). According to Biesta (2022, p. 53), educators should make sure that what students seek to express can meet the world in a way that allows for a “reality check” and relates this to enabling “subjectification.” Accordingly, something real should be at stake and students should be able to encounter the world in its materiality and sociality (Biesta, 2022, p. 50). Hence, “what is real” should not be understood in terms of an authentic reality as such but rather something “real” being at stake. In this thesis, possibilities for such encounters in upper secondary school are explored by creating space for students to address the situation of nonhuman animals currently exploited by humans and analyzing what happens in the classroom when doing so. This correlates rather well with a poststructuralist pedagogy suggested by Ellsworth (1989, p. 311) that includes a construction of contextualized political strategies to move away from an instrumental approach and to “distance itself from [...] abstract, philosophical reasons.” Hence, I consider instances in the data when specific circumstances of nonhuman animals are taken into consideration, as well as when they are dismissed, in addition to situations when the other participants and I seem to become stuck in abstract and hypothetical examples. Additionally, the existence, or absence, of contextualized political strategies is considered. However, in line with feminist standpoint theory, the focus is not only on the experiences of individual beings but rather on group-based experiences and how power relations and social structures foster inequalities (Collins, 1997, p. 376), reproducing exploitative human-animal relations.

In connecting animal standpoint theory to feminist care theory Donovan (2006, p. 315) emphasizes that “care theory means listening to other lifeforms regardless of how alien they may seem to us and incorporating their communications into our moral reaction to them.” This means that we need to take seriously and care about what nonhuman animals are telling us (Donovan, 2006, p. 305) and act accordingly. Hence, this requires developing an attentiveness,

and in this thesis I explore possibilities and challenges for acquiring such an attentiveness through working with CAP by engaging with non-anthropocentric relational ethics and exploring the doings of affects and emotions (Ahmed, 2014b).

## Relational and non-anthropocentric ethics

I am especially concerned with the potential for ethical relations with nonhuman animals within the context of upper secondary education. Here, I draw upon the concept of “entangled empathy,” which acknowledges that humans are inextricably entangled with other animals, and the fact that humans are in these relationships with nonhumans has ethical consequences (Gruen, 2013, p. 224). This also correlates with Butler’s (2020, p. 16) ethics and politics of nonviolence, according to which one must take into consideration that “selves are implicated in each other’s lives, bound by a set of relations that can be as destructive as they can be sustaining.” This correlates with the work of Biesta (2022, p. 54), who acknowledges that human freedom is both wonderful and disastrous. According to Butler (2020, p. 16), we are defined by our relations not only to other humans but “to all living and inter-constitutive relations.” Hence, Butler (2020, p. 16) moves away from an ethics based on individualism to one focused on social relationality, which correlates with the feminist approaches to ethics that Gruen (2013, p. 224) draws upon. The focus on relationality is crucial here, since it makes visible how one’s actions impact others and that one has an ethical responsibility regarding these others due to this entangled relationship. This is especially important in regard to nonhuman animals, since there exists a hyperconnectivity between humans and other animals (Franklin, 2007), with disastrous consequences for nonhuman animals. Hence, the concept of “entangled empathy” aligns with the CAS commitment to address how and why other animals are affected by humans (Taylor & Twine, 2014, p. 3). In this thesis, I am not only interested in possibilities for ethical human-animal relations in terms of more ethical connections but also (and perhaps primarily) in exploring possibilities for breaking some of the destructive connections of current exploitative relations. I therefore interpreted the concept of “entangled empathy” with MacCormack’s (2013) non-anthropocentric pedagogical ethics in terms of “gracious pedagogy.” This pedagogical ethics urges humans to take a step back and leave other animals alone, and I consider to what extent this seems possible when addressing human-animal relations in ESE. I am also concerned with what becomes of “gracious pedagogy” (MacCormack, 2013) when it encounters pedagogical practice. Therefore, I

interpreted entangled empathy not primarily as advocating for entangled relations but rather for acknowledging that the current (exploitative) entangled relationship between humans and nonhuman animals has ethical consequences requiring ethical responsibility (Gruen, 2013), and I explore how this is manifested in my empirical contexts.

This normative approach diverges from Biesta's (2022, p. 54) work on subjectification in that he does not consider subjectification to be about morals and responsibility but about freedom, which includes the freedom not to be responsible. At the same time, it seems implicit in Biesta's work that subjectification occurs while responding in some ways and not others. For example, Biesta (2022, p. 53) states that subjectifying education is "*not* about asking students for their opinions or providing them with opportunities to express themselves 'without limits'" (emphasis in original). Instead, he considers it to be about making sure that what students seek to express can meet the world in a way that enables a "reality check" (Biesta, 2022, p. 53), as previously noted. Further, reading Biesta (2022) in tandem with the work of Butler (2015) enables a more relational application of his educational philosophy in going beyond the individual student and focusing more on community and relationality. Hence, I pick up parts of Biesta's work addressing this relationality. For instance, Biesta (2022, p. 48) considers the question of democracy to concern "the limits that our living together poses to our own freedom." With reference to the current ecological crisis, Biesta (2022, p. 48) states that humans' engagement with the physical world "cannot be limitless." Furthermore, subjectifying education is about arousing a desire in students for "wanting to try to live one's own life *in* the world without putting oneself at the center of the world" (Biesta, 2022, p. 50, drawing upon Meirieu, 2007). This approach to education resonates with the thoughts of Gruen (2013, p. 224), in that humans should not see themselves just as individual beings but rather as central parts of relationships in which individuals shape each other. It is through the insight that humans are entangled with other animals and the rest of nature that one can start reflecting on these relations in order to be responsible to those with whom one engages (Gruen, 2013, p. 224). This thesis starts from the assumption that it is crucial to create space for such reflections in education. By drawing upon Gruen (2013), Butler (2015), and Biesta (2022), I explore possibilities for creating space for these kinds of reflections through engaging with CAP.

For Gruen (2013, p. 224), being *responsible* means being *responsive* in a manner that enables ethical relations that demand a shift in perspective to grasp someone

else's circumstances and act upon this (Gruen, 2013, pp. 224-6). This means that it is crucial to genuinely try to understand how someone else experiences the world and to gain as much knowledge as possible of the ways they live (Gruen, 2013, p. 226). Hence, this relational ethics resonates with animal standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), in that humans must try to understand and respond to the "needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes and perspectives" of other animals and have an ethical responsibility to do so because of our relations with them (Gruen, 2013, pp. 224-5). This can be understood in terms of an ontology of care (cf. Adams & Donovan, 2007), which should not only prohibit suffering but also support nonhuman animals' need for freedom of movement, joy, and companionship with loved ones within a framework that understands these emotions from the nonhuman animals' different worldviews (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 266). As stated before, acknowledging and responding to the interests of nonhuman animals demands hard work and dedication, and Gruen (2013, pp. 224, 231) warns against assimilating nonhuman animals into human-oriented frameworks and granting them recognition based on similarities with humans (cf. Bailey 2007; MacKinnon, 2012). Noske (1997), on the other hand, talks about "human-animal continuities" rather than similarities, acknowledging that capacities, behaviors, and emotions are shared between humans and nonhuman animals.

A feminist animal care ethic must be "political in its perspective and dialogical in its method" (Donovan, 2006, p. 324). Embracing a dialogic theory, humans should construct an ethics in conversation with other animals by paying attention to their communications, instead of "imposing on them a rationalistic, calculative grid of humans' own monological construction" (Donovan, 2006, p. 306). These feminist approaches to animal ethics thus break with rationalist approaches, such as those presented in the work of Singer, who "continues to abide by the constraints of the neutral conception of reason," creating an animal ethics that ties into a human-headed ranking of life-forms (Crary, 2018, pp. 122, 130). In line with the thoughts of Donovan (2006, p. 307), humans must not reshape the difference of nonhuman animals to conform with human-based perceptions but instead "reach out emotionally as well as intellectually to what is different from oneself" in order to not assimilate nonhuman animals into a human-oriented framework. Dealing with nonhuman animals in a manner that ignores differences risks enacting ontological violence (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 266). In the thesis, I put these feminist approaches into dialogue with contributions on "anthropomorphism" as a pedagogical strategy or resource, stating that

acknowledging similarities between humans and other species can enable moral concern, empathy, conservation caring, and animal welfare (Butterfield, Hill & Lord, 2012; Chan, 2012; de Waal, 1999; Sherman et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2023; Young, Khalil & Wharton, 2018). Drawing upon these contributions when engaging with my empirical material, I explore moments in the data in which nonhuman animals are valued based on their similarities with humans, or by addressing “human-animal continuities” (Noske, 1997), and the consequences this may have, as well as moments in which, to use the words of Crary (2018, p. 129), different animals enter humans’ moral reflections “as beings who call for specific forms of attention not as ‘lesser’ beings but just as the kinds of beings they are.”

Doing so demands an awareness regarding the limits to understanding the experiences of others (Gruen, 2013, p. 225), and working with CAP entails a balancing act between trying to represent the interests of other animals in ways that are attentive to their subjectivity and do them justice and still acknowledging that humans’ ability to understand the lives of nonhuman animals are limited (Saari, 2021, p. 67). Hence, this also relates to some approaches of critical pedagogy that assume an “emancipated teacher,” suggesting that teachers can connect knowledge to power by “teaching subjugated histories, experiences, stories and accounts of those who suffer and struggle” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986 quoted in Ellsworth, 1989, p. 307). Ellsworth (1989, pp. 307-8) acknowledges that teachers cannot unproblematically bring subjugated knowledges to light, since everyone is impacted by learned oppressions. Hence, I analyze how this balancing act is handled by the other participants and me while developing and introducing CAP in schools. I also explore whether the efforts to represent the interests of nonhuman animals risks reinforcing human supremacy (MacCormack, 2013; Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 266; Wadiwel & Chen, 2019, p. 1; Saari, 2021, 67), since there is a danger of misreading or assuming something incorrectly in relation to other animals. For instance, MacCormack (2013, p. 13) considers all attempts to create knowledge about the nonhuman as trapping the nonhuman in anthropocentric discourse since, according to her, all (human) perceptions of the nonhuman are anthropocentric, no matter the intent. In line with a feminist ethics of care, the risk of misreading other animals, however, can be minimized by improved practices of attentiveness and by practicing “openness, receptivity, empathy, sensitivity, and imagination” (Jaggar, 1995, p. 190 quoted in Donovan, 2006, p. 322). Hence, I explore whether the conditions of ESE and upper secondary education make it possible (or impossible) to enable such practices of attentiveness through the introduction of CAP. The risk of misreading the

communication of other animals should, furthermore, not be used as an excuse for continued exploitation or inaction in relation to their suffering. For instance, “[w]e should not kill, eat, torture, and exploit animals because they do not want to be so treated, and we know that” (Donovan, 1990, p. 375). In this regard, the normative starting point of CAS and CAP may clash with Biesta and Säfström’s (2011, p. 541) rejection of education, which is occupied with critiquing the current situation or telling students *how* to act toward a predetermined future that may never arrive (see also Biesta, 2022, p. 47). At the same time, there are limits to what can be understood as legitimate, even for Biesta (2022, p. 48), who considers democracy to impose limits on human freedom. In this thesis, I put (openly) normative theoretical perspectives and pedagogical practices in conversation with Biesta and Säfström’s philosophical starting point and explore what becomes of this philosophical perspective when it encounters a non-speciesist and non-anthropocentric approach to empirical experiences of engaging with CAP.

Moreover, Gruen (2013, p. 224) connects responsiveness to exercising moral agency and, following the thoughts of Butler (2015, p. 102), receptivity is both a precondition and constitutive for action. According to Butler (2015, p. 102), we only act when we are moved to act, that is when others’ situations impose upon us so that we cannot ignore them. Here, Butler (2015) draws upon Levinas, who embraces a phenomenological approach that goes against philosophies that build upon universal principles and instead considers the experience of obligation as stemming from empirical face-to-face encounters with others. Hence, I engage with Levinasian ethics through the work of Butler (2015). However, I read both Butler and their, as well as others, readings of Levinas in a manner that extends the ethical realm to other species, which resonates with an animal care tradition and feminist affect theory in not considering sentience or personhood in other species from universal “rational” principles. The focus on empirical encounters echoes entangled empathy, since this “is a way of connecting to specific others in their particular circumstances and thus is a central skill for being in ethical relations” (Gruen, 2013, p. 226). Clark (1997) considers the possibility of expanding on the work of Levinas to include nonhuman animals. Such a possibility is created when considering the ethical question “who is my neighbor?” (Clark, 1997, p. 178). “If animals are also murdered, if their deaths are no longer denegated [sic] as merely being put to death. Then to whom or what am I answerable?” (Clark, 1997, p. 178). The focus on CAP in this thesis begs for such questions. The face-to-face encounter is furthermore central to Levinas’s work, but Lingis (2019, p. 17) acknowledges that in feeling a requirement to respond to someone’s suffering

due to their needs being exposed one also understands that there are others in need who they have not yet encountered, as well as others who are too distant for us to encounter or in such distress that they cannot face us. And so, Lingis (2019, p. 17) extends the ethical obligation beyond the face-to-face encounter to those that one has not faced, since “[t]here cannot be an essential difference between perceiving the vulnerability and suffering on the face whose eyes single me out and those who do not or cannot.” In the thesis, I explore possibilities for an ethical obligation to arise in encounters between students and nonhuman animals addressed in the CAP modules and whether such a response is extended to nonhuman animals in similar situations. This also relates to Butler’s considerations of relations of distance and proximity:

Is what is happening so far away from me that I can bear no responsibility for it? Is what is happening so close to me that I cannot bear having to take responsibility for it? If I myself did not make this suffering, am I still in some other sense responsible to it? (Butler, 2015, p. 110)

This is also relevant with regard to human-animal relations, since the exploitation of nonhuman animals is often present in people’s everyday lives in the form of food and animal-tested medicines, etc., but the spaces in which this exploitation takes place are almost always hidden from public view in Western countries. Butler’s work is helpful for exploring questions of responsibility in relation to negotiations of the proximity to different issues taking place in the classroom.

In this regard, I also look to Biesta (2022, p. 54), who states that responsibility is not chosen but encountered, in that responsibility calls on me. Hence, “[t]he encounter with responsibility is therefore the ‘moment’ where I encounter my freedom” (Biesta, 2022, p. 54). For Biesta, this is related to subjectification. For education to create space for subjectification to occur requires the educator to assume it is a “you” “there” (Biesta, 2022, p. 46). Although only an assumption, Biesta (2022, p. 46) considers this to be potentially “the most fundamental educational ‘gesture,’” since addressing someone as a subject creates the possibility for them to exist as “a subject, in and with the world,” and education should enable a desire in students to exist as a subject of their own life. Drawing upon Rancière, Biesta (2022, p. 47) considers “education as subjectification” to be about refusing young people the comfort of not being a subject. Hence, I am interested in whether the CAP practices carried out in the project act on the assumption that there is a “you” “there” able to respond to the issues addressed in the classroom and whether the pedagogical practices call upon the students to respond. However,

“whether the [...] student will respond to the call, is entirely up to them and can neither be produced nor controlled by the educator” (Biesta, 2022, p. 47). Hence, in this project CAP is understood to be about creating the space and providing the tools needed for students to respond ethically to nonhuman animals, while acknowledging that this is ultimately impossible to control. In the thesis, I explore what happens when pedagogical practices in the form of CAP call upon students.

I am interested in moments when responsiveness or receptivity in regard to nonhuman animals seem to be enabled or disabled in my material, as well as when the situation of nonhuman animals imposes upon the other participants and me so that some of us cannot avert from it. In this thesis, I am also concerned with moments when the entangled relationship between humans and other animals is made visible and how it is responded to. I relate this to possibilities for unlearning exploitative human-animal relations, enabling ethical relations, and exploring whether such unlearning is possible to achieve in upper secondary schools. To further understand and explore possibilities and obstacles for ethical human-animal relations, I find focusing on affects and emotions to be helpful and will now give an account of why and how I embrace this focus in my thesis.

## Why focus on affects and emotions?

Paying attention to affects and emotions while exploring what happens when CAP is introduced in my empirical contexts enables a nuanced analysis of the possibilities and obstacles of working with CAP in upper secondary education. I focus on affects and emotions, especially since I agree with Ahmed (2014b, p. 170) that “the ‘truths’ of this world are dependent on emotions, on how they move subjects and stick them together.” “Truths,” in this context, refers to knowledge claims. Therefore, I am exploring how the movements of affects and emotions bring subjects together upon the introduction of CAP in ESE and what knowledge claims and discourses are (re)produced or interrupted in these processes.

My focus on emotions coheres with a critique against some strands of critical pedagogies. This critique concerns a tendency to favor “rational deliberation” and “critical reflection” that assumes universalized capacities for language and reason, as well as the ability to “hear and be heard,” which also presumes that students and teachers interact with each other as “fully rational subjects” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 301). Since I am interested in the (im)possibility to be attentive to other animals, I cannot start from the idea that such attentiveness is always possible. Related to a one-sided focus on rationality is the central place occupied by “dialogue” as a

pedagogical strategy of “democratic education” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 314). This builds upon the assumption that:

[A]ll members have equal opportunity to speak, all members respect other members’ right to speak and feel safe to speak, and all ideas are tolerated and subjected to rational critical assessment against fundamental judgements and moral principles. (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 314)

However, Ellsworth (1989, p. 314) points out that this assumes a certain type of classroom, student, and teacher and does not account for dynamics of subordination present among and within those in the classroom. Concerned with the conditions that upper secondary education provides for working with CAP in ESE, I draw upon such critical accounts in exploring classroom interactions, such as whole class discussions and conversations in smaller groups of students. According to Ellsworth’s (1989, p. 302) poststructuralist approach, existing power relations and structures in society impact what happens in the classroom, and she states that rational debates cannot assure equal weight and legitimacy to all voices or make the debates free from conscious or unconscious concealment of interests or non-negotiable interests that will not change no matter the argument presented. With this in mind, I explore the possibilities available for students to take an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) in classrooms and workshops.

These aspects can be more closely addressed by focusing on the “doings” of emotions (Ahmed, 2014b), since “it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, our contact with others” (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 10), which correlates well with a relational ethics (Gruen, 2013; Butler, 2020). Ahmed (2014b, p. 6) also uses the concept “impression,” emphasizing the “press” in particular, since it associates the experience of having an emotion with the impact of one surface upon another. Furthermore, emotions shape the surfaces of both individual and collective bodies through the repetition of actions over time (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 3-4). Hence, I focus on what actions are repeated in relation to nonhuman animals in the context of upper secondary school, as well as which emotions seem to circulate in this context when working with CAP in ESE. My focus on affective and emotional dimensions does not, however, assume a dichotomy between emotionality and rationality but rather seeks to address this divide as artificial. By so doing, I follow the thoughts of Ahmed (2014b, p. 170), who states that reason and emotion cannot be separated. This artificial separation between reason (or rationality) and emotion excludes some others from the realm

of thought and rationality but also conceals the embodied and emotional aspects of thought and reason (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 170). Hence, I am exploring the “doings” of affects and emotions in educational contexts that consciously work with emotions as well as situations that, from an understanding that sees emotion and rationality as opposites, would miss the presence of emotions and their impact.

In line with the work of Ahmed (2014b, p. 8), feelings that seem to be present in my data are understood to be produced as effects of circulation, and not as residing in the subjects or objects of my study. Hence, emotions are not seen as properties of the participants in my project, since emotions are not understood to be “in” either the social or the individual (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 10). Rather, emotions are relational, involving (re)actions or relations of “towardness” or “awayness” in relation to objects (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 8). The objects of feelings pull people closer or push them away, and it is the direction of that pull that creates different affective relations (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 84). The experience of different emotions is also impacted by past impressions and our affective responses, in line with Ellsworth’s (1989) reflections, are affected by cultural histories and memories (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 7, 25). This means that “every telling is constrained, partial and determined by discourses that prefigure” (Britzman, 1995, p. 232). In considering the affective experiences of working with CAP, I explore what relations of “towardness” and “awayness” are created and how these movements may impact which human-animal relations are enabled or disabled.

In relation to nonhuman animals and environmental education, it is emphasized that learning opportunities enabling embodied, emotional, and affective ways of knowing possess a potential for creating increased empathy and compassion for both humans and nonhuman animals, as well as the “environment” (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2018b; Russell & Bell, 1996; Russell & Oakley, 2016; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015; cf. Lloro-Bidart, 2018c). However, several of these scholars diverge from what is perceived as a linear relationship between affective/emotional/embodied engagements and changes in attitude and behavior (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2018bc; Russell, 1999; Russell & Oakley, 2016). Possibilities for embodied, emotional, and affective ways of knowing are explored in this thesis, in particular in relation to how students respond to the suffering of other animals, and I explore what affects and emotions seem to circulate in my empirical contexts when addressing animal suffering. Ahmed (2014b, p. 21) acknowledges that people sometimes respond to the pain of others in a way that turns them into objects of their own feelings (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 21). This could be understood to hinder attentiveness in relation to others’ situations. To respond

ethically, one is required to be *with* others in their pain in acting upon pain that cannot be claimed as one's own (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 30-1). Ahmed (2014b, pp. 30-1) defines this as an "ethics of responding to pain," which means that one must act upon that which one cannot really know or feel. This is crucial in relation to nonhuman animals since human perception of animal suffering is inevitably flawed by our humanness, although humans still need to act upon the circumstances of animals by trying to see from their perspective. Hence, this way of responding to pain could be understood in terms of "entangled empathy" (cf. Gruen, 2013). It further coheres with the feminist poststructuralist pedagogy outlined by Ellsworth (1989, pp. 318-9) in which she acknowledges the impossibility to "know" the experiences and knowledges of others.

Living in a speciesist society, in which the majority considers exploitation of nonhuman animals justified, ethical responses to the pain of nonhuman animals demand an *unlearning* of previous beliefs and practices. It is particularly important from a position of power to put in hard work and engage in processes of unlearning in a manner that does not expect total access to the experiences of the oppressed, which would place the burden of teaching on them (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 312). Following Kumashiro (2000, p. 7), unlearning means returning to what has previously been learned, understanding it differently, and working through the resulting crisis that comes with this insight. Crisis, for Kumashiro (2000, p. 7), relates to the discomfort felt when learning about how one's own privileges and previous practices have enabled various forms of oppression, which can lead to liberating change or more entrenched resistance. Encountering new knowledge or new ways of understanding can result in different responses because:

every encounter with unknown ideas or what one has not expected carries threats of catastrophic change because new knowledge may destroy the valence of deeply held beliefs and shake one's foundational myths to the core. (Britzman, 2021, p. 34, drawing upon Bion, 1993)

Since CAP is an openly normative pedagogy, standing in solidarity with nonhuman animals, it aims for critical (and for many also new) ways of approaching human-animal relations. Hence, CAP seeks to change current exploitative human-animal relations. However, "every change could be experienced as turbulence to be avoided, even though we cannot evolve without disturbing what we know" (Ferro, 2017, quoted in Britzman, 2021, p. 34; cf. Kumashiro, 2000). Further, Biesta (2022, p. 50) states that "an encounter with what is real often manifests itself as an *interruption*," and subjectifying education therefore has an interruptive quality.

These moments of possible crisis or breakdowns can be uncomfortable and challenging and, so, potentially painful. When feeling pain, one often seeks to distance oneself from the perceived cause of that pain, and in doing so it feels as if one is moving away from the pain itself (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 24). This could further be connected to an “affective difficulty” that “alienates the feelings of those who come into contact with it,” making them less likely to be interested or even believe in it (Freud, 1917, in Britzman, 2021, pp. 34-5), which suggests that one might move away from that which causes pain (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 24).

This could also impact how different CAP educators are understood and responded to in the classroom. For instance, Twine (2014) acknowledges how the lived experiences of animal rights activists reveal the meat norm. By drawing upon intersectionality, ecofeminism, and CAS, he sees “vegan practice as part of a broader politics of resistance against routinized norms of commodification and violence” (Twine, 2014, p. 624). I am interested in what happens when students encounter such politics of resistance in the form of CAP, sometimes embodied by the differently positioned CAP educators in the project. Ahmed (2010a) develops the figure of the feminist killjoy by pointing to how those who break norms are sometimes held responsible for the discomfort created when speaking up about inequalities. According to Ahmed, “oppositional politics” contest the social order and are therefore in struggle with a “normative affective community that embeds happiness norms within the status quo” (Twine, 2014, pp. 637-8). Drawing upon Ahmed (2010a, 2023), and developing her humanist intersectional notion of the “feminist killjoy” beyond an anthropocentric application, Twine (2014) maps out the notion of the “vegan killjoy” (cf. Stanescu, 2013). From the position of the vegan killjoy (and the vegan-feminist killjoy), happiness in accordance with the normative community is exposed as anthropocentric (Twine, 2014, p. 638). By considering the dominance of meat culture, or omnivorously normative practices, in terms of the relationship between affect and social norms, Twine (2014, p. 624) conceptualizes vegans as occupying a “killjoy position:”

Veganism constitutes a direct challenge to the dominant affective community that celebrates the pleasure of consuming animals. It questions the assumption of shared happiness around such consumption raising the prospect of a cruel commensality. This implicit or explicit questioning shapes much of the troubled interaction between vegans and omnivores. To have this happiness reunited with its inherent violence through the killjoy discourse or mere presence of the vegan invites a troubled self-conception for the omnivore. It is unsurprising that omnivores indulge in defensive discursive practices with the aim of consolidating the normative meanings of

animal consumption, human/animal hierarchy and the hegemony of their affective community. (Twine, 2014, pp. 628-9)

In this thesis, I explore what happens when veganism and the vegan (killjoy) position challenge the meat norm and its related dominant affective community in the context of upper secondary school.

Being a killjoy is not only about being given this title or held responsible for what it might evoke in others but also about how one engages with and understands the world. By not feeling (and performing) happiness in relation to what is supposed to bring happiness one becomes an “affect alien” (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 1). Hence, one becomes estranged from certain norms. However, being “estranged” can initiate a “consciousness off” (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 3) and thereby provide a starting point for addressing (and resisting) certain norms. A killjoy position is particularly common for activists and creates a consciousness off the world, since “trying to change the world, is how we know it” (Ahmed, 2023, p. 132, drawing upon Angela Davis). From the starting point of the feminist killjoy, and the analysis this position enables, the feminist killjoy can therefore engage in “world-making projects” (Ahmed, 2010a). According to Ahmed (2010a, p. 5), an “activist archive is an unhappiness archive” that is shaped by the struggles of those willing to struggle against normative forms of happiness, or the struggle by those “who are willing to be willful.” Moreover, to be willful is to provide a point of tension (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 6), and might evoke denial and control (Twine, 2014, p. 625, drawing upon Ahmed). “Willfulness is stickiness: it is an accusation that sticks” (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 6). This has consequences for how activists are perceived by others as well as how activists experience themselves in being willing to cause unhappiness, even if unhappiness is not the goal (Twine, 2014, p. 625). Twine (2014, p. 625) connects this to sociological pedagogy in acknowledging there often is “a need to take students into an uncomfortable space to reflect upon social norms and practices” (cf. Kumashiro, 2000). This is contrary to an understanding of learning that argues that teachers can transmit knowledge most effectively through creating “good feelings” (i.e., a certain form of normative happiness) in students (Mapes & Ascher, 2023, p. 233). A killjoy pedagogy, however, acknowledges how “the happiness landscape often exacerbates oppressive hierarchies of a white supremacist, hetero-patriarchy” (Mapes & Ascher, 2023, pp. 233-4) and therefore rejects the demand of keeping everybody in the (class)room happy. Hence, I am interest in whether uncomfortable situations seem to arise in the classroom when CAP is introduced and what they might evoke. Drawing upon Twine’s (2014) concept of the “vegan killjoy” and his thoughts on

discomfort and pedagogy, I map out a “vegan killjoy pedagogy,” exploring what such a pedagogy puts into motion.

In this chapter I have mapped out my theoretical framework reading CAS, or more specifically animal standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), with these other works in order to enable an in-depth exploration of what happens when CAP is introduced in upper secondary school. After accounting for my methodology and research design in the next chapter, my theoretical framework is put into work in relation to my empirical material. This makes possible an exploration what of what happens in the encounter between theoretical perspectives and empirical material, possibly enabling something new to occur when brought together.



## Chapter 4: Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to explore how CAP can contribute to ESE. Given that CAP is an emerging research field and pedagogical practice, but not yet common practice in schools, the project needed to enable the development and introduction of this pedagogy in practice. Hence, I initiated a collaborative project in which teachers and students from upper secondary schools, CAS scholars at universities, and activists from an animal rights organization, interested (and some also already engaged) in issues related to CAP, engaged in discussing, developing, and introducing CAP. Embracing a collaborative and explorative perspective in combination with a commitment to CAS, this project was carried out according to a feminist activist ethnographic approach (Davis & Craven, 2016), which in its collaborative design partly draws upon critical participatory action research (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017).

The project could be understood to be divided into two overlapping stages. The first stage consisted of workshops, in which the participants and I critically addressed how nonhuman animals are currently present in education, and we explored alternatives, with these later being developed into CAP modules. In the second stage, CAP was introduced in practice in two upper secondary schools through CAP modules carried out within the subjects of Swedish as a second language, religious education, civics, humanities and social science, and natural science. These stages of the project were carried out between May 2022 and March 2023. In total, I have participated in 20 workshops and 36 lessons with six different classes.

In this chapter, I start by giving an account of my decision to apply a feminist activist ethnographic methodology (Davis & Craven, 2016). I sketch out this methodological approach and how it informs the project. Thereafter, I situate myself as an activist-scholar and describe how this positioning has influenced the project and this thesis. After these accounts, I detail the specifics of the project. In the research design, I provide an overview of the project as a whole, give an account of the processes of data production, finding participants and creating workshop groups, and explain the workshop processes and those of introducing CAP in practice in the different courses in the two participating schools. From

here, I move on to discuss ethical considerations relevant to this project, and I end with some reflections on validity and my methodological approach and choice of methods.

## A feminist activist ethnography

The choice to embrace the methodology of feminist activist ethnography was based on commitments beyond the academic (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 146) and I commit to the struggle for interspecies sustainability and justice. This follows a call for researchers and universities to move “from publications to public actions” and engage in advocacy and activism, since it is considered “naïve to assume that policy and political decision-making are informed solely by evidence” (Gardner et al., 2021, p. 2). According to Gardner et al. (2021, p. 2) scientists are considered to have a duty to use their platforms and positions to speak out and take appropriate action in light of the current climate and ecological emergency, of which exploitative human-animal relations are a central cause (e.g., Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021; Twine, 2024). Moreover, CAS has its roots in social movements, particularly the radical animal liberation movement. According to Best (2009), the field of CAS has developed as a response to the institutionalization of human-animal studies in a manner that depoliticized “the Animal Question” (Wolfe, 2003b). Within feminist scholarship, there is also a tradition of commitment to activism, which often correlates with the research focus of feminist researchers, as reflected in both their analysis and writing (Desai in Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 147). The same goes for the field of CAS: Pedersen and Stanescu (2014, p. 264) state that a person involved with CAS must learn how to “write as an activist” and to be accountable for its nonhuman animal subjects. Carrying out a feminist activist ethnography furthermore means that I embrace feminist principles as a researcher, merging research and activism (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 152).

I drew inspiration from the pioneering scholars mentioned, among others, as I initiated and carried out this project, positioning myself as an activist-scholar. Hence, my activist commitments guided my choice of research project and influenced my choice of research design. A commitment to the goal of the animal liberation movement to contribute to a society with more ethical human-animal relations is part of the reason for carrying out this project. In this regard, it has been important that the project not only is theoretical but also entails practical dimensions (cf. Gardner et al., 2021, p. 3). This ambition guided me to carry out a collaborative project in which CAP is explored, developed, and introduced in

practice. I further committed to carry out research that contributes to the community collaborators involved in the project (e.g., Cahill, 2007). In terms of its collaborative character, the research design has been influenced by critical participatory action research (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017). Action research consists of a family of methodologies in which theory is intimately tied to practice, and reflection and action are brought together (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 37). This correlates well with my overall methodological starting point, anchored in feminist theory and the field of CAS, which both emphasize that theory should be closely tied to action. Hence, this project aims to go beyond describing, analyzing, and theorizing social practices and instead work in collaboration to disrupt and transform educational practices (cf. Somekh, 2006, p. 1; Kahn & Humes, 2009; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019). The specific action research approaches from which I draw inspiration have been chosen for their feminist starting points and critical approach to participation and collaboration, as well as their suitability for collaboratively investigating a common concern and engaging in envisioning and developing alternatives to be realized in the present. I therefore draw upon critical participatory action research (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019) and critical utopian action research (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017) in particular.

Within critical participatory action research, the questions explored should be formulated and initiated by the participants, and the most marginalized groups affected should take the lead (Cahill, 2007). Furthermore, it is traditionally teachers who formulate and initiate the questions within action research in educational research (Rönnerman, 2011). Although the overall aim of exploring how CAP can contribute to ESE was formulated by me in the role of researcher, the participants were part of formulating questions and areas explored in the project, and the aim of the project is to build upon previous research, with teachers (among others) making visible challenges in relation to ESE and CAP (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2010a; Saari, 2021, 2025; Sjögren, 2016; cf. Bursjö, 2014; Torbjörnsson, 2014). In this project, the most marginalized group affected by the questions of concern are nonhuman animals exploited by humans. Hence, the aim and research questions are formulated in solidarity with these beings by drawing upon previous research critiquing how nonhuman animals are currently approached in education and suggesting critical approaches to teaching animal-human relations, as previously mentioned (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al., [Eds.], 2019; Saari, 2021; Tallberg et al. 2022; Rowe, 2011, 2013, 2016; Russell, 2019). The project therefore centers an “animal

standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) to start from “the radical margins” (Fine & Torre, 2019, p. 436), and the research questions are formulated in line with the ambition to explore how the current presence of nonhuman animals in upper secondary schools can be critically addressed, disrupted, and transformed. Accordingly, participation in the workshop groups built upon an interest in this mission. All participants were carefully selected due to their specific expertise and position, and it is the fusion of our joint experience and knowledge that enabled this project. That action research is “eminently present,” and as such also “future-expanding” in embracing “prefigurative, critical utopian practice” (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 38), resonating with an animal standpoint as defined by Kahn (2011). According to Kahn (2011, p. 54), an animal standpoint is anticipatory in that it envisions and works toward a future that is only realizable to a certain extent in the present. By embracing the “politics of possibility” (Amsler, 2014, drawing upon Day, 2011), I aim, together with my participants, to:

create new worlds that embody and enact not-yet futures by using the resources of the existing world, paying particular attention to the micro-politics of space, time, language, the body and the emotions through which the powers of the resources operate (Amsler, 2014, drawing upon Gibson-Graham, quoted in Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 38)

As an activist-scholar exploring possibilities for engaging with CAP in upper secondary school today, I am especially intrigued by prefigurative practice, since it challenges the “temporal disconnect” between present struggle and future goals by fusing them in the present (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 38). Prefigurative practice allows for exploring possibilities to carve out space in the current formal education system to disrupt and resist speciesism and engage with alternative pedagogical practices in the form of CAP in the present. I find my methodological approach anchored in feminist activist ethnography, drawing inspiration from critical participatory action research, to constitute a suitable starting point for doing exactly this.

## Engaging with research as an activist-scholar

Those who critique activist-research often point to its lack of objectivity (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 147) and the idea that academics should remain “detached and neutral observers” (Gardner et al., 2021, p. 3). However, feminist research (e.g., Davis & Craven, 2016) questions the idea that researchers can ever be objective and neutral, since the values, prior experiences, and political commitments of a

researcher influence the research questions asked and how they approach exploring these questions. In line with the work of Haraway (1988), I embrace “feminist objectivity,” which is about situated knowledges grounded in a specific and particular embodiment. Hence, I commit to being open and transparent in terms of where I am coming from. My activist background within the animal liberation movement, as well as experiences being engaged in other social movements connected to queer issues, anti-racism, feminism, and anarchism, have given me invaluable knowledge and a sense of community. I could not have carried out this project were it not for my activist experiences, since my experiences fighting for a more just world together with others have shaped my ways of seeing, being, and acting in the world. These experiences influenced both the aim of the research project as well as how it was carried out. It should, however, be acknowledged that although activist commitments were a core reason for engaging with the project, and its design, such commitments did not determine the outcomes of the project nor its findings.

I have embraced the commitments of the (feminist activist) critical ethnographer in the sense that:

The critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control. Therefore, the critical ethnographer resists domestication and moves from “what is” to “what could be.” (D. Soyini Madison, quoted in Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 152)

This quote captures well what the position of the activist-scholar has meant to me in this project. I consider activist-research to go beyond conducting critical research, since I am committed not only to being critical and responsible at every step of the research process but also to working intentionally to contribute to change in terms of interspecies sustainability and justice. Furthermore, being situated at the crossroads between social movements and academia made it possible to bring these different worlds together in this project, enabling its realization. In embodying the borderline between academia and activism, I moved between doing research as an activist and doing activism as a researcher (Zavos in Zavos & Biglia 2009, pp. 156-7). “Activist” and “researcher” are not two homogenous categories but rather constitute a spectrum. The two roles can further not be completely separated in terms of how I engaged with this project. Instead, I aim to be transparent about how the fusion of the roles of the activist and researcher has influenced this project throughout the thesis. I will discuss this later

in the methodology chapter, particularly in terms of how it has influenced my analytical procedures and the ethical considerations of this project. First, however, I will discuss the research design.

## Research design

Here, I describe the research design in terms of the data production process, recruitment of participants to workshop groups and the formation of the groups, and the selection of schools, as well as the processes of discussing, developing, and introducing CAP in practice in the two schools. The project began with group workshops, starting in May 2022 and ending in March 2023, with four teachers from three different upper secondary schools,<sup>8</sup> two activists from one animal rights organization, and two CAS scholars from two different universities. The participants and I engaged in a process of exchanging and co-producing knowledge to develop and introduce CAP in practice in two of the schools. I worked with one group at each of these schools. There was an activist and a scholar in each group, together with two teachers at one school and one teacher at the other (an additional teacher participated in the first two workshops at this school). In each group, two workshops were organized during the spring of 2022. After one or two additional workshops at the beginning of the fall semester of 2022, CAP was introduced within ESE in the teachers' courses between September 2022 and February 2023 in collaboration with the participants and in parallel to continued workshops. This enabled discussions in the workshops on the experiences of introducing CAP, which in turn informed new themes and topics to be explored during workshops and new teaching practices and material to be developed. Students participated in the project in two ways. All the students participated in the CAP modules that were developed and introduced in their courses in the two upper secondary schools. If they consented to do so, students were also part of the classroom observations carried out during lessons. Additionally, ten students,<sup>9</sup> five from each school, participated in two separate workshops with me, starting in the fall of 2022 and ending at the beginning of spring 2023. Below are two tables that provide a short overview of the project.

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<sup>8</sup> One teacher dropped out of the project and CAP was therefore only introduced in two schools.

<sup>9</sup> In total, 19 students participated in one workshop, but only 10 students participated in four workshops throughout the entire project.

Table 1 Project overview—workshops

Group	Participants	Number of workshops
WS group 1	1 teacher (School 1), 1 scholar, 1 activist (2 teachers for WS 1 & 2)	5 workshops (13,25 h), May 2022–Nov 2022
WS group 2	2 teachers (School 2), 1 scholar, 1 activist	5 workshops (14 h), May 2022–Nov 2022
WS groups 1 and 2	2 teachers (School 2), 1 teacher (School 1), 2 scholars, 1 activist	1 joint workshop with groups 1 and 2 (4 h), March 2023
Student WS group 1	5 students in Year 1 (electricity and energy program) at School 1 (10 students participated in WS 1)	5 workshops (5,75 h), September 2022–March 2023
Student WS group 2	5 students in Year 2 (social science program) at School 2	5 workshops (5 h), November 2022–February 2023
Student WS group 3	5 students in Year 2 (electricity and energy program) at School 1	1 workshop (1,5 h), September 2022

*Overview of workshops.*

Table 2 Project overview—CAP modules

Course	School & class	CAP module	Observation
Swedish as a second language	School 1 (1 class, Year 1)	1 semester (start September 2022)	13 lessons (14 h)
Religious education	School 1 (2 classes, Year 2)	6 lessons (start September 2022)	6 lessons (4,25 h)
Civics	School 2 (1 class, Year 2)	8 weeks (start November 2022)	5 lessons (6 h)
Specialization course in humanities and social science	School 2 (1 class, Year 3)	6 weeks (start November 2022)	7 lessons (8,5 h)
Specialization course in natural science	School 2 (1 class, Year 3)	4 weeks (start November 2022)	5 lessons (6 h)

*Overview of CAP modules.*

## Data documentation

I produced and documented data as an “observing participant” (Velasquez, 2007), meaning a participant first and an observer second. This means that I took part in the workshops and lessons while at the same time observing the situations that arose and collecting data. Data was produced using audio recordings and field notes, in addition to observations, during participation in the workshops. During classroom studies, both audio and video recordings were used. Data also consisted of student assignments, lesson plans, and other educational material developed or used in teaching, such as video clips, texts, and presentation slides. The data collection process, moreover, was continuously discussed with the participants and

modified in relation to the needs of the participants and changing circumstances. For instance, data collection in the form of video and audio recordings was temporarily paused in some classes to not disturb the students' education, as being recorded made it difficult for some students to concentrate. The process of data production in the classroom is described in more detail in the section Ethical considerations.

In the data production process, I used a method of notetaking inspired by Beach (1997) that separates different forms of notes, mainly in terms of observations, interpretations, and reflections. I wrote observational fieldnotes during or in close proximity to the workshops and lessons. These observational fieldnotes contained information regarding who was leading the lessons, how many students were present, and what happened during the observations. The fieldnotes also include some entries clearly marked as my own reflections and interpretations rather than observations of what happened. I further included whether the reflections were written during the time of observation or when subsequently writing up the fieldnotes. I further wrote work-notes during and between workshops related to planning and developing CAP, as well as work-notes focused on planning the workshops and capturing the different themes, questions, and topics raised. I call these notes "work notes" since they primarily relate to the collaborative work carried out during the project in terms of exploring, developing, and introducing CAP, rather than constituting a form of documentation, although these notes have been used as data. I wrote notes summarizing the lesson plans before they took place, including the aim and plan for each lesson. Additionally, notes consisting of a summary of the content of data on different occasions, as well as a logbook containing reflections (often connected to theory and methodology), were produced. Hence, I adapted the different categories of note taking suggested by Beach (1997) to my project, using what was applicable and possible given the research context. Doing so resulted in fewer different types of notes but still offered a notetaking strategy that enabled me to distinguish between observations of what happened in the field and my own interpretations.

In between observations, I needed to focus on planning the CAP modules and lessons, sometimes alone and sometimes together with other participants, alongside planning and organizing the workshops. Since I primarily needed to focus on facilitating lessons and workshops, the multiple focuses, in terms of both observing and being an engaged participant within the empirical contexts, was a challenge. In this regard, the audio and video recordings were invaluable, functioning as important sources of data, especially when notetaking was not

possible. Video provides rich records of interactional phenomena, such as eye gaze, body posture and proximity, content of speech, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, and use of physical artifacts (Derry et al., 2010, p. 17, drawing upon Barron). I found video data to be particularly suitable for documenting classroom activities since it captures much of what happens in the room and allows for rewatching and listening back to the lessons.

The data consists of more than 30 hours of audio recordings from workshops with teachers, scholars, and activist on 11 occasions, 12 hours of audio recordings from workshops with students recorded on 9 different occasions, and almost 30 hours of video recordings from 27 different lessons. During 9 lessons, only audio recordings and field notes were used for documentation, with approximately 3,5 hours of audio recorded. During all these occasions, observational notes were taken, which amounts to observational notes from 20 workshops and 36 lessons. In addition, lesson plans, presentation slides, video clips, and other teaching materials from these 36 lessons have been used as data. Furthermore, student assignments consisting of 8 podcasts and speech scripts, 12 presentation slides, 11 short story analyses, and 3 written assignments, as well as notes, questions, and reflections written by students on several occasions, were produced during the project and used as data.

### Formation of workshop groups and selection of schools

Here follows a description of the composition of the workshop groups, as well as how participants were recruited and introduced to the project. First, relevant actors for the project's realization were identified and selected based on their anticipated contributions to the project. The participating teachers and students brought important knowledge on teaching practices and everyday practices in schools, and it was in their schools that the pedagogy developed in this project was introduced in practice. Moreover, the teachers offered to apply the CAP pedagogy in their courses during the project. Hence, they were able to share information about the courses and provide examples of lesson plans, assignments, and more. The activists from the animal rights organization possessed extensive knowledge of different forms of animal exploitation and had experience in discussing issues related to animal rights and animal ethics. They further contributed with material that was used in the CAP modules. The participating CAS scholars had experience of teacher education and engaging with critical perspectives on human-animal relations and sustainability issues and were able to contribute to developing

education on a scientific basis. They also provided material that could potentially be used during lessons, and they had previous experience and knowledge of the subjects in which CAP was introduced. Since the aim of the project, in line with the feminist activist ethnographic methodology, was to provide continued value for participants after the research was completed, I sought to involve relevant actors that could be involved in a network concerned with exploring, developing, and introducing CAP beyond the completion of the project.

In terms of the two participating scholars, they were approached based on their previous engagement and experiences of CAS and teacher education. Likewise, the two activists at the animal rights organization were asked if they or others in the organization wanted to participate in the project. This selective process was a result of the specific nature of the project: I wanted to ensure that I recruited people who I anticipated would complement the group working dynamic, had relevant knowledge, and had the capacity to put in the time and effort needed for the project. To recruit teachers to the workshop groups, I used the method of snowballing (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Information about the project was shared on social media, primarily Facebook, by me and people in my network, as well as in online Facebook groups for teachers and people interested in sustainability education and animal rights issues. Information about opportunities to participate in the project was shared via relevant e-mail lists and sent directly to principals and teachers. Additionally, colleagues and friends of mine asked teachers they knew if they would be interested in participating in the project. Two teachers were recruited through my personal networks, one via another teacher involved in the project, and the fourth (who dropped out after two workshops) through information shared with the teachers at his school. All participating teachers expressed their interest in the project before their participation was discussed. Hence, the four teachers were asked to participate based on their interest in the study and having the opportunity to work with CAP in their courses. Before deciding on their participation, information about the project and CAP was shared in writing (see Appendix 1) and individual meetings were carried out with all participants via zoom or phone. Additional meetings, in which expectations, roles, needs, and forms of collaboration were discussed, were conducted with the three groups of participants: “teachers,” “activists,” and “scholars” (these meetings are discussed in more depth with regard to ethical considerations). Research person information including a short description of the project, what it would mean to participate, possible forms of data collection, and my contact information, was

provided to all participants (see Appendix 2) and informed consent obtained in writing (see Appendix 3).

Two workshop groups were formed with teachers, activists, and scholars, each focused on one of the two participating schools. At the beginning of the project, each group consisted of two teachers, one activist, and one scholar, as well as me, resulting in five participants in total during the workshops. However, one of the teachers dropped out after the two initial workshops due to increased workload, resulting in only one teacher participating in one of the groups. The size of the groups follows Wibeck's (2010) suggestion that focus groups should contain four to six participants (which is similar to workshop groups) to enable productive collaboration in terms of providing space and time for everyone to speak, listen to each other, and provide feedback. All participants took part due to their engagement in the subject area of the project, and each of them identified the need for change regarding how nonhuman animals are approached in education, as well as a desire to develop their own understandings and skills in relation to CAP. This provided a promising starting point since the success of action research usually depends on participants' self-identified need for change (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 39).

The two upper secondary schools in which CAP was introduced were included in the project based on the participating teachers. The schools were located in two large urban cities in Sweden. Most of the students did not live in the city centers but in surrounding suburbs characterized by precarious socioeconomic conditions. Both schools were independent (private) schools,<sup>10</sup> one with a practical orientation focused on preparing students to start work straight after upper secondary school and one with a theoretical orientation preparing students for higher education. The project was introduced to the school boards through conversations between the participating teachers and the school principals, who were also provided with an information folder about the project (see Appendix 4). In total, six classes across the two schools took part in the project. At School 1, three classes studying an electricity and energy program participated: CAP was included in a Year 1 class for Swedish as a second language and two Year 2 classes for religious education. Three classes participated at School 2: CAP was introduced in a Year 2 civics class for students in a social science program, a Year 3 specialization class in humanities

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<sup>10</sup> In Sweden, there are municipal and privately owned independent schools. Both types of schools are free of charge for the students, and due to the "free school choice" students can decide where to go to school independently of where they live.

and social science for students in a social science program, and a Year 3 class in a specialization course in natural science.

In addition to workshop groups with teachers, activists, and scholars, workshop groups were formed in which students and I collaborated. Before students were asked to participate in workshops, their participation was discussed with their teachers and other workshop participants who were already part of the project. It was decided that separate student workshops with only the students and me would be organized, since it was anticipated that it would allow both students and teachers to speak more freely and lower the risk of students feeling as if they were being assessed by the teachers. In addition to the possible impact of the relationships between teachers and students, other power asymmetries were addressed, for example age differences and prior knowledge on the topic, in relation to students' willingness to express themselves during workshops. For these reasons, a decision was made to organize separate student workshops. All students in the three participating teachers' classes who were taking part in the project were invited to participate in workshops when the project was introduced to them. The students were told their participation was encouraged, since the other participants and I did not want to make assumptions about what they would find interesting, important, difficult, or boring, but rather engage the students themselves in discussing how they wanted to work with CAP in school. Students could participate in workshops for a multitude of reasons, and both students who were quickly engaged in the topic of CAP and students who were perhaps not particularly engaged but still wanted to discuss the topic were welcome to participate.

In School 1, ten students in the electricity and energy program, studying CAP in Swedish as a second language, stated their interest in participating and were invited to the first workshop. After the first workshop, five students were selected to continue their participation in order to create a productive environment (cf. Wibeck, 2010).<sup>11</sup> At School 2, I asked several students personally to participate, since no one indicated an interest during lessons, and a workshop group with five students from a social science class in Year 2 was formed. Hence, the student workshops ended up consisting of two groups, one for each school, with five

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<sup>11</sup> This selection was based on the level of interest shown in the topic during the first workshop and the teacher's assessment of whether they would benefit from taking part in the workshops and work relatively well as a group.

students participating per group.<sup>12</sup> In comparison to the other workshop participants, the students joined the project later: the students' participation started in the fall of 2022, whereas the other participants joined in the late spring of 2022. This was due to awaiting confirmation on which courses the teachers would teach to be able to recruit students from these classes.

### The workshop processes

The workshop processes were inspired by “the future creating workshop,” generally attributed to the work of Junk (Gayá & Brydon-Miller 2017, p. 39), and consisted of three phases: 1. addressing and critiquing the current situation, 2. imagining possibilities and sharing ideas with other participants in as much detail as possible (the utopian phase), and 3. developing concrete proposals to be carried out in practice (the realization phase). The project did not follow a linear process moving from one phase to the next. Instead, the process of addressing the current situation was intertwined with imagining new possibilities and developing concrete proposals, which enabled new insights (imagination) on possibilities for introducing CAP, some of which were developed further and explored in the project.

Before starting these phases, the participants and I engaged in a process of establishing our collaboration in the different groups. During the first workshop, I shared the initial aim of exploring possibilities for working with CAP in ESE with all the participants. I also shared my preliminary research questions with the scholars, teachers, and activists, but not with the students. At the first workshop session for each of the groups, the participants introduced themselves and described their current position and possible role in the project, why they wanted to participate, and their expectations. We further discussed how the workshops were going to be organized, possible themes to work on, and how involved the different participants wanted to be in organizing the workshops. This follows Levinsson's (2011, p. 249) suggestion for action research to discuss the form of collaboration early in the research process. The rather open and flexible plan for the workshops encouraged participants to take part in planning, and throughout the workshops we engaged in this collaborative process, sharing our different knowledges and experiences to learn from and with each other. Hence, themes,

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<sup>12</sup> The initial idea was to create student workshop groups in which students from different classes and schools could come together. However, this ended up not being possible since the two participating schools were located in different cities and this could not accommodate the students' different schedules.

possibilities, challenges, and questions identified by the participants were central to this project and writing the thesis.

Regarding our different roles, I aimed to take part on equal terms with the other participants as far as possible, but given that I was the one initiating the project and the responsible researcher, and that I had more time to invest compared to the other participants, I needed to take responsibility accordingly. My role in relation to the other participants and the project as a whole will be discussed throughout this chapter. My participation was a balancing act, since I needed to take responsibility for the group processes, at the same time as wanting to create space for the participants to impact the process as much as possible. As such, I took on a guiding role in the groups, suggesting agendas for the workshops, which the other participants were asked to give feedback on, and left space for additional points to be added. I also summarized our discussions and the lesson plans, assignments, and exercises that we developed. The participants and I discussed together what to talk about during upcoming workshops, and most workshops started with each participant expressing their thoughts on the suggested agenda and whether they wanted to bring something up for discussion. In line with a suggestion regarding action research by Gillberg (2009, pp. 82-3), I kept in contact with the participants between the activities, engaging in a continuous process of reflection on CAP, as we developed lesson plans and carried them out.

At the start of the workshops, I suggested using a feminist meeting technique to organize the workshops more collaboratively. In the workshop groups with teachers, activists, and scholars, we did not delegate roles, rather the collaboration grew dynamically and, although I took on a guiding role, we all took part in carrying out the workshops. In the student workshops, we followed the feminist meeting technique more thoroughly, dividing roles between us so that the different students and I each had one task: keeping track of time, making sure we stayed on topic, being mindful of the atmosphere and suggesting breaks when needed, making sure participants did not interrupt one another, and ensuring space to speak for everyone who wanted. This helped ensure that the student workshops were conducted with a flatter hierarchical structure, than what would otherwise have been the case, although I still took on a guiding role and needed to be mindful about power asymmetries. The aim was to create a supportive environment in the workshop groups. This did not mean we strived for consensus, however, and the aim was to create a space in which we could work with possible tensions, contradictions, and opinions in a constructive way (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019).

After initiating the collaboration, all workshop groups engaged in a process of mapping out how nonhuman animals are currently present in education in general and in the participating schools in particular as part of the phase of addressing and critiquing the current situation in line with the first phase of “the future creating workshop” (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 39). This is also in line with CAP, since one dimension of CAP is to critically analyze the role of nonhuman animals within education and how education shapes humans’ relationships with other animals (Pedersen et al., 2019, p. 317). However, we did not only look for problematic examples of the presence of nonhuman animals in education but we also looked for positive examples and alternatives. Here, the participating teachers and students took on a leading role in identifying how nonhuman animals and human-animal relations were currently dealt with in their upper secondary schools. These current practices, together with other practices in both formal and informal education, were addressed critically by the participants and me, mapping out possible problems, challenges, and opportunities.

In critical action research, one of the central questions is: “[h]ow does the problem look from the bottom up or from the radical margins?” (Fine & Torre, 2019, p. 436), and in this regard the other participants and I tried to address the current situation from “the radical margins” by taking an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). Doing so from a human position, however, is only possible to a limited extent. Nevertheless, it created a starting point for imagining alternatives. In the “utopian phase” (cf. Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 39), the participants and I started to envision new possibilities for addressing human-animal relations in ESE and shared ideas on how to do this in practice. This is in line with the second main objective of CAP, focused on exploring ways to resist educational practices that reproduce oppressive human-animal relations to identify how education can be done differently to change humans’ relationships with other animals and enable the liberation of both humans and nonhuman animals (Pedersen et al., 2019, p. 317). During this imagination phase, the teachers, scholars, activists, and I engaged in a process of sharing knowledge about the courses in which CAP was going to be introduced, insights from previous research and literature on CAS and CAP, experiences of working with CAP in higher education, and perspectives anchored in animal rights and animal ethics, as well as knowledge about animal exploitation. Based on this, we discussed what content to introduce, how, and why. The students and I engaged in a similar process during student workshops. Hence, drawing upon our diverse experiences and situated positions, different possibilities for CAP were explored, with some developed into

lesson plans that were introduced in practice. In total, twenty workshops in different constellations were carried out throughout the course of the whole project (see Appendix 5 for a more detailed overview of all workshops).

### The realization phase—Introducing CAP in schools

With the point of departure in these more exploratory phases focused on mapping out the current situation, learning from each other, and envisioning possibilities for CAP to be introduced in practice, the participants and I engaged in the “realization phase” (cf. Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017, p. 39). Three to four workshops with teachers, activists, and scholars were organized for each school before CAP was introduced in practice. The workshops with these two groups were then continued in parallel to the student workshops.

In the realization phase, we continued to develop concrete proposals and lesson plans. A preliminary plan for each course was mapped out in the workshops with teachers, activists, and scholars before CAP was introduced in practice within the teachers’ courses. The lessons were developed in a manner that resonated with how sustainability should be engaged with in Swedish upper secondary schools, as stated in the overarching Swedish curriculum and the curriculums of the individual courses. The CAP modules further related to the aims and central content of the courses, as well as the competencies the courses should give students. The aim of CAP to address, challenge, and transform exploitative human-animal relations was connected to the overall aims of ESE in the curriculum for Swedish upper secondary schools, as well as the course aims and central content.

The process of introducing CAP in practice differed between the subjects, and short working meetings and check-ins with those involved in facilitating the lessons took place in between lessons to plan and realize the CAP modules. At School 1, CAP functioned as a theme for one semester, providing content, concepts, and critical perspectives while the students worked with different assignments in the class for Swedish as a second language. The students were part of a course with a practical orientation (energy and electricity) in Year 1 and worked with CAP during the fall semester of 2022 and the beginning of the spring semester of 2023, with some gaps focusing on other topics. With a heavy focus on developing and practicing competencies, the course Swedish as a second language provided significant space to address overarching focus areas, such as ESE, that should be introduced in schools. Hence, this was a suitable course for introducing CAP, and a multitude of openings and significant space for focusing on different

topics related to CAP were identified in the workshops. Most lessons were carried out in collaboration between the teacher and me. Some lessons were carried out only by the teacher, and some were carried out with a trainee teacher together with the teacher of this course. Throughout the course, the students engaged with a poem, worked with a short story and wrote short story analyses, carried out oral presentations on different areas of animal exploitation, and addressed animal testing (see Table 1 in Appendix 6 for a more detail description). CAP was also introduced within two courses on religious education in which students from two different classes with practical orientations (electricity and energy program) in Year 2 took part. The lessons were carried out during the fall semester of 2022 by the students' teacher and me. The courses included three CAP lessons each. The first lesson in each class focused on introducing CAS and included a brainstorming activity around religion and nonhuman animals. The two other lessons focused on reading and discussing religious texts concerned with human-animal relations and discussing the relationship between religion and eating practices (see Table 2 in Appendix 6 for a more detail description). Originally, the plan was to work with CAP during more lessons and to relate it to the central content of the course in terms of ethical and moral ideas regarding what a good society should be like, as well as in relation to ethical models. However, the two classes were rather dysfunctional, making it tricky to carry out any type of teaching. Additionally, several students seemed to be disturbed by my presence during their lessons, as well as the by the data collection process. Hence, the students' teacher and I decided not to continue the CAP classes to not risk causing further disturbance to the students' education.

In School 2, CAP was introduced as week-long modules in two social science courses and one natural science course. The lessons were carried out in collaboration between the teachers and me; the animal rights activist in the workshop group connected to School 2 was also part of facilitating several of the lessons. CAP was introduced within a specialization course in natural science, which a natural science class in Year 3 studied. The students were introduced to CAP during three lessons and then engaged with CAP again through an assignment including an oral presentation on different species in the food industry (see Table 3 in Appendix 6 for a more detail description). Within social science, CAP was introduced in the civics course (see Table 4 in Appendix 6 for a more detail description) of a social science class in Year 2, as well as the specialization course in humanities and social science (see Table 5 in Appendix 6 for a more detail description) of a social science class in Year 3. The CAP modules ran for six

weeks with the students in Year 3 and eight weeks with the students in Year 2. The students in Year 3 had eight lessons explicitly focusing on CAP, and the class in Year 2 had six lessons. All three classes in this school had three lessons in which they were introduced to CAS, CAP, and animal rights; received information about the Swedish animal industry; and addressed human-animal relations and sustainability, including through classroom discussions. The social science classes also addressed animal slaughter. Additionally, the social science class in Year 2 had a lesson focused on assumptions about human-animal relations, nonhuman animals, and veganism and the social science class in Year 3 engaged with CAP in relation to their course in philosophy and also had one lesson on civil disobedience, and one critically addressing the Swedish animal welfare law. Both social science classes also engaged with CAP in their final assignment for the CAP modules. In conclusion, CAP was introduced for between three lessons and up to one semester in the two schools, engaging with several different topics, materials, and pedagogical approaches.

#### *Project follow-up*

Several participants in the workshop groups with teachers, scholars, and activists expressed a desire to meet other participants in the project to exchange knowledge and experiences. Hence, after CAP had been introduced in all courses, all three teachers, one activist, both scholars, and I held a joint workshop in which we shared some of our experiences. All the participants were able to ask questions and share their reflections. Discussing our experiences, we focused on both challenges and opportunities that we encountered while introducing CAP in upper secondary school. During this workshop, we decided to build a resource bank that can be used by other teachers, students, activists, and scholars. The idea is for the resource bank to consist of lesson plans, exercises, assignments, recorded lectures, sources of information, and material for introducing CAP, as well as to provide further training for CAP educators. During an additional online meeting, some of the participants and I discussed the resource bank, which will be created after the thesis project drawing upon insights from the thesis. Producing this resource bank is in line with my methodological approach anchored in a feminist activist ethnography. It aligns with the ambitions to make the outcomes of the research accessible and available and to work together with social movements (Mullings interviewed by Feliciano, in Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 146).

The participants also expressed an interest in continued collaboration in the analysis process and in presenting the project. An additional online meeting was

arranged in which two of the teachers, one of the scholars, and one activist participated. In the meeting, I shared some preliminary analysis and received feedback from the other participants. They also shared some overall reflections in terms of introducing CAP in upper secondary school. The participants and I envision further future collaborations, and my hope is that the project has created a platform for knowledge production, exchange, and collaboration that will continue to exist and grow beyond this specific project.

## Analytical procedures

The analysis process started while data was still being produced, by writing down interesting aspects and possible theoretical connections during observations and when writing up the fieldnotes and reflecting upon the workshops or lessons soon after they were carried out. Before going through the material systematically, I engaged in a process of writing down moments from the workshops and lessons that caught my attention, especially those that captured recurring patterns or breaks in the reproduction of such patterns. Although this process was guided by my aim and research questions, I tried to be rather open to not lose interesting aspects. In some respects, the selection of data was a collective process in that it was also impacted by discussions with participants on identifying moments, aspects, or themes of significance for this project.

I started to work through the data systematically. In addition to the data production phase, this systematic engagement with the data could be understood in terms of a phase of “familiarizing” myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). With the point of departure in my aim and research questions, I listened to the audio recordings from workshops and classrooms and the students’ podcasts, watched video recordings from lessons, and read student assignments and notes. Hence, data was selected based on its potential to provide insights into my research questions. I summarized the content and included comments on interesting aspects. Previous research, especially within the fields of CAS, CAP, and ESE, guided the formulation of the aims and research questions. Thus, previous research within these fields impacted the data selection and analysis process. Throughout the analysis process, I also engaged with new contributions to these research fields and identified more previous research that resonated with or contradicted the insights of this project and was thus important to engage with. Hence, previous research has been important throughout the analysis process. In the concluding discussion, I tie the knots together and engage in even more depth

with the research and debates, especially within ESE, that I deem most relevant for my analysis. The debate around normative and pluralistic approaches to ESE, especially in relation to teaching about human-animal relations, for instance, has been central from the start, but insights from introducing CAP in practice made the relevance of engaging in this debate even more clear, as becomes apparent in the concluding discussion.

I transcribed most of the audio recordings from the workshops automatically, and I engaged with parts of these transcripts using the software ATLAS. These parts of the transcripts were coded in terms of their content. Hence, I primarily used ATLAS to start categorizing data in the audio recordings from the workshops and related transcripts, marking parts of the data concerned with different areas of interest related to my research questions, such as normative pedagogy or how nonhuman animals were currently present in education. Codes such as “nonhuman animals materially present” or “nonhuman animals discursively present” were used, and I also coded the species of nonhuman animals that appeared and whether they were present as living or dead. Hence, several codes overlapped, and new codes were added as I worked through the data. Coding the data in this manner resulted in too many codes to be useful and was very time-consuming, and I felt that the data lost some of its life through this manner of categorization. Hence, I found it more productive to listen to some of the recordings multiple times. Listening to the audio recordings and watching the videos without focusing on which codes to use created space for closer engagement with the data. In this process, I focused on the content of what was being said, the tone of voice, the forms of interaction between participants, and the atmosphere in the room. I went through the data in this way, summarizing it and sometimes listening to or watching the same sequences several times. In this process, I continued to make notes on possible theoretical connections, noting instances I found particularly interesting.

Themes started to appear during this process, and I also noticed interesting moments that stood out. Sometimes these themes and events cohered with what I had found interesting during the data production process, and at other times I noticed new things while working through the data. Working through the data, I was particularly aware of moments that related to my research questions in terms of nonhuman animals seeming to appear as subjects, or moments when such a presence seemed impossible. I also analyzed the data in terms what human-animal relations seemed possible or impossible, focusing on both what reappeared and what broke with patterns and selected instances in the data that could account for

this. In this process, I have followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 82) method of thematic analysis, according to which themes are not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but instead appear as a result of capturing something important in relation to the overall aim and research questions. Hence, this approach allows for greater flexibility, rather than following rigid rules in terms of identifying themes (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase, I searched for, reviewed, defined, and named themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 89-93) while still searching, for instances, in the data that broke with patterns.

Throughout this process, I started to engage in depth with selected parts of the data as I continued to go through it. Selected passages were then transcribed in detail. While the primary focus was on what was said, I also focused on body language, direction of gaze, and facial expressions. I engaged in an iterative and abductive process, moving between theory and empirical data. In this sense, the analysis process informed the data collection in that new themes and insights were gained in the process of analyzing chosen parts of the data. In this process, I tested my theoretical framework and concepts on some of these selected parts of data, considering what it enabled me to see (and not see). Animal standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), for instance, was not initially part of my theoretical framework but was added during the iterative analysis process, since I needed theoretical tools that could enable me to analyze the (im)possibility of nonhuman animals emerging as subjects in ESE and students engaging critically with human-animal relations.

In the analysis process, I wanted to create space for something to happen in the encounter between me, my theoretical approach, and the data itself. Hence, I embraced this openness in relation to the choice of theoretical concepts drawn upon in the thesis. This process was inspired by MacLure (2013, pp. 228-9, drawing upon Massumi, 2002) who states that an analysis process too focused on categorizing and finding themes risks constraining the data, since “[f]rom this standpoint, data have no status other than that of ‘dumb matter’ to be molded or informed by human interpretation or inspiration.” Having this in mind was helpful when reflecting upon my theoretical framework, and it resonates with my early experiences of being constrained by coding my data in the software ATLAS and being too focused on categorization. My experience of becoming stuck in limited questions about coding echoes some of the concerns of Braun and Clarke (2019, p. 590), in terms of how their method of thematic analysis is approached, who note repeatedly missing complex theoretical methodological questions and instead capturing “rudimentary concerns,” often connected to coding. Instead of molding

my data into preexisting themes or categories, or a preexisting theoretical framework, I allowed the empirical data itself to influence the theoretical framework.

In this sense, the writing process enabled new discoveries through the encounter between data and theory creating space to explore what could become visible and graspable when using different theoretical concepts. In this process, I was inspired by St. Pierre (in Richardson & St. Pierre 2018, p. 1421), who states that “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery,” and I used the writing process to explore different thoughts and approaches when writing the analysis in a manner that offered opportunities for me to be surprised and to discover new things. Nonetheless, the analysis includes themes that appeared throughout the data, acknowledging patterns through engaging in reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006). This helped me divide the data corpus into sets focused on different themes, which I organized and described in detail and then interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, I have also addressed interruptions in these patterns. Moreover, I have engaged in in-depth analysis of selected pieces of data that provide insights into my research questions, rather than focusing primarily on that which would be representative for the data in its entirety (the data corpus; cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). As such, I have paid specific attention to openings for nonhuman animals to appear as subjects in upper secondary school and for ethical human-animal relations to be envisioned.

According to Davis and Craven (2016, p. 122), writing feminist ethnography can be particularly challenging due to “the expectation to be politically, strategically, ethically and reflexively engaged.” I am mindful of the power of writing, since “inscribing and publishing any story gives it a frozen quality” (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 123, drawing upon Wolf, 1992) and I have strived to present my data and carry out the analysis in a transparent manner that allows for multiple interpretations (cf. Davis & Craven, 2016). Throughout the analysis, I have tried to provide thick descriptions of my data and include as much detail as possible without making it so detailed that it ends up being hard to comprehend rather than being transparent. Doing so, I have shifted between providing a rich description of the data set in relation to a specific theme and providing a detailed account of particular aspects by focusing on one or a few examples, allowing for both depth and complexity and more general insights in the analysis (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83).

Accounting for the data and themes in detail has been a balancing act, which I think I have been successful in at times, and at other times not. This is a reflection of the level of messiness in the data communicated in the thesis. I have tried to not get stuck in an urge to make sense of all the messiness in my data in a way that would create order and clarity, but in doing so have reduced the complexity and overlooked certain nuances. In this regard I looked to Lather (2013, p. 642), who states that “perhaps, ‘getting lost’ might exactly be about an accountability to complexity and the political value of not being so sure (Lather, 2007),” and I have tried not to “tidy up” my data and analysis too much but keep some of its messiness to make the complexity and uncertainties visible (cf. Cook, 2009). Hence, I strived, at least sometimes, to embrace the messiness, even abstaining from interpreting some parts of the data and instead focused on describing what happened. In other words, I have attempted to think *with* the mess. In this regard I also follow a suggestion by Lenz Taguchi (personal communication, 2021-10-20), who encouraged me to “think with the mess of human superiority.” This is in line with the thoughts of Wolf, who states that ethnographic experience is and should be messy (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 123). Embracing and communicating the messiness is furthermore part of my ambition to be transparent in every step of the research process.

I also took ethical dilemmas into consideration and explored different authorial choices and how they affected my text in the analysis process, in line with the approach of writing feminist ethnographies (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 126). This relates to how I have engaged with my different forms of data. I have strived to not differentiate regarding the status of different forms of data, such as video material, audio material, student notes taken during lessons, or student assignments. However, students who participated in the workshops tended to have a stronger “voice” in the thesis compared to students who only participated in the lessons. In this regard I have tried not to generalize from the conversations in workshop groups and to be transparent regarding which data various parts of the analysis are built upon and explain my interpretations.

An ethical dilemma related to the analysis process regarded how to depict participants and analyze what they said and did in my empirical contexts. This thesis is concerned with what happens when CAP is introduced, and what it puts into motion, more than the opinions, feelings, or actions of individual participants. Still, I have focused especially on spoken language in my analysis, with the risk of analyzing the individuals behind certain statements, rather than what the pedagogy puts into motion. In this regard, I have focused on what students’ statements

reveal about the (im)possibility for nonhuman animals to appear as subjects and enabling ethical human-animal relations, as well as when certain hegemonic narratives circulating in society appear in the classroom. I have tried not to ascribe roles, opinions, or feelings to participants, especially in ways they would not agree with. Hence, I aimed for the analysis to be recognizable for my participants. However, it is a balancing act when putting data into contact with theory, since the analysis reflects my interpretations, which may differ from those of the participants. I have also tried not to frame the statements in my data as either ethical or unethical (Britzman, 1995, p. 233) in relation to nonhuman animals but rather focused on what was put into motion in different moments and the specific conditions that enabled or disabled specific human-animal relations. In this regard, I have been inspired by Britzman's approach to poststructuralist ethnography in trying not to represent me or the other participants in my data as "noncontradictory subjects who say what they mean and mean what they say" (Britzman, 1995, p. 230). However, it was challenging, on the one hand, not to ascribe certain opinions and feelings to participants and, on the other, still give them credit in terms of what they did say and mean and address the diverse experiences that my data includes. Nevertheless, I have primarily analyzed what was put into motion and what it might mean in terms of possible human-animal relations, rather than analyzing the opinions of individual participants. Regarding ascribing qualities to participants, it should be noted that the pronouns used for participating students are, when not gender neutral, used according to how the students are gendered by society. Hence, I do not use students' self-ascribed gender, since I did not gather this type of data due to not analyzing gendered dimensions. Still, I use gendered pronouns occasionally, since I simultaneously did not want to make gendered dimensions completely invisible when accounting for my empirical examples.

Engaging with the data, my position as an activist-scholar presented both possibilities and challenges. Furthermore, I am emotionally invested in the topic of my project and have been part of developing and introducing the educational practices of CAP that I explore. At times, the activist position in combination with me being part of the data analyzed resulted in me struggling to take a step back to see the whole picture, especially when analyzing instances in the classroom that reproduced rather than interrupted speciesism in which I participated. Focusing on these moments, I did, at times, struggle to focus on the didactical conditions provided, as well as how, together with the other participants, I was swept up in the circulation of taken-for-granted assumptions about nonhuman animals and

human-animal relations prevailing in society. In this regard, I had to be reflexive and self-critical instead of blaming myself for what felt like failures. However, the activist starting point also ensured a persistent commitment to be critical, thorough and reflexive, and to engage in depth with the data in its complexity. Throughout the analysis process, I was mindful in terms of what possibilities for understanding the data were enabled or disabled in relation to my positionality in different situations, the theoretical framework used, and my commitments, in line with CAS, that I brought into the analysis process. Thoroughly describing my theoretical framework and the commitments and assumptions that come with it is important when engaging with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81), which I do sought to do. According to Braun and Clarke (2019, p. 591), researcher subjectivity should be understood as a resource (cf. Gough & Madill, 2012), rather than a threat to knowledge production, and with that in mind I committed to be transparent and accountable. I have further participated in communities of other scholars and engaged in discussions on failure and perceived failure, which has been helpful for critically considering my data and preliminary analyses (cf. Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 128). Discussing these perceived “failures” with the other participants during and after data collection has also brought new insights into the analysis process. My position as an activist-scholar and my previous experiences from animal rights activism have attuned me to human-animal power relations, which has been helpful for enabling me to take an animal standpoint in the analysis process. These experiences have further provided insights into my analytical questions that have guided my analysis.

## Ethical considerations

Here I account for the ethical considerations involved in carrying out this project. I address the ethical concerns present in this project, the ethical guidelines I have followed, and how I carried out this research to ensure it met ethical standards. The project has also been ethically approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Dnr 2021-04643). Although I carry out a focused discussion of my ethical considerations here, various ethical concerns are reflected upon and explored throughout the thesis, and several crucial aspects have already been highlighted. In my research project, I followed the guidelines by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024), as well as principles more specific to carrying out a feminist activist ethnography (Davis & Craven, 2016), partly drawing upon critical participatory action research (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá

& Brydon-Miller, 2017) as an activist-scholar within the field of CAS (e.g., Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014). In using the notion of *feminist objectivity*, I want to be responsible for what I learn how to see (Haraway, 1988, p. 583).

### Data collection in classrooms and obtaining informed consent

The process of recruiting and informing the teachers, activists, scholars, and students who participated in workshop groups has already been described. Here, I will go into more detail regarding the process of informing the students who took part in the lessons that were observed as part of the project. In the process of informing participants and obtaining informed consent, I followed the guidelines by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024).

When I first introduced myself and the project in the classes, the participating teachers were present and took part in informing the students about what participation in the project would mean. In School 2, the students had watched a ten-minute recorded video presentation, including slides with information, about me and the project before I visited their classes. In all classes, I introduced myself as a researcher and activist-scholar, and so I was transparent about my positionality in relation to CAP from the start. I further addressed my varying roles in terms of researcher, activist, and educator. The students were informed that they were asked to participate due to their teachers being participants in the project. I further informed the students about the aim of the project, explaining that I wanted to join their lessons to study how human-animal relations could be approached in different subjects in upper secondary school. In all classes, I strived to discuss the project and provide information in a language adapted to the student groups in question. For the class studying Swedish as a second language, this meant explaining several different words that their teacher and I had identified beforehand.<sup>13</sup> I gave a brief introduction to CAP in all classes.

The students were informed that they were going to work with CAP during their courses no matter if they decided to participate in the project or not. I further explained that I was going to participate in, and possibly facilitate, some of their lessons, as well as observing and taking notes. The students were informed that participation in the project was voluntarily, would not influence their grades, and

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<sup>13</sup> I also explored the possibility of providing information in languages other than Swedish, but upon meeting the students their teacher and I drew the conclusion that their level of Swedish was advanced enough to understand the information.

did not require any extra work. I also explained that I would not be assessing them. It was made clear that all participants' names, as well as the names of the schools and the cities in which they were located, would be fabricated, and that I would not include any identifying details in the project. I further informed them that I, ideally, wanted to collect data through video recordings of the lessons, but that it was voluntarily to be part of such recordings and that it was possible to participate in the project without being recorded. The students had the opportunity to ask questions both in class and individually after the lesson. Written information, including a short description of the project, what it would mean to participate, possible forms of data collection, and my contact information, was distributed to the students (see Appendix 7). Additionally, the possibility of participating in workshop groups was introduced.

Most of the students were informed about the project several times before deciding on their participation. In both schools, the students were introduced to the project and provided with information a second time, this time in smaller groups, and had the opportunity to ask questions before deciding on their participation. Students who did not to participate in the lesson when I provided information about myself, the project, and their possible participation, were still provided with thorough information and had opportunities to ask questions before deciding on their participation. Informed consent was obtained in writing from the students who decided to participate (see Appendix 3 for consent form). The students who agreed to participate were also asked if they consented to being recorded on video or not. Furthermore, the process of informing them about the project and obtaining informed consent was discussed with the students' teachers.

I also carefully considered ethical aspects, such as whether the students felt pressured by their teacher, classmates, or me and how to make them feel comfortable deciding for themselves if they wanted to participate. For example, I tried to be attentive to how they replied to my questions during our interactions and also considered their facial expressions and body language to try and determine whether they seemed comfortable or uncomfortable. If anyone hesitated when they agreed to participate, I asked them again whether they were sure that they really wanted to partake. Any students who did not want to decide straight away upon their participation were given time to think and were asked again on a later occasion. Due to this rather extensive process, I met most of the students several times before CAP was introduced in their courses and the data collection process started. It also gave students time to think about whether they wanted to participate, and allowed them to talk to their classmates, friends, and family about

their participation in the project before deciding. It further provided the opportunity for them to change their minds before the project started. Uncertainty regarding participation seemed primarily to be related to students being under the impression that it meant extra work or participating in workshops rather than only being observed during lessons, and most students in the classes decided to participate. Some students, however, were not present during this initial process of providing information about the project and obtaining informed consent. Therefore, these students were informed about the project and asked whether they wanted to participate during the classes when CAP was carried out. Of these students, only those who appeared sure that they wanted to participate were included in the video recordings. If they were not sure or seemed hesitant, they were seated in the class such that they would not be recorded. Thus, informed consent was obtained from all participating students.

Not all students in the classes agreed to participate in the project. Moreover, some students wanted to participate but did not agree to be video recorded, only audio recorded. To facilitate the different students' wishes, they were placed in the classroom in accordance with their agreed form of participation. The video cameras were placed so that only students who had agreed to be part of video recordings were filmed. Audio recording devices were placed so that they recorded participating students. From the students' placement in the classroom, it was possible to distinguish who was participating in the project and who was not. On every occasion before the video and audio recordings started, all students and educators present were informed that the recordings were starting and provided their consent. This process of obtaining consent before starting the recordings, as well as the intentional placement of recording equipment in the classrooms, enabled an iterative process of obtaining consent (Ryen 2016, p. 38), rather than the students agreeing just once. Instead, they were made aware of their participation at the beginning of every lesson that was observed in the project and could decide whether to continue their participation or not.

Throughout the fieldwork, the methods for data collection were continuously discussed with the teachers, activists, and students involved in the lessons. In some courses, in which several students with concentration difficulties took part, data collection needed to be paused due to students having difficulty concentrating on the lessons due to a new person (me) joining their class, in addition to being video and audio recorded. In these classes, I participated during some additional lessons that were not focused on CAP so that the students would get used to me being there and have the chance to get to know me better before data collection

proceeded. During some lessons when CAP was carried out, no video or audio recordings were used to limit the disturbance to the students' education, and during these classes I only took field notes. During other lessons, only audio recordings were used, either to limit distraction or because students were required to move around during exercises, and not all of them had agreed to being video recorded. Hence, the process of data collection demanded that I be attentive and communicate at every step of the process.

### Taking account of power relations and different roles in the project

In line with my methodological approach of feminist activist ethnography (Davis & Craven, 2016) and the research design inspired by critical participatory action research (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017), the dynamics within the workshop groups and the relationships between the participants, as well as between me and the participants and our different positionalities in relation to CAP, were critically addressed. Carrying out a feminist activist ethnography means that I embraced feminist principles as a researcher (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 152), and the intersectional and norm-critical starting point of the project, the importance of considering power relations within the workshop groups, and positionality in relation to the topics being discussed were emphasized from the start. I have already accounted for the process of forming the workshop groups, as well as the workshop process, but I will reflect here in more depth on some aspects of particular ethical relevance.

In terms of ethical considerations, the question of "participation" had to be considered, since the term is used very broadly and refers to a wide range of practices (Cahill, 2007, pp. 298-9). Cahill (2007, p. 299), for example, points to a risk of careless use of the term "participation" that instead results in "tokenism," risking enhancing dominant interests. Hence, I was careful to carry out the research in a manner that ensured the participants' opinions, ideas, and experiences were considered, and I made sure they could impact the research process. This was ensured through continuous dialogue, especially with workshop participants. Students that only took part in the project through participating in the lessons had more limited opportunities to impact the project. Nevertheless, participation was voluntarily, and the students impacted how the data collection process was carried out (as described before). In line with the thoughts of Cahill (2007, p. 299), I approached participation as a political commitment rather than just a set of

techniques and was mindful to ensure that everybody participating felt like they gained something from taking part in the project. I was careful to make sure participation was voluntarily, making clear that students could decide to withdraw their participation, and I have previously accounted for the process of obtaining informed consent.

In terms of the ethical considerations with regard to my relationships with participants, I was familiar with all the participating scholars, activists, and teachers, except for the two teachers in School 2 and the teacher from School 1 who dropped out of the project after two workshops. While I needed to take this into ethical consideration, there was no relationship of dependence between me and any of the participants. Some of the participants I was already friends with, and others I was familiar with from operating in similar circles and having shared engagement in activism and academia. I was transparent regarding my relationships with the other participants so that they were known to the whole group. In relation to the participants with whom I had closer friendships, we engaged in conversations prior to the workshops in which we discussed possible ethical dilemmas, as well as the importance of taking responsibility for being inclusive. We also had many years of experience collaborating in different group settings before this project. My familiarity with the participants was not only a potential ethical dilemma, however, it enabled me to put together workshop groups that I anticipated would work well and offer valuable exchange. In hindsight, this was realized in practice. Another aspect I needed to consider was the risk of burnout among participants. All participants in the workshop groups were people with high workloads who tended to have high expectations of themselves and significant ambitions for what they wanted to achieve. In this regard, I tried to not add further pressure and reminded the participants that the amount of time and energy spent on the project was voluntarily. Hence, I tried to continuously adjust the ambitions of the project's collaborative aspects in accordance with the time and energy available among participants.

As previously accounted for when describing the workshop processes, participation, expectations, responsibilities, different roles, and plans for both workshops and lessons were discussed in depth. These open discussions about roles and responsibilities, in addition to the possibilities for participants to impact the research process, created transparency and made it possible to hold ourselves accountable for what we sought out to do (as well as *how* we did it). In the workshop groups with teachers, activists, and scholars, we discussed our different roles in the project and in relation to the students. However, it was not always

straight forward and several of us occupied different positions at different times, and sometimes simultaneously. For example, some participants were both teachers and activists, or scholar-activists. For me, the sifting roles were particularly evident, but I will come back to this. Nonetheless, it was outspoken from the start that the teachers were responsible for their students' education, although the other participants and I contributed to their education by developing and facilitating lessons. Due to the scholars' situatedness also as researchers (although not in this project), being part of academia, and occupying a similar position to me, I was mindful about the risk that they would be seen as "more expert" compared to the other participants. This would have contradicted my methodological approach, anchored in feminist activist ethnography (Davis & Craven, 2016) and inspired by critical participatory action research (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017). However, it was clear from the beginning that all workshop participants contributed with their knowledge on similar terms. Considering the supportive atmosphere in the workshop groups and that the participants seemed comfortable expressing conflicting opinions and ideas, this ultimately did not seem to be an issue.

In the workshop groups with teachers, activists, and scholars, the situatedness of the participants and me compared to many of the participating students was addressed. Since "critical pedagogues are always implicated in the very structures they are trying to change" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 310), it is crucial to critically consider the position of educators in relation to the topics in focus, as well as in relation to the students. The power inequalities between the educators and students were discussed. An awareness of differing positionalities in relation to students, for instance, was the reason for organizing separate student workshops. How to best account for power inequalities related to class and race, in particular, was addressed. In this regard, the participating teachers, activists, scholars, and I had to consider our position of privilege in terms of both race and class. In comparison, many students in the project did not share this privilege, including in terms of socio-economic position. Hence, it was addressed that some forms of CAP might seem more relevant or obvious from my perspective and those of the teachers, activists, and scholars. These discussions related to how CAP was going to be introduced and engaged with in the courses. The discussions also focused on the animal rights movement and problems with some forms of mainstream animal rights activism carried out from a perspective that is predominately white and middle class. Relatedly, the workshop groups with teachers, activists, and scholars

sought to consider what felt critical, pressing, and relevant for the students, and what would resonate with their everyday lives.

Including students in workshop groups who could be part of exploring, developing, and introducing CAP was one way in which the student perspectives became a core part of the project. It was particularly important to include students in the development phase of CAP, given their age and position as students. Collecting notes and feedback during lessons was another way to include student input. Taking account of power asymmetries between students and the differently positioned CAP educators, it was important to consider what forms of student expression and dialogue were favored, to the extent possible given the power imbalances (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 9). Such a power-sensitive analysis, however, must be extended to the nonhuman animals in focus during the CAP lessons of the project by exploring whether an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) was introduced and whether this standpoint could be taken by those present. This is of ethical importance in relation to both nonhuman animals and students, since it impacts the positions and perspectives that it is possible to take. Relatedly, an important aspect to consider in this regard was whether the positioning of different educators impacted the possibilities of taking an animal standpoint for both students and educators.

### Considering my shifting role in the project

Throughout the project, I have been mindful of ethical considerations in relation to my role, especially due to its shifting character as a researcher, participant, educator, and activist-scholar. Similar to the other participants, I was involved in discussions during workshops and contributed with my opinions, knowledge, and experiences. I was also part of developing and introducing teaching practices and material. In my role as researcher and project leader, I needed to be particularly attentive to *how* I participated in the workshop groups and how I came across to the other participants, and I aimed to participate in a way that did not silence others (Cahill 2007, p. 302). In this regard, I followed Cahill (2007, p. 302) and made clear the position from which I was speaking and that I wanted to contribute to the discussions from the position of a group member with no claim to authority, speaking from my own experiences and standpoint. At the same time, I did have authority when it came to certain aspects of the project, and I openly discussed my role, decisions, and responsibilities with the other participants.

In relation to the students participating in the workshops, I was mindful of power asymmetries related to age, class, ethnicity, race, and religion. Carrying out research together with young people, I was aware that the students could, in identifying me in the role of researcher, respond to me as an adult authority figure (cf. Cahill, 2007, p. 301 drawing upon Matthews, 2001). This could constrain how the students participated in workshops and what they felt that they could bring up. Thus, I tried to create an open environment in the workshop groups (much of which has already been accounted for when discussing the workshop processes). However, this was a challenge in some workshops since the students looked to me to lead the discussions. Using a feminist meeting technique enabled a flatter organization of the workshops and more shared responsibility, as well as increased opportunities to influence the workshop process for the students. However, I still took on a rather guiding role.

Although I was mindful and critically reflected on my role in the project at every step in the research process, the shifting nature of my role still presented ethical dilemmas. Since the nature of my participation changed, or perhaps since I almost always occupied a dual role, it sometimes became a little bit “muddy.” Since I facilitated lessons and engaged with students in the role of an educator, while at the same time being a researcher conducting research, this dual role might not have come across to the students in every moment. In this regard, the data production process was helpful for reminding everyone participating that I was carrying out research, as well as the continuous process of obtaining informed consent before starting any recordings. When I engaged with students during lessons, I, nevertheless, primarily did so as a CAP educator, especially if I was responsible for carrying out the lesson. In relation to the teachers, scholars, and activist, my role was also a dual one, since we developed and carried out the CAP lessons together, while I was also occupying the role of researcher. Since I also engaged with the participants on separate occasions to those of the workshops and lessons, some of our conversations took on a more personal character. In this regard, I was mindful about what was included as data. In my analysis, I have only drawn upon conversations that have been recorded. Nonetheless, the analysis is based on my overall experiences from the field; if I was ever unsure whether something could be used as data, I either omitted it or asked permission to include it from the person(s) concerned.

### Risk of harassment and negative reactions

Before the project started, I considered the risk of participants being subjected to harassment or threats due to taking part in introducing CAP. Although this never occurred, the security department at the University of Gothenburg would have helped guide our response had it done so. Possible consequences of taking part in the project were also communicated to participants before they decided to take part. Several of the participants were already openly engaged in these issues, and for them this risk was not connected specifically to participating in the project. The teachers, who had no previous engagement in questions connected to animal rights, regularly carried out critical forms of pedagogy and engaged with so-called “controversial issues.” Possible negative reactions from coworkers, students, or guardians were considered, and the project was anchored in the school boards. Additionally, I offered to be involved in the process of anchoring the project within the school boards and provided an information folder about the project to be distributed to principals. However, all four participating teachers discussed their participation in the project with their principals themselves and were given a green light before joining the project. With regard to the students who took part in workshop groups, their relationships with other students and the possible reactions of other students were considered, and I was attentive to how they were approached by their classmates since they were part of developing lessons carried out in class. Neither teachers nor students reported any negative reactions from peers due to participating in the workshops. The workshop groups further functioned as a place to discuss possible risks and challenges and as a space to receive support.

### Ethical considerations beyond the present participants

I also considered ethical dimensions beyond the present participants of the research project and beyond the Swedish classroom. I am concerned with how the issues explored in the project may impact groups of nonhumans and humans in vulnerable situations, especially those groups of nonhuman animals addressed in the CAP modules. This relates to the project being anchored in the field of CAS and my commitment, based on the methodological approach, to look upon the issues explored from the “radical margins” (Fine & Torre, 2019). The question is how this could be done when the other participants and I are not positioned there ourselves. For this project, it was therefore important to also take into consideration the perspectives of those who could not be physically present, but

on whom the project nevertheless had a significant impact. Some of the most central beings to consider in this regard were nonhuman animals exploited by humans or impacted in other ways by human practices. Others include marginalized groups of humans impacted in various ways by current human-animal relations, such as people living in places significantly impacted by environmental problems and climate change connected to the current exploitation of nonhuman animals, groups of humans exploited within animal industries, or groups that face various forms of oppression due to processes of dehumanization and animalization. These different groups relate to the participants in various ways, and participants may be part of some of these groups. These groups were, moreover, brought up in classrooms and workshops to varying degrees in the project, and this ethical commitment related to considerations in terms of the possibilities available to participants to engage in workshop discussions and lessons in a manner that enabled a solidarity position with these groups and opportunities for solidarity actions.

The participants and I needed to take our situatedness as humans into account and consider how nonhuman animals could be present in our discussions in a responsible way that enabled us to take an animal standpoint while at the same time realizing that we would never be able to fully understand the perspectives of other animals (cf. Saari, 2021). This commitment guided discussions in workshop groups and impacted the CAP practices developed and tried out in practice. Risks of trapping nonhuman animals into human discourses through the practices of the project (MacCormack, 2013) and of reproducing anthropocentrism and speciesism while trying to represent the interests of nonhuman animals in education (cf. Saari, 2021) are explored in depth throughout the thesis. The aim was to create a platform for working with CAP in a way that created space for challenging and criticizing, as well as rethinking, existing power structures related to oppressive human-animal relations.

The composition of the workshop groups was helpful for ensuring an animal standpoint. For example, the activists' primary responsibility was to nonhuman animals, whereas the teachers could be understood as being primarily responsible for the students' education. In my role as researcher and project leader, I had more diverse responsibilities. Including scholars with expertise in CAS and engaging in animal rights issues also ensured a critical perspective attentive to the perspectives of nonhuman animals. In hindsight, the project would have benefitted from also including participants with expertise in ethology. Another aspect was the effort made to bring together theory and practice. In classrooms and workshops, this

came to the fore in discussing methods, strategies, and possibilities for changing current human-animal relations and ways to structure society in more ethical and sustainable directions. Another concrete way in which theory and practice came together in the project was by serving vegan food at workshops, which can be understood in terms of “vegan education” (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; cf. Andrzejewski, 2003). In addition to showing my gratitude for the participants’ work in the project and helping keep the energy level up, this interrupted the normalization of animal products as food and pointed to alternatives. In all workshop groups, but especially the student workshops, it also functioned as a starting point for discussions on vegan food and the coming together of theory and practice.

The pedagogical practices used were carefully considered. Relatedly, footage depicting animal exploitation and suffering were used in the CAP modules, and when using footage of other individuals, who cannot consent to this use, in research, a key ethical concern is what is given back to the individual animals (Rosiek et al., 2020). In this regard, it should be noted that almost all individuals shown in video material and images during lessons will be dead when you read this text. This is important to address from the perspective of research ethics, since I also include the non-present participants in the form of individuals and groups of nonhuman animals that are affected by the issues brought up in the project. Hence, I want to acknowledge the individuals killed in animal production, research, and entertainment encountered throughout this project. For example, 117,9 million land-living animals were killed at Swedish slaughterhouses alone due to the meat, dairy, and egg industry in 2024 (The Swedish Board of Agriculture, 2025a). In working with video material, including of animal suffering in schools, death is very present, both discursively and materially. Often, nonhuman animals can only exist discursively as individuals to be killed, but the specific individuals depicted in the material are now also dead in the most literal and material sense. Hence, what is carried out in the classrooms and the insights drawn in this research project will have no impact on these specific individuals, since their lives have been taken from them. Nevertheless, the hope is for the pedagogical practices carried out, including the use of images of animal suffering, and the insights drawn from exploring these practices to contribute to exploitative human-animal relations being addressed and potentially transformed.

## Working with CAP in schools—ethical considerations

In developing the project, I considered that questions regarding human-animal relations and the role of both human and nonhuman animals in the world might be challenging for some students. Engaging with such issues involves questioning human privileges and taken-for-granted practices, both at a societal and individual level. This was discussed in the workshops with teachers, activists, and scholars before introducing CAP in practice. The participants and I also addressed that these issues could cause heated discussions or risk discomfort. During workshop discussions, none of the participants considered possible “negative” feelings to be a reason for not carrying out CAP. Instead, the participants and I referred to previous research (as well as the experiences of practicing teachers) that acknowledge the importance of embracing emotions, that may be perceived as “difficult,” when working with sustainability issues in general (cf. Ojala, 2013) and CAP in particular (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014; White, 2019). During the discussions, we considered the possibility of some issues related to human-animal relations being “provocative.” The potential of such issues to enable new thoughts and questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions was, nevertheless, considered a sufficient reason for engaging with them in class, which is in line with a “pedagogy of discomfort” (Boler, 1999; cf. Kumashiro, 2000; Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012; Winks, 2022). Moreover, this project aimed to enable both students and educators to develop tools to deal with (possibly) uncomfortable emotions and situations in the classroom rather than avoid them. This further points to the importance of creating a classroom environment in which different perspectives can be presented and engaged with in a respectful manner. This goes for the perspectives of students and educators, as well as the nonhuman animals brought up in the CAP modules. Given the messy reality in the classrooms, this demanded attentiveness and flexibility on the part of all those put in the role of educator at some point. When we felt that we were not able to create the environment we aimed for, we engaged in discussion to develop the teaching practices further and make changes for the next class. For both the students and other participants, the project created an opportunity to practice discussing topics that can be perceived as sensitive or controversial and possibly develop tools to handle the different kinds of emotions generated during these discussions.

Risks of reducing nonhuman animals to resources and objects, as well as risks of reinforcing anthropocentrism and speciesism, were carefully considered in

relation to the CAP modules and in every step of the research project, as previously acknowledged. The material used during lessons required special ethical consideration in relation to both the students and nonhuman animals. For instance, material from animal rights organizations, consisting of videos and footage from inside animal factories, was used. The material in question consisted of images and short video clips from inside the dairy, pig, and egg industries in Sweden, as well as a three-minute video from inside a Swedish slaughterhouse showing the killing of sheep, a pig, and a cow. These videos were produced by animal rights organizations through undercover investigations and the use of hidden cameras. Additionally, a three and a half-minute video of the trade and breeding facilities for monkeys used in experimentation and a one-minute video clip about experimentation on monkeys in Sweden put together by an animal rights organization were used during lessons. The possibility to approach this material with respect for the beings pictured in the material and those living and dying under similar circumstances needed particular ethical consideration when using this material in class (cf. Aaltola, 2014). Another ethical dilemma relates to the potential distress students and other participants might feel when watching such material and their level of consent in terms of watching it (cf. Winks, 2022). Ethical considerations in relation to both students and the nonhuman animals depicted, or occupying similar positions to the animals depicted, in the material used were discussed with the teachers, students, and activists and carefully thought through. Documenting and showing the realities of animal industries is a common strategy within the animal rights movement. Possible risks and benefits of such a strategy are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, in which I focus particularly on the use of video material from slaughterhouses in upper secondary school.

When discussing their potential responses, the other educators and I further tried to avoid homogenizing or paternalizing students by anticipating beforehand how they would react or how they were positioned in relation to these issues. We wanted to avoid not covering certain topics because they might cause emotional distress. Not providing students the opportunity to engage critically with animal exploitation can be understood as ethically problematic. Possible learning outcomes, space for dealing with uncomfortable emotions, and the importance of providing a suitable context for engaging with the material, however, was carefully considered. Such considerations are explored in Chapter 7. Instead of anticipating what the students would think and feel, the students who participated in the workshop groups were involved in the discussions and could share their opinions. “Listening to youths’ concerns is [...] critical to both understanding and

participating in social change” (Cahill, 2007, p. 297), and in this project students’ own opinions regarding working with this kind of material were used as guidelines when deciding on whether to use (and how to approach) this material in class. It should be noted that all students engaging in these discussions consumed animal products and had no prior engagement in relation to animal rights.

Following the students’ suggestions, images and videos from animal factories, including slaughterhouses, were used in class. However, a content warning and description of the material were provided before showing the material in line with student recommendations. Both students and the responsible teacher identified a potential problem of students stepping out of the classroom to “escape the lesson” if suggested the possibility to do so when the video material was to be shown in class. This was identified as a challenge for several classes in this school, since students sometimes stepped out of lessons and did not come back. Therefore, students were not encouraged to step out of the classroom if they found the videos hard to watch, but they were also not hindered from doing so. All students participating in the workshops considered the possible feelings evoked in relation to nonhuman animals and the positive impact they anticipated these having on human-animal relations to outweigh the potential distress created from watching these videos. Nevertheless, possible emotional distress among students when engaging with footage of animal suffering was discussed, and the footage used was selected with this in mind. For instance, some suggested video clips of animal testing were not used in class after discussions between the responsible teacher and me, since they were considered to possibly be too painful to watch. In conclusion, the material used and the possible reactions and their consequences for humans and nonhuman alike, as well as how to handle these, were discussed with teachers, students, and activists, and ethical considerations carefully thought through. The conclusion was that the possible benefits of using the material outweighed the ethical risks of doing so.

## Validity issues

When carrying out a feminist activist ethnography from a perspective anchored in CAS, feminist theory, and poststructuralism, the question of validity differs slightly from traditional science who claims objective results, since this project partly considers other dimensions. In this project validity is approached through a lens informed by CAS, feminist theory, and poststructuralist thought. Starting from such a framework challenges conventional notions of objectivity and instead

foregrounds partiality, situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988), and the co-construction of meaning. While traditional paradigms seek validity through detachment and replicability, this research embraces reflexivity, participation, engagement, and multiplicity. Reflecting upon the validity issues of this project, I find Tracy's (2010) criteria of credibility adapted to qualitative research suitable. The reflections below are concerned with the validity issues central to this thesis and how the issue of validity was navigated throughout the research process.

This project provides insights into a multitude of ways of engaging with CAP in practice in upper secondary schools. By introducing CAP over different lengths of time the project enables insights into what occurs when working with this pedagogy for both short and long time periods. Some of the lessons and exercises were unique to the specific courses and some were similar across courses. This offered an opportunity to compare and contrast the varying conditions different subjects provide for working with CAP, as well as different approaches to CAP. However, this is not a comparative study, and the comparisons are likely limited in their character. Introducing CAP in more subjects and exploring a greater variety of CAP practices, however, could have provided even deeper insights. Another possibility would have been to work with CAP in a larger number of schools. Considering the time available for data production and the scope of opportunities available to work with CAP in the courses, I consider the number of courses included suitable for meeting the aims of the project. In terms of the kind of knowledge this thesis provides, it should be noted that the collaborative manner in which CAP was introduced in the schools did not enable an exploration of what occurs when CAP is carried out in schools by teachers alone, with no external educators in the form of animal rights activists or CAS scholars. Instead, this project has focused on what occurs when the pedagogy is introduced collaboratively.

In terms of the time spent producing data, the research design enabled prolonged engagement and time in the field (cf. Tracy, 2010). This offered the possibility to engage with participants during workshops and maintain contact in between the workshops over a longer period of time. Moreover, the introduction of CAP in the schools meant that I engaged with the teachers and students there over a period of six months. In addition to the lessons during which CAP was introduced, I had many conversations with participants involved in planning and carrying out the CAP modules between lessons. The extended time in the field also allowed for conversations with students between lessons, although most of these conversations took place during student workshops. The time in the field

increased my familiarity with the context of Swedish upper secondary schools in general and the two participating schools and six participating classes in particular. Carrying out persistent participatory observations during both workshops and lessons for about seven months made it possible to identify the elements most relevant to the research problem being explored and to focus on these in detail. The circular process of conducting workshops and lessons enabled me to move back and forth between reflections on data, connected to my theoretical and methodological approach, and the introduction of CAP. This created space for me to test (and modify) my theoretical approach in relation to my data and focus on aspects of the observations that I noticed during my reflections. While I found the time period sufficient to explore possibilities for CAP to contribute to ESE, a more longitudinal study with follow-up interviews with students and teachers would have provided insights into the possible long-term effects of the CAP modules, which could not be explored through the current design.

Regarding data production, Denscombe (2010, p. 197) addresses a major concern in terms of avoiding disrupting the “naturalness of the setting” studied. In this regard, my prolonged engagement in the schools enabled the students and teachers to become familiar with my presence, which in most classes reduced the disturbance of having a guest in the classroom. However, this thesis studies new settings created through introducing CAP rather than settings that could be deemed “natural,” in the sense they already existed in schools. Furthermore, I was part of the empirical contexts as an observing participant and by carrying out lessons and participating in workshops. Therefore, my presence inevitably impacted the settings studied. Considering that, it was impossible not to disrupt the settings, and I instead focused on being open and transparent regarding my role in the settings analyzed. Moreover, I consider data and researcher to be co-constituted (Lenz Taguchi, 2012), which must be understood rather literally in my case, since I appear in both the video and audio recordings taken when facilitating lessons and engaging in workshops. In terms of the analysis process, I aimed to be transparent in terms of “becoming-with” the data (Lenz Taguchi, 2012). Analyzing situations of which I was part presented some dilemmas, however. I know more about what I thought in the moments analyzed and why I acted the way I did than I do about the other participants. I have tried to handle this by avoiding including empirical examples of which I was a major part if other equivalent examples were available. However, I did not want to exclude myself from the analysis entirely and have included some examples in which I am present. One method I used to

approach this was discussing my analysis with others. I discuss this and the data selection process in more depth when describing my analytical procedures.

When it comes to the amount and forms of data collected (cf. Tracy, 2010), the material consists of more than 42 hours of audio recordings from workshops on 20 different occasions, almost 30 hours of video recordings from classroom settings during 27 lessons, and 3,5 hours of audio recordings from 9 lessons. Additionally, observational notes were taken for 20 workshops and 36 lessons. Lesson plans, teaching material, student assignments, and written reflections and questions from students have also been used as data. Thus, multiple sources of data were used. When describing my analytical procedures, I have accounted for how I engaged with the different sources of data in the analysis process. For example, I tried to not ascribe a certain status to the different forms of data, although the audio and video recordings served as the primary sources. These have been especially important due to my active participation in the workshops and lessons, impacting my ability to observe and write observational notes. When taking notes, I used a method that relied on separating different forms of notes between what happened in the field and my own interpretations (cf. Beach, 1997). A consequence of relying heavily on the audio and video recordings is that I may have missed out on important aspects that were not captured by the recordings. In this sense, fewer participatory observations could have provided a suitable complement to these recordings to capture more of the settings. On the other hand, this would have changed the collaborative and embodied character of the project. I wanted to avoid a research design that risked me taking on the role of a researcher who sees “everything from nowhere,” with claims of objective knowledge, making myself invisible and unaccountable (cf. Haraway, 1988, pp. 581, 585). At the same time, the video and audio recordings allowed me to watch and listen to the recordings several times, enabling an in-depth analysis process, moving between theoretical concepts and data. This process is described in more detail in my discussion of the analytical procedures.

Considering validity, “crystallization” (Tracy, 2010; cf. Ellingson, 2008; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018) could be understood to have been enabled by drawing upon the different data sources together with combining different theoretical concepts in the analysis. Instead of providing a “more valid singular truth,” this is understood as offering a space for complexity, and an in-depth understanding, though one that is still partial (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). In line with the thoughts of Velasquez Atehortúa (2015, p. 328), I approached the recorded video and audio material as representations rather than visual and audial facts. In relation

to this, none of the different forms of data were understood as facts or objective representations of “reality” but rather as partial and subjective representations (cf. Tracy, 2010; Velasquez Atehortúa, 2015).

Although the research design offered space for workshop participants, consisting of teachers, activists, scholars, and students, to share reflections on their own practices when exploring and discussing CAP and the lessons, it did not include their written reflections. Thus, adhering more closely to an action research approach, including the participants’ reflections on their own (and collaborative) practices as data, would have provided deeper insights into the different processes put into motion when developing and introducing CAP. It would also have allowed more diverse perspectives on the possibilities for working with CAP and, moreover, have facilitated an exploration of what such room for reflection could have enabled in relation to CAP and nonhuman animals. In relation to this, asking participating students to keep logbooks would have offered an opportunity to explore a larger number of student accounts and reflections on the CAP practices engaged with. Another possible avenue that this project did not include was interviews with students, which could also have offered more diverse perspectives. In terms of students’ perspectives, the research design used provided space for primarily ten students to share their thoughts during workshops, which came with the risk of putting more weight on these students’ perspectives, presenting a risk of drawing generalizations from these conversations. I have tried to avoid doing so and to be clear in terms of the data I drew upon for different parts of the analysis. Moreover, I did not primarily focus on the thoughts and actions of individuals but rather on what was put into motion, exploring how utterances, ideas, assumptions, affects, and emotions circulated and materialized in my empirical contexts.

In terms of the perspectives of the participants, multivocality (Tracy, 2010) can still be understood to have been achieved through engaging with the perspectives of both students and educators. The possible impact of both educators’ and students’ situatedness, what it made visible, and the possibilities and challenges it presented for working with CAP is discussed, although, as previously stated, the accounts of more students could have been included. Additionally, working with animal standpoint theory (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) has enabled a critical analysis starting from the perspectives of nonhuman animals. In this regard, risks, possibilities, and challenges have been discussed throughout the methodology chapter and are reflected upon throughout the thesis. The circular process of workshops and lessons created space for discussing some significant elements

together with workshop participants. This, in combination with a meeting during which some of the participants and I discussed my preliminary analysis, allowed for some degree of “member checks” (cf. Tracy, 2010).

Although I have not carried out a poststructuralist ethnography as such, and only partly draw upon poststructuralism in the analysis, I still find Britzman’s (1995, p. 230) “unruly” poststructuralist perspective on ethnography valuable for questioning three kinds of authority that are sometimes taken for granted while discussing a study’s validity in traditional terms. These are “the authority of empiricism, the authority of language, and the authority of reading and understanding” (Britzman, 1995, p. 230). Written language can only capture so much, and what is written in this thesis should therefore be understood as partial. Britzman (1995, p. 230) acknowledges the partiality of language, stating that one should be mindful about: “what cannot be said precisely of what is said, and of the impossible difference within what is said, what is intended, what is signified, what is repressed, what is taken, and what remains.” In this regard, I have tried to be as open and transparent as possible in my analysis by providing context for the empirical examples brought up, as well as in terms of how the processes of discussing, developing, and introducing CAP unfolded. To meet the quality criteria of “credibility,” I have tried to include thick descriptions of the situations analyzed as far as possible, providing details and striving to show rather than tell (cf. Tracy, 2010), without sharing so much information that it ended up being messy. Nevertheless, I followed Cook (2009) in trying not to avoid writing about the messy aspects of the study to achieve a “tidy” thesis and create order where there is none. Instead, my aim was to embrace the messiness and capture nuances and complexities (cf. Lather, 2013). Still, several examples were left out that could have been included, and I have sought out to explain why I have chosen the examples that ended up in the thesis, relating to my overall aim and research questions.

## Part II Introducing critical animal pedagogy in practice



## Chapter 5: Vegan killjoy pedagogy

In this chapter, I focus on the perspective of CAP educators and what is put into motion when they introduce the openly normative pedagogy of CAP in the classroom. I am concerned with what it is like to work with openly normative pedagogy from the position of an educator, as well as what it is like to encounter this pedagogy and these educators as a student. As such, this chapter initiates some of the core discussions of this thesis by exploring possibilities and challenges of working with openly normative pedagogy within ESE in upper secondary schools through collaboration with schools, universities, and social movements. It explores possibilities for connecting and reorganizing these actors' practices to create new forms of knowledges and activities (cf. Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016, p. 572).

ESE, in general, and CAP, in particular, have sometimes been accused of “indoctrinating” students (e.g., Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; Franck, 2017; Jickling, 1992, 2003; Jickling & Wals, 2008). For example, Ideland and Malmberg (2015) criticize the perceived aim within ESD to create “eco-certified children,” while Lindgren and Öhman (2019) are skeptical of education that “serves a specific end” and they refrain from “moralizing” about human-animal relations. In contrast, others consider human-centered plural interpretations of ESE that do not take a stance in solidarity with nonhuman animals to carry a risk of marginalizing non-anthropocentric, non-speciesist, and ecocentric perspectives (Kopnina, 2012; Pedersen, 2019b). Furthermore, Biesta and Säfström (2011, p. 541) reject education that is occupied with critiquing the current situation or telling students *how* to act for the purpose of bringing about a predetermined future that may never arrive (see also Biesta, 2022, p. 47). This is particularly interesting in relation to working with openly normative critical pedagogy, such as CAP, and Pedersen (2021) points to an anxiety surrounding “the question of the Animal” (Wolfe, 2003b) in education. At the same time, the hidden curriculum of values, which determines what is seen as the “neutral” position, is often not addressed (Pedersen, 2010a; cf. Fien, 1994). Previous research also addresses the influence of the “neutral teacher” as an ideal with regard to teaching on sustainable development, indicating a discomfort among teacher instructors of stepping out of this role. However, it simultaneously seems impossible to manage sustainable development

in education without taking a subjective and normative approach (Sjögren, 2016). I am interested in what happens when I put my empirical material and theoretical framework in dialogue with previous research related to normative pedagogy and ESE and aim to engage with these ongoing debates in a way that allows for nuances and complexities to be addressed.

In this chapter, I draw upon discussions from workshop groups consisting of teachers, activists, and scholars, and separate student workshop groups. These discussions are concerned with normative pedagogy, the purpose of CAP and how it can be approached, the role of and space of action for teachers and other CAP educators, and what it is like to encounter and engage with this kind of pedagogy as a student. In addition to workshop discussions, I draw on situations from the classroom in which the openly normative character of CAP becomes visible, such as when students engage with the meaning of the pedagogical practices introduced or when moments of resistance occur.

## Identifying the need for a more radical ESE

The didactical question of what kind of content educators should work with in ESE was put forward as highly relevant by the teachers in the project, and a lack of (some) critical perspectives in relation to sustainability was outlined as an obstacle for creating engagement and enabling students to challenge the status quo. For instance, both teachers and students in the project stated that “sustainability” is something they regularly work with in school, but nonhuman animals exploited by humans, critical perspectives on human-animal relations, and narratives of animal rights activists did not, however, seem to be included in common practice. It was also not a topic addressed in students’ previous schooling or in the learning activities in which the teachers and students engaged. The participants’ experiences of nonhuman animals in education instead largely cohered with descriptions in previous research, in terms of how nonhuman animals were present in both the participating schools and experiences of education more generally. Therefore, similarly to previous research, this project speaks to how nonhuman animals are exploited as tools for teaching and learning, as scientific objects in dissection and research, metaphors or representatives for entire species, and for consumption in terms of school lunch (e.g., Cole & Stewart, 2016; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2010a, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2024; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021; Sallaway-Costello et al., 2021; Sjögren, 2014, 2016; Solot & Arluke, 1997; Truman, 2016) within the context

of Swedish upper secondary schools. This points to the strong connections between the “animal-industrial complex” (Noske, 1997; developed in Twine, 2013) and education (Pedersen, 2019b; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021).

Furthermore, the teachers stated that rather limited and one-sided perspectives are repeatedly used when working with sustainability in schools (cf. Du Pisani, 2006; Cutter-Mackenzie & Rousell, 2019). In their opinion, this results in the risk of concepts losing their meaning and content being unclear, and students finding it repetitive and boring. In the conversations, a hegemonic perspective regarding sustainability in schools, but also regarding taken-for-granted human-animal relations in education, and beyond, with limited scope for it to be questioned, was identified by the participants. Among other things, this hegemonic societal narrative was understood to frame nonhuman animals as exploitable and high consumption of meat as normal and unproblematic. Critical perspectives on human-animal relations were seen as lacking in such a narrative. Furthermore, one of the teachers connected low engagement among students to *how* the issues of sustainability are approached in school, and the kind of content addressed, stating that his students are often otherwise “naturally engaged”<sup>14</sup> (audio recording from workshop, May 16, 2022) in sustainability issues. All four teachers participating in the project stated that they craved new perspectives and ways to approach sustainability.

The participating teachers understood the introduction of CAP as one way to enable engagement and a critical understanding of current human-animal relations. The lack of teaching material available, however, was described as an obstacle (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019; Saari, 2021). For instance, the social science teacher in School 2 stated that “it must be allowed to be more radical than the textbook,” since she considered the social science textbooks to not “dare to get there” (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). The teachers considered this to be a dilemma, since CAP, to use the words of the social science teacher, is “totally in line with what we are supposed to work with,” yet there is currently a lack of textbooks (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). A need to incorporate other types of material to bring in critical perspectives on human-animal relations when working with sustainability in upper secondary school was therefore identified. The teachers expressed a desire for content in the form of research, statistics, texts, films, questions, debates, and concrete examples. The

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<sup>14</sup> All quotes are my own translations from video or audio recordings in Swedish.

social science teacher further suggested the inclusion of social movements, which was picked up on in several of the CAP modules when one of the animal rights activists shared their experiences during some of the lessons.

Another aspect impacting the didactical conditions of Swedish upper secondary schools for working with CAP is the grading system. Two of the teachers considered grades a motivating factor for students to engage with sustainability issues (audio recording from workshop, June 13, 2022). In contrast, one of the natural science teachers considered his students' focus on attaining high grades an obstacle to engagement and critical thinking in regard to sustainability issues (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). He wanted to enable his students to question things, think for themselves, and break with traditions, and considered their focus on grades to be an obstacle to this, by, among other things, incentivizing them to respond in alignment with his ideas and values (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). An urge for something beyond the current mundane practices of schooling and grades became apparent in conversations also with students in the workshop group in School 2. In contrast to the lessons, the student workshops were not examined and did not impact the students' grades. One of the students shared her thoughts saying: "when we are doing this with you it is not like we are students and that we must know more facts, but we are humans, we feel like humans" (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2023). She further acknowledged that it felt "really hard" and "horrible" to consider how "humans are treating animals," and several of the other students in the group agreed. Here, one can detect an appreciation and desire to engage in discussions beyond the traditional roles of "student" and "teacher," beyond having to prove your knowledge on a topic, and beyond being graded. In sum, participating teachers and some students called for new (more radical) approaches to ESE in upper secondary school.

### The idea(l) of the "neutral teacher"

During discussions in the workshop groups, a need to introduce new critical perspectives on human-animal relations became evident, as previously addressed. In exploring the didactical question of *how* to introduce CAP, it became apparent, however, that strong ideals of how a teacher should act and what education is and should (as well as could) achieve impacted the perceived possibilities of introducing CAP. These discussions centered around the idea(l) of the neutral teacher, moralizing and objectivity in education, how different issues should be

addressed, and the importance of interrupting the status quo. It became clear that norms guarding teaching and education put frames into place that affect what is understood as possible. These norms, however, were also questioned and critically addressed.

In the discussions with teachers, the idea of needing to present “both sides” was raised on several occasions, seemingly impacting the perceived appropriateness of addressing various issues in upper secondary school. The discussions point out complexities when engaging with marginalized perspectives in education in that, on the one hand, it is framed as important to always show both sides and, on the other, it is acknowledged that one side is already heavily represented. This idea of presenting both sides came to the fore, for example, when one of the natural science teachers emphasized the importance of providing information and presenting “the arguments of both those who are for and those who are against” (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). The teacher further stated that he aims to encourage discussion in his classroom but is hesitant of telling students what to think or “pushing” his opinion onto them. Similarly, the social science teacher aims to point to several different perspectives on issues but not tell students one perspective is “the right one” (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). Here, the idea(l) of the neutral teacher appears. Although the teachers found it important to make space for a CAS perspective in schools, which they acknowledged is lacking, they were hesitant about doing this in a way that could be perceived as “moralizing.” For example, the social science teacher argued that it is important to increase students’ understanding but without “too much moral stuff” (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). She also stated that “one cannot force people to think certain things,” emphasizing the need for students to develop their own understanding. This is in line with Pedersen’s (2010a) experiences from ethnographic fieldwork in Swedish upper secondary schools, according to which teachers of animal welfare-related topics avoid promoting their own views on human-animal relations, especially if these views have an animal rights commitment (cf. Weber et al., 2022). In Pedersen’s (2010a, pp. 54-5) material, both teachers and students concerned with animal rights emphasized the importance of being “unbiased,” “showing different perspectives,” and letting students freely choose their opinions. Teachers who represented more hegemonic views, on the other hand, were more likely to assume their views were taken for granted, mediating these in the classroom (Pedersen, 2010a, p. 55).

This concern about showing different perspectives and not being “too open” with one’s opinions seemed also to be present among the educators in my project. The emphasis on not pushing one perspective or suggesting that one course of action is better than another reproduces a liberal pluralist approach in which inconsistent, or contradictory, courses of action are seen as equally valid (Kopnina, 2012, drawing upon Callicott, 1990). This approach, however, has been criticized for failing to stand in solidarity with nonhuman animals, and thereby, leading to a risk of reproducing anthropocentrism (Pedersen, 2019b). According to Kopnina (2012, p. 705), this might result in students being denied the opportunity to learn to care about and contribute to solutions to environmental problems, as there is a risk that they will adopt the perspectives that are most self-serving in the circumstances if all perspectives are presented as “subjective and (in the most relativist sense) equally valid.” According to Pedersen (2010a, p. 55), underrepresented standpoints (such as the “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), which is a core perspective in CAP) are at greater risk of being understood as “biased,” restricting educators engaged in animal ethics. This is in line with a liberal orientation to education, in which it is often considered neutral to teach students about certain values and how to clarify their standpoint in relation to them, whilst simultaneously failing to make visible the “hidden curriculum” shaping what is understood as “neutral” in the first place (Pedersen, 2010a, p. 55, drawing upon Fien, 1994). This “hidden curriculum” became visible in the workshop discussions when reflecting on the “democratic mission” of Swedish schools, according to which schools should communicate and transmit core democratic values to students. The CAS scholar, participating in the workshop group connected to School 2, for example, pointed out how this form of education has been normalized and that it is seen as a given that one should be “molded into a democratic citizen” through school (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). The scholar stated that this is one example of the school’s “activistic mission.” Hence, the introduction of CAP makes the “hidden curriculum” visible, enabling a consideration of what is taken for granted in Swedish schools, ultimately challenging its perceived neutrality.

The idea that moralizing and trying to steer students in a certain direction is problematic, furthermore, appears within the research fields of ESE (e.g., Ideland & Malmberg, 2015; Jickling, 1992; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019; Wals, 2012) and educational philosophy (e.g., Biesta & Säfström, 2011), as previously addressed. Such ideas also appeared in the workshop discussions. This came to the fore in hesitation regarding pedagogy that could be defined as “moralizing,” or at least

involving “too much moral stuff,” to use the words of the social science teacher (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). When it comes to introducing nonhuman animals as stakeholders in education, the skepticism about “moralizing” can be connected to a trend within the research field of ESD that Pedersen (2019b, 3) has termed an “enlightened distance” to anthropocentrism. In line with this trend, it is relatively common to speak positively about including the “more-than-human” in education but at the same time eschew the idea of “moralizing” about human-animal relations (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 4). However, only some forms of education seem to be considered problematic in terms of “moralizing,” which can be seen in a quote by the CAS scholar:

What is it that counts as enforcing morals on others contrary to ordinary education? [...] It is impossible to draw the line, of course, but it is very interesting to see how [...] it plays out in the school and how it is judged by others and how it is experienced by the students. (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022)

Here the idea of moralizing as something clear and easily defined, as well as the idea that some aspects of school are free of values, is interrupted.

Nevertheless, this hesitation in relation to what is understood in terms of “moralizing” or being biased seems to be circulating in society, haunting educators and scholars engaged with education in general, but perhaps ESE and human-animal relations in particular. This could further be related to an anxiety surrounding “the question of the Animal” (Wolfe, 2003b) in education (Pedersen, 2021), as well as the risk of being deemed a “vegan killjoy” (Twine, 2014; cf. Stanescu, 2013). The experiences of the participants in this project further indicate that some approaches to education, along with some positions as educators, are at greater risk of being deemed “moralizing” or framed as “killjoy pedagogy.” In line with a liberal orientation to education (cf. Pedersen, 2010a; Fien, 1994), there exists a consensus regarding some issues that are not seen as problematic. In relation to these issues, arguments for or against are not discussed in a seemingly neutral manner. One of the natural science teachers, for example, gives “violence” and “Nazism” as examples, stating that they would not discuss whether it was right to “exterminate Jews” during the holocaust (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). This suggests that within the context of school, some topics related to humans are approached differently than those related to nonhuman animals. Furthermore, one of the animal rights activists addressed the role of the Swedish curriculum in pointing to how certain forms of human oppression are addressed differently in the curriculum compared to oppression of nonhuman animals (audio

recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). It therefore seems that forms of human oppression are less often up for discussion in terms of being “good” or “bad” than oppression of other animals.

Relatedly, the teacher of Swedish as a second language and religious education acknowledges a possible pitfall in holding discussions over whether, for example, animal testing, eating meat, wolf hunting, and mink farming are “good” or “bad.” The teacher problematizes how issues related to animal ethics are sometimes used for practicing certain competencies, stating that “the animals become an object [...] not a physical object but rather [...] an object of mind.” (audio recording from workshop, June 13, 2022). Thus, when CAP comes into contact with common pedagogical practices, these practices are seen in a new light. Here, it creates space to critically address them from an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), causing the teacher to acknowledge the risk of nonhuman animals being used as interesting topics for discussions with no real engagement regarding their actual circumstances. This also relates to the role and position of the educator, and the teacher indicated a risk that teachers might think they should not intervene in discussions among students, considering the conclusions they draw regarding the issues discussed less important than that they learn how to argue. Discussing topics through “pros and cons,” or “right and wrong,” may further indicate these topics are up for discussion and risk reproducing certain forms of oppression.<sup>15</sup> This relates to *how* questions are framed, an issue raised by some of the teachers. This is also addressed in CAS literature. For example, Pedersen (2019b, p. 7) acknowledges that when Lindgren and Öhman (2019) ask *whether* animal use can be avoided rather than *how it becomes possible* in the first place, the idea of nonhumans as resources for humans to exploit remains intact. This can be conceptualized in terms of a difference between an educational context that is only “about animals” instead of also “*with* them and *for* them” (cf. Linné & Pedersen, 2014, p. 283, emphasis in original). Consequently, when CAP enters education, didactical questions regarding both *what* content should be introduced as well as *how* it should be engaged with come to the fore. The line between what can and cannot be discussed, and perhaps especially *how* things should (and should not) be discussed, is questioned. This became even more apparent when the natural science teacher

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<sup>15</sup> In educational theory and practice, this has been addressed in relation to “value exercises,” pointing out how these exercises carry a risk of reinforcing oppression if the starting point is not considered from a norm critical perspective, creating a “tolerance pedagogy” in which those who are in a privileged position or part of the majority norm have the right to “tolerate” others, reproducing asymmetric power relations (Bromseth, 2010).

in School 2 stated: “But then it is interesting to think about... Where is the limit and what is consensus in society? And can we move the limit?” (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). This question about whether it is possible to move the limit captures a core focus of this thesis, as the participants and I explored possibilities for bending this limit, moving it (as suggested by this teacher), redrawing it, breaking it, and ultimately transforming it.

## Suggesting a vegan killjoy pedagogy

The idea(l) of always presenting both sides, however, was also problematized by the teachers. When discussing the requirement (sometimes put forward as a critique of openly normative critical pedagogy representing marginalized perspectives) of presenting the opposite side to the one advocated in CAP modules, the social science teacher, for example, stated that it is “silly” to bring up something everybody already knows (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022). One issue that arose during the conversation was that most people have already internalized the anthropocentric idea of nonhuman animals as resources *for* humans to exploit (Pedersen, 2019b; Wallin, 2014). In contrast, the social science teacher acknowledged that the students might not be aware of the nature of the animal industry or how much money it generates. She further stated that students already encounter commercials from these industries, as well as animal products presented in the form of food in the grocery store. This slightly diverges from Pedersen’s (2010a) experiences that teachers aligned with animal rights stress the importance of “showing both sides,” although this idea appeared on other occasions in the data, as I have previously addressed. What was put forward in the workshop discussions also gives nuance to and calls into question the skepticism of pushing specific perspectives, which is prevalent within some parts of the field of ESE. Instead, the need for CAP to constitute a countermovement to animal, human, and environmental exploitation (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016) through the introduction of a CAS perspective was emphasized. Due to the marginalization of CAS perspectives, introducing counternarratives (cf. counterstorytelling, Kahn, 2011; and counterhegemony, Martinsson & Reimers, 2020) anchored in an animal standpoint was conceptualized as creating space for students to encounter new perspectives and form their own understandings rather than “forcing” specific perspectives onto them. This can, for instance, be seen in a quote by the social science teacher:

Creating space for, perhaps, a perspective and knowledge and what you may not have encountered that much before. And from this getting to think and have the chance to at least think like that or change one's opinion. (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022)

According to the teacher this is what democratic education is about.

One possible approach to introducing these counternarratives suggested by one of the teachers can be understood to put into practice the educational philosophy outlined by Biesta (2022). For example, the social science teacher stated: "I want to be a bit... Or, well, you can be a bit provocative, or a bit like 'this is happening right now', 'look at what is happening right now.'" (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). The teacher explained that she aims for students to think more deeply and achieve some sort of "awakening." When contemporary social issues "happening right now," such as the exploitation of nonhuman animals for food, are addressed through a perspective anchored in CAS, the current anthropocentric world view is potentially disrupted. The social science teacher could be understood as striving to create space for "subjectification," by "calling upon" students to respond through the introduction of current events (cf. Biesta, 2022). According to Biesta (2022, p. 53), subjectifying education is "*not* about asking students for their opinions or providing them with opportunities to express themselves 'without limits'" (emphasis in original). Instead, he considers it to be about making sure that what students seek to express can meet the world in a way that enables a "reality check" (Biesta, 2022, p. 53). The social science teacher's description of her teaching practices could be seen as an example of this idea being put into practice.

This resonates with Twine's (2014, p. 625) acknowledgement that it is often crucial to bring students into an uncomfortable space to enable them to reflect upon social norms and practices (cf. Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Martin, 2014; Martusewicz, 2014; Russell, 2019; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012; White, 2019; Winks, 2022). This is contrary to an understanding of learning in which teachers should transmit knowledge and are understood to do so most effectively through fostering "good feelings" (i.e., a certain form of normative happiness) in students (Mapes & Ascher, 2023, p. 233). In this sense, the social science teacher can be understood as advocating for a "killjoy pedagogy," or rather a "vegan killjoy pedagogy" (cf. Twine, 2014). Such a pedagogical approach acknowledges how "the happiness landscape often exacerbates oppressive hierarchies of a white supremacist, hetero-patriarchy" (Mapes & Ascher, 2023, pp. 233-4, drawing upon Ahmed, 2008) as well as speciesist hierarchies, and therefore rejects the demand

to keep everybody in the (class)room happy (cf. Twine, 2014). Hence, theoretical ideas (and practices) within the field of CAS and educational philosophy, as well as in the overlap between them, were to some extent already present in some of the teachers' practices or tested in practice during the project.

## The risky position of the vegan killjoy teacher

The Swedish curriculum states that education needs to be “factual” and “multifaceted” (“saklig” and “allsidig” in Swedish). It emphasizes that it should always be clear who stands behind values when they are being described (see Gy25, The Swedish National Agency of Education, 2025, p. 2), but it does not say anything about being neutral. Nevertheless, the idea that a teacher should be neutral seems rather prevalent in education in Sweden (cf. Sjögren, 2016), and appeared also in my empirical contexts. Sometimes this idea was being reproduced and at other times interrupted, but it seemed almost always present in some way, as is apparent from the previous analysis.

Nonetheless, some of the teachers have experience sharing their own position as a vegan, but doing so as a teacher does not come without risks. In this regard, one teacher in the workshop group connected to School 1 recalled an instance when he had just started working as a teacher in secondary school with students aged 13 to 16. He acknowledged receiving many questions about veganism and felt that this was hard to handle before he had more teaching experience. At one point, he told some students that meat can cause cancer, and one of the students got really upset. The student brought it up with the principal, stating that the teacher had tried to “influence the students.” Since then, the teacher has been more careful about bringing up the topic of veganism. He continued his reflections:

Of course, I say [I am vegan] if someone asks [...]. So, it is absolutely not anything I try to hide my opinions about. But it still feels like... well, it is not something I talk a lot about or try to, kind of, put forward my opinions on since [...] it turned out that way. (audio recording from workshop, June 13, 2022)

In this example, the teacher seemed to be placed in the “vegan killjoy” position in regard to the “happiness order” of eating meat when pointing to the negative health effects of such eating practices (cf. Twine, 2014). In Twine’s (2014) development of the “vegan killjoy,” he points out that the lived experiences of vegans reveal the meat norm, sometimes without them even saying anything (cf.

Stanescu, 2013). Conceptualizing the “feminist killjoy” (which Twine draws upon), Ahmed (2010, p. 1) suggests that the feminist disturbs the happiness inherent in the status quo by speaking up and, in doing so, “makes the world distorted.” The feminist is then often ascribed to be the cause of this distortion and, so, one *becomes* the distortion one causes (Ahmed, 2010, p. 1), and this goes for the vegan killjoy as well. In this teacher’s story, it is clear that the vegan killjoy position has consequences, which, according to this teacher, impacted his way of approaching veganism in school. Consequently, the idea(l) of the neutral teacher seems to constrain and discipline teachers (cf. Pedersen, 2010a; Weber et al., 2022).

The ideal of neutrality was also addressed in relation to different school subjects, which provide varying opportunities and challenges. For example, the natural science teacher in the workshop group related to School 1 argued that he could “get away” with more by “putting the facts forward somehow,” although he acknowledged it might be hard for some to hear these “facts” (audio recording from workshop, June 13, 2022). By presenting them with evidence, the teacher argued that it was a given that students would problematize the meat industry. Like the other teacher in this workshop group, the natural science teacher was vegan and explained that he thinks he has “gotten away” with being “carefully unneutral” (audio recording from workshop, June 13, 2022). Here, an understanding of natural science as putting forward “facts” appeared, and it is didactically interesting how the perceived neutrality of facts creates space for presenting things that might be experienced as difficult to hear. Addressed within natural science, it seems as though when some information central to CAP is brought up in the classroom it may be perceived as “facts” rather than an attempt to “moralize.” Hence, CAP may be perceived as more or less (openly) normative, depending on the subject in which the pedagogy is introduced and, of course, how it is introduced. The approach used by the natural science teacher can be seen as an example of aspects central to instrumental environmental education, which is mostly expert driven and emphasizes factual information (Wals, 2012). According to such an instrumental approach, “there is a strong sense of what is ‘right,’ what needs to be done, and a high degree of confidence and certainty in both the current knowledge base and the kind of behavior that is needed” (Wals, 2012, p. 633).

Moreover, *who* the students are, and what previous experiences they have with veganism and critical perspectives on the animal industry, may have an impact in terms of how transparent a teacher feels they are able to be about their opinions and experiences. Both the natural science teacher and the teacher who shared the story about being called out by a student were vegan but worked in two different

schools in the same city. Whereas many students of the natural science teacher were familiar with problematizing the meat industry and humans' use of other animals, this was not the case with most of the students in the other teacher's school. Nevertheless, both teachers considered it important to be transparent with their students about being vegan, but they also continuously reflected on how transparent they could be and what might cause resistance and reactions. This indicates a disciplining effect of students' (potential) reactions and those of colleagues, principals, and guardians. Being vegan makes one aware of the risk of being held responsible for the discomfort veganism may cause to people who consume meat (cf. Twine, 2014). The risk of being put in the position of being a "vegan killjoy" (Twine, 2014) impacts the space of action experienced by vegan teachers. In line with my previous analysis, this also seems to impact non-vegan teachers, as in the examples of the social science teacher and the natural science teacher in School 2.

With regard to the constraints presented by the idea(l) of the neutral teacher, and the associated risk of being put in the position of being the "vegan killjoy" (Twine, 2014) for stepping out of this ideal when teaching about human-animal relations, it is interesting to consider the possibilities that come with including other CAP educators in lessons. Involving an animal rights activist or activist-scholar in lessons offers teachers the possibility of introducing radical perspectives on sustainability without having to step out of the "neutral teacher position." Additionally, it allows teachers to more easily take on the role of co-learners engaged in reflection and exploration together with students, compared to when they facilitate lessons themselves and potentially "push" for the perspectives introduced. From conversations with students who participated in the workshop groups, it further appeared that the space of action might be greater for other CAP educators compared to teachers. In discussions with students, the "neutral teacher" was sometimes framed as the "professional teacher" (audio recording from workshop, December 7, 2022). Hence, once again, the idea(l) of the neutral teacher was reproduced. This idea, however, was also somewhat problematized, indicating that there exist possibilities for stepping out of this role while still being a "professional teacher," depending on how this is done, with students explicitly stating that a teacher should not try to "force" students or make anyone "feel guilty" (audio recording from workshop, March 23, 2023). Nonetheless, while most of the students expressed hesitation over teachers sharing their own opinions with students, they stated that it was unproblematic for an activist to speak their mind and be open regarding what they think. In conversations with students, this

seemed to be related to the fact that teachers have a closer relationship with students, meaning more is at stake if this relationship were to be damaged (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2023). The teachers involved also grade the students, and the power dynamic present between the students and teachers is more consequential than that between the students and the other CAP educators they encountered in this project. Nevertheless, the teachers in the project have experience stepping outside the role of the neutral teacher, as previously addressed. The social science teacher, for example, acknowledged that doing so can sometimes strengthen the relationship between teacher and students. In one example, she stated that it can, for instance, be important for students who face racism to know that their teacher did not vote for the Swedish Democrats (audio recording from workshop, June 17, 2022).

Drawing upon the experiences of the participants, the idea(l) of the neutral teacher seems strong and ever present, but it was not necessarily always an ideal for the teachers in this project. This ideal was further problematized, nuanced, and even called into question through the introduction of CAP.

## A society based on interspecies sustainability— utopia or dystopia?

The following section of this chapter focuses on what occurred when the openly normative character of CAP was applied in the upper secondary school classroom. It does so by exploring, in particular, what happens when an alternative vision for a society based on interspecies sustainability and justice enters education through CAP educators' narratives of their personal transitions to veganism and becoming engaged in animal rights. As such, it makes visible how the world-making project of the vegan killjoy (Twine, 2014; cf. Stanescu, 2013), along with its conceptions of nonhuman animals and society, is received and approached by students. In the process of considering what such a society would look like in practice, moments of rejection and opportunities for transformation occurred. In the analysis, I draw upon data from two lessons with a social science class in Year 2 and one lesson in religious education with a class in Year 2.

During the three introductory CAP lessons with the social science class in Year 2, facilitated by an animal rights activist and me and attended by the class's civics teacher, an alternative possible (future) society based on interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021) was mapped out by the activist. The alternative was one that the activist, others, and I already largely

practice in the present. During one of the lessons, the activist explained that the animal rights movement approaches nonhuman animals as conscious, sentient beings with their own interests and needs, and fights for the belief that “all animals, not just humans, should exist for their own sake” (video recording, November 22, 2022). She claimed that it is not justified to exploit or kill other animals, stating that the animal rights movement wants to change the system as a whole and work “towards a future in which there are no animal factories or slaughterhouses” and animal testing has been replaced with alternatives (video recording, November 22, 2022). The activist concluded that the animal rights movement seeks to achieve “a more ethical world for everyone living here.” In this moment, a potential opening appeared for nonhuman animals to enter the upper secondary classroom as subjects and for the current system of exploitation and killing of animals for human benefit, which is currently legitimized, to be disrupted.

One of the first questions asked by the students after being introduced to the basic ideas of animal rights and the activist’s personal journey was: “What happens if no one eats animals?” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). Upon the introduction of CAP, the students started to grapple with what a future in which humans do not eat animals would look like:

“I am thinking that animals will breed, and it will create imbalance in the environmental system. There will be problems in the whole world.” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022)

“Why should we enable the animals to kill us by letting them live? (methane gas)” (Post-it note from lesson, November 22, 2022)

“Even during the Stone Age, we ate meat. How would we know if there would be fewer or more animals; we have never experienced not eating animals?” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022).

Hence, the animal rights narrative was met with other narratives framing meat consumption as natural, normal, a tradition, and, even, by some students, necessary for the continuation of the human species. There seems to exist a limited repertoire of perspectives and ideas regarding what a vegan society would look like that circulate in society and resurfaced in the classroom. The existence of this limited repertoire is in line with some of the teachers’ thoughts at the start of the project in terms of a hegemonic, anthropocentric narrative that is familiar to the students. Some of these ideas, which resurfaced in the classroom, combine different pieces of information that normalize and legitimize humans’ continued exploitation of nonhuman animals for food. Twine (2014, p. 632) points out how such discursive

strategies of naturalization seek to “consolidate the normativity of meat culture.” According to Twine (2014, p. 632), such reproduction of the meanings of animal consumption “evoke[s] an essentialism of the human and place[s] meat culture as part of an imagined fixed natural order rather than a political, economic and social norm.”

It seems that humans and (some) animals are so intertwined that a society without animal consumption was almost unimaginable, or at least very uncertain, for many students. In line with the limited repertoire of perspectives on animal consumption that exist in society, pieces of information were here combined in ways that seemingly resulted in some students connecting a vegan society with a sort of dystopia in which (previously domesticated) animals overpopulate the planet with unknown but severe effects for ecosystems. This was done with reference to tradition and by acknowledging the uncertainty involved in breaking habits. When the activist stated that “all animals [...] should exist for their own sake” and that it is not justified to exploit or kill animals (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022), eating meat, along with the killing of animals that it inherently involves, was questioned as legitimate and inevitable. Thus, the meanings of animal consumption practices and vegan practices were reproduced in competitive tension with each other (cf. Twine, 2014) in the classroom. Due to existing dystopian narratives of societies without animal consumption that appeared in the classroom, the activist could be understood as a “vegan killjoy” (cf. Twine, 2014) who not only threatens the “happiness” of meat consumption but the survival of the entire human species in favor of nonhuman animals. Thus, the vegan utopia of a more “ethical world for everyone living here” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022), as presented by the activist, existed in tension with a sort of dystopia in which (previously) domesticated animals overpopulate the planet and destroy ecosystems.

This actualizes central discussions in ESE regarding different didactical approaches. For example, Östman et al. (2019, p. 48) argue for a pluralistic approach, making visible how knowledge creates pre-conditions for action, but they also stress the importance of considering value judgements in addressing sustainability problems and discussing possible solutions. The pluralistic approach is conflict based and strives to highlight different views, perspectives, and values when engaging with sustainability problems (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 75). According to the pluralistic approach, these different perspectives should be approached through “democratic discussion” or “deliberation,” in which facts, values, and emotions are engaged with through “rational discussion” (Öhman &

Östman, 2019, p. 75). This approach is understood as “open and does not aim for a preconceived version of the state of the world or an ideological standpoint” (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 75). When the previously discussed demand on teachers and education to always present “both sides” is combined with these ideas on pluralistic approaches, it presents specific challenges for the CAP educator. Firstly, different perspectives do exist, but anthropocentric perspectives, and their related values, seem more familiar to students. Accordingly, “one side” is already heavily represented while the “other side” (i.e., the animal rights or vegan perspective) is not represented to the same extent. Secondly, taken-for-granted assumptions, and even misconceptions, appeared again and again in the classroom. This implies that it is not simply a question of presenting different perspectives as they relate to different knowledges and values, since some knowledge is less widespread, some ideas are bound up with misconceptions, and some values are already reinforced in current anthropocentric societies. The implicit (or explicit) demand on teachers to present “both sides,” as acknowledged by the teachers in this project, or highlight different views, perspectives, and values, as suggested in previous research (e.g., Öhman & Östman, 2019), therefore carries a risk of reinforcing taken-for-granted assumptions, reproducing speciesism and anthropocentrism if not enough space is allocated to reflect on the assumptions that arise or to introduce counternarratives (cf. Kopnina, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Pedersen, 2019b). Developing tools to handle this risk in ESE is therefore crucial.

On some of these occasions in the classroom, educators and students together explored where certain assumptions came from, but when asked about preconceived ideas that surfaced in the classroom, students were often unsure as to where they originated. The demand to present “both sides” is complicated further by the time constraints of upper secondary school education, since it takes time to create space to critically reflect on assumptions rather than simply reinforcing them. In the project, narratives that naturalized animal production and eating meat were often handled by introducing counternarratives addressing humans’ systematic breeding of “production animals” and the large numbers of some species animals this results in, leading to animal suffering and environmental problems. These counternarratives were introduced in line with the teachers’ initial aim to increase the variety of perspectives available to students, and on several occasions students “tried out” these perspectives. The introduced counternarratives on breeding in animal production, for instance, were picked up by two students when discussions regarding what would happen if humans

stopped eating animals arose, once again, during the next lesson with the social science class in Year 2. During the discussions, these two students addressed the role of humans in breeding other animals, with one stating: “We are breeding them. We do not need to breed them.” (video recording, November 23, 2022). Hence, space was created to contextualize and question current exploitative human-animal relations inherent in animal production. In response, some students continued to emphasize an imagined dystopia in which previously domesticated animals would overpopulate the planet. This prompted the first student to reply, with an irritated tone in her voice and gesticulating with her hand: “It is already hard enough for the cow. Why should she be pregnant all the time?” (video recording, November 23, 2022). The repetition of exploitative human-animal relations was, in this moment, interrupted and called into question. This student could therefore be understood to temporarily occupy a “vegan killjoy position” (cf. Twine, 2014) when challenging the standard practices of animal breeding inherent in animal production. This “trying out” of an animal rights perspective could be understood as a gesture of solidarity in a discussion that was otherwise not focused on the nonhuman animals’ feelings and experiences. Hence, it introduces an animal standpoint through being a killjoy toward the hegemonic order conceptualizing cows solely as “meat” and “milk-machines.” While the argument was rejected by the other students engaged in the discussion, in the moment of utterance the cow appeared as an individual with feelings deserving consideration. According to some researchers and educators that emphasize pluralistic approaches in relation to animal production and ESE (e.g., Bruckner & Kowasch, 2019; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019), it is understood as problematic to emphasize and prioritize an animal-rights perspective in ESE over other (anthropocentric) perspectives. However, these experiences from the classroom suggest that this perspective is rarely present if not specifically introduced and emphasized.

Although an alternative (future) society based on interspecies sustainability was envisioned by the CAP educators and shared with students, it was acknowledged that it is not a given exactly what such a society would look like or how it would be achieved. During one of the lessons with the social science class, for instance, I addressed the fact that a food production system based on plant-based agriculture is far removed from today’s society, which might make it difficult to imagine transitioning from one to the other (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). I further acknowledged that such a transformation entails “hard questions” in terms of what the society would look like and what species would remain. Stating that these are “hard questions” acknowledges the wickedness of

sustainability problems and the complexity of transformation, inviting students to consider the complexity of a transformation to a vegan society. Wicked sustainability problems can be understood as pertaining to a situation in which “facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high and decisions urgent” (Block et al., 2019, p. 34). This, for instance, was brought to the fore by one of the students’ responses to my questions and reflections:

It might also create a lot of resistance and such, since there are many who cannot accept this. That you would take away animals altogether. Well that you would stop eating animals and such. So, it will become very problematic for everybody in the whole world, really. Even if many agree there should be such a sustainable transformation, it might not work in practice. (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022)

Here, the student referred to possible obstacles for enabling the transition envisioned in the CAP module, which speaks to the wickedness of the problem, especially in terms of disputing values but also in terms of priorities. Moreover, an imagined human collective that is unwilling to change appeared on this and many other occasions in the data. This human collective seemingly constrains what changes are considered achievable, especially on a societal level. It also puts certain constraints in place for the discussions in the classroom when working with CAP in ESE. Nevertheless, a transformation of the current agricultural system toward plant-based agriculture is framed in the CAP module as a future possibility that is in tension and competition with current practices of animal agriculture (cf. Twine, 2014). In this exchange between the activist, the students, and me, the road toward a society based on interspecies sustainability was framed as a wicked problem to which there are no easy answers, or at least multiple perspectives on what is possible, desirable, and achievable.

## Engaging with the meanings of veganism

Before entering the discussions on what a society where humans do not eat animals would look like, as described above, the activist shared her story of becoming vegan and engaging in animal rights activism. Hence, practices of veganism and animal rights activism were introduced to the students, creating space to deal with the meaning of veganism in the classroom through students curiously asking questions. Sharing her story, the activist told the students that, growing up, eating animals or visiting zoos and circuses was framed as normal, a given, or “just the way it was,” and that no one acknowledged that she had a choice over whether she

wanted to be part of this (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). She then told them the story of how she watched a documentary when she was the same age as the students about animal transportation within the meat industry, which, according to her, “turned her world upside down.” The activist shared how it brought up many questions for her: “it was probably because I was able to make the connection that what I have on my plate was once a conscious and sentient individual” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). She explained to the students that this was the trigger for her to become vegetarian and later vegan, although she acknowledged that it was an ongoing learning process and that it can be hard to practice what one preaches in today’s society. She also told them that she became involved in animal rights activism because “change in the world or society will not happen without action” and that animal rights activists are “ordinary people” engaged in trying to achieve change.<sup>16</sup> In rejecting food of animal origin, the vegan re-imagines the animal and recalls the relational violence inherent in animal consumption (Twine, 2014, p. 626; cf. Salih, 2014), as described by the activist. This can be explained in terms of a process of becoming “estranged from” familiar eating practices through a “process of affective alienation from normative associations between food consumption and happiness” (Twine, 2014, p. 632), which enables a “consciousness of” these practices (cf. Ahmed, 2010a) in terms of a “vegan killjoy consciousness” (cf. Twine, 2014). In sharing this experience and connecting it to the envisioning of a society free from animal exploitation, the activist shared a process of “vegan killjoy world-making” (Twine, 2014) with the students.

Here, the students encountered the narrative of a person learning about injustices, taking a stand, changing her everyday life choices, and getting involved in activism. According to Twine (2014, p. 627), listening to vegans talk about their experiences of adopting veganism locates the practice within the “ethical, political and relational complexity of everyday life,” which provides lived knowledge

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<sup>16</sup> Although the activist did acknowledge that this was an ongoing process for her and that it can be hard to “practice what one preaches,” and stated that animal rights activists are “ordinary people,” there is a risk that this story framed the animal rights activist as a “hero.” This is particularly interesting since both the activist and I are critical of a longstanding tendency within (some parts of) the animal rights movement to uplift individual activists as “super activists.” It is particularly common that (cis, white, straight) male activists engage in this dynamic, asking others to support their activism. Both the activist and I are concerned with the risk of discouraging a broad number of people from engaging in activism in their daily lives in favor of supporting these “super activists.” Hence, the activist’s remark that animal rights activists are just “ordinary people” can be seen in the light of this critique, while the story also risked feeding into the notion of the “super activist.”

different from the knowledge produced by engaging in abstract philosophical discussion. The activist sharing her story created space for discussion and exploration in the classroom, with the students asking questions about how long the activist and I have been vegans, what we eat, the health risks and benefits of vegan diets, and whether we miss eating meat. It also enabled the students to engage with vegan viewpoints on animal production. Some of the questions risked reproducing the idea of veganism being primarily related to diet and conceptualizing veganism in terms of “dietary restriction” (cf. Cole & Morgan, 2011), but they also enabled deeper reflection on the position and lives of “production animals.” For example, a student’s question about whether the activist and I drank milk created space to critically address dairy production (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). When I explained that we do not drink milk from cows, but rather plant-based milks such as oat milk and soy milk, the student asked what one was supposed to do with cow’s milk if it was not consumed by humans. Another student burst out: “Cows exist to be milked, right?” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). The notion of cows existing for human milk consumption circulates in society and was here reproduced in the classroom. Britzman (1995, p. 231) points out that some practices and meanings become “intelligible, valorized, or deemed as traditions while other practices become discounted, impossible or unimaginable.” In this moment in the classroom, milk consumption was put forward as a tradition and cows became intelligible as “milk machines” rather than subjects. Therefore, cows existing for anything other than milk production became unimaginable.

However, the students’ questions also enabled a different approach to cows when the civics teacher replied: “Do you know why the mother cow produces milk? It is for the calf! Her child should have it.” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). The student replied that he understood, while some students laughed, and then continued by asking: “Do they have children?” to which the teacher replied: “Yes, but they are not allowed to be with their kids.” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). Framed as “mothers,” cows entered the classroom, at least temporarily, as subjects. Stating that the calves “should” have the milk, moreover, framed cows’ milk as being not *for humans* but rather *for calves*. By acknowledging the relationship between cows and calves, conceptualizing it as the reason for cows to produce milk, the idea that cow’s milk is for humans, along with the happiness order of normative eating practices, including animal-derived products, was disturbed and called into question. This suggests an opening for considering the dairy industry from the perspective of cows, or from a “cow

standpoint.” In this sense, the “vegan killjoy” position (cf. Twine, 2014) creates space for seeing cows (and cow’s milk) differently. The (new) narratives articulated in relation to cows can be conceptualized as vegan counterstories (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). These stories reclaim the “euphemistic narratives” of the origin of food, using these as tools for critical exploration, and for making “animals heard and alternatives visible” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 54).

A similar process took place when one of the students connected the lives of nonhuman animals used in food production to practices of veganism by asking:

Do vegans not want to eat egg and milk due to how it is produced? Since they, for instance, put all the chickens together and it is bad for them? And then they also take the milk from the cows by [using] these [milking] machines. Well, they are tortured by it. (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022)

Using the word “tortured” suggests that these standard industry practices can be understood in terms of violence when considered from the perspective of a vegan, violence which is otherwise often concealed (Saari, 2021, pp. 64-5). Hence, reflecting upon the perspectives of vegans can enable the taking of an animal standpoint from which the practices of animal industries can be critically addressed. The poor conditions within animal factories were addressed in the classroom discussions as a primary reason for being vegan, but I also explained that it is important for me not to view eggs as food at all in order to change my relationship with other animals, hens in this case (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). This could be understood in terms of a process of recalling the relational violence (Twine, 2014, p. 626) inherent in eating egg as a human. Refusing the egg as an end-product and instead connecting it to oppressive human-animal relations was here suggested as a way to “know otherwise” (cf. Salih, 2014) and imagine (and practice) less oppressive relations with other animals in the present. This prompted one student to ask: “Aren’t eggs... They are just coming out of them. It does not hurt them?” (video recording from lesson, November 22, 2022). Once again, the notion of some animals as “production animals” was so prevalent in human society that the egg production of hens was regarded as natural, whereas in reality it is a result of intense breeding that has produced a hybrid species of hens exploited by the egg industry and capable of laying over 300 eggs a year compared to 10-15 for the red jungle fowl from which these hens originate (Romanov & Weigend, 2011, p. 1057). This hegemonic anthropocentric narrative that circulates in society, conceptualizes animal

production, in this case egg production, as an “imagined fixed natural order,” rather than placing such production in the context of political, economic, and social norms (cf. Twine, 2014, p. 632) that have had a huge impact on the bodies of hens. The idea that egg production does not hurt the hens is commonly repeated and correlates with the notion of the “happy oppressed,” which helps to mitigate the discomfoting affects that tends to occur for those holding power in a relationship if the suffering is made visible (Twine, 2014, p. 626). The notion of the “happy oppressed” reproduces the idea that nonhuman animals exploited in production are “happy” and treated “humanely” (Twine, 2014, p. 626; cf. Canavan, 2017). If the narratives of vegans are embraced, however, discomfort regarding the animal industry and the consumption of animal-derived food may arise. For this reason, narratives of veganism and animal rights often encounter other narratives that may potentially ease this discomfort. Such narratives are repeated in society in general and reappeared in the classroom discussions.

Drawing upon the experiences of taken-for-granted assumptions about human-animals that circulate in society and reappeared in the classroom repeatedly, five students in this class, who participated in the student workshop group of School 2, initiated the development of a lesson in which the class discussed such assumptions. When discussing the idea that humans have the right to exploit other animals, one of the students in the class exclaimed: “One has the right. One has the right, sure? One has the right.” (video recording from lesson, November 30, 2022). Like how such statements often appear in society in general, the student repeated the statement several times. This can be compared to Pedersen’s (2019a, pp. 67-8) experiences from Swedish upper secondary caretaker programs of how certain ideas, such as the idea that zoos preserve endangered species for future generations, work by force of repetition, providing comfort and functioning as a preventive response to potential critique. In my example, these ideas originated from the surrounding society, and potentially also previous schooling experiences, but were called into question rather than repeated in the CAP modules. Still, such moments of repetition occurred. It seemed as if humans’ right to exploit other animals needed to be confirmed and reassured. Hence, asymmetric human-animal relations were reproduced, but the repetition seemed not to be enough, and the statements often took the form of a question, such as in this example. Perhaps this almost compulsory repetition of humans’ right to exploit other animals also represents an opening? At least when framed as a question. One of the other students continued by asking: “Are humans not supposed to eat meat?” (video recording from lesson, November 30, 2022). Both

a justification and a question. What is crucial here is for education to provide space to critically engage with such questions, rather than repeating the original ideas and taken-for-granted assumptions.

The experiences from the first lessons suggest that there might be limited knowledge about what animal production means for the individuals exploited within food production. In line with the social science teacher's aim to introduce "what is happening right now" (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022) to create space for a "reality check" (cf. Biesta, 2022, p. 53), the second lesson with the social science class in Year 2 consisted of the animal rights activist providing information about Swedish animal production and sharing footage and experiences from undercover investigations. During this lesson, the students continued to engage with the meanings of veganism and animal rights and seemed interested in the thoughts and actions of the activist. For example, one of the students asked: "You do not support the murder of cows, chickens, and so on, right?" just as the activist started her lecture (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). When students considered how animal rights activists perceive the killing of cows, chickens, and other animals, here, it enabled approaching the often taken-for-granted killing of some animals for food as "murder." The word "murder" has different connotations to "killing" or "slaughter." The ways that nonhuman animals are socially constructed, which is intimately bound up with language and discourse, impacts how they are treated by human society (Stibbe, 2001, p. 4). However, Adams (1993, p. 202) acknowledges that this is also an ontological question, in that the prevailing ideology ontologizes nonhuman animals as consumable. This instance in the classroom suggests a "vegan killjoy perspective," since the estrangement of vegans from the normalization of killing other animals enables a consciousness of such practices (Twine, 2014), here, framing them as "murder." Within the context of the school, the killing of other animals for food is often framed as normal and therefore rendered familiar to those inhabiting the meat norm. Hence, it becomes tricky to address this killing, since "the ordinary is not experienced or felt at all" (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 179). Ahmed (2014b, p. 179) furthermore relates the "non-feeling of ordinariness" to the feeling of comfort, more the absence of discomfort than a feeling in itself. Discomfort might therefore be needed to address and possibly also resist the killing of animals for food, which has been rendered so familiar (cf. Martin, 2014; Martusewicz, 2014; Rowe, 2011; Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014; White, 2019). Hence, considering the slaughter (or murdering) of nonhuman animals for food from the perspective of an animal rights activist might create space to

approach this killing as something that is not normal or a given. The experience of vegans reveals the meat norm because it is estranged from normative eating practices (Twine, 2014). Hence, exploring the perspectives of vegans creates space in the classroom for addressing this norm, which happened, for instance, when a student asked the CAP educators what the reason was for showing videos from inside animal factories and slaughterhouses, resulting in discussions on meat consumption and possibilities for impacting the circumstances of nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses (this is explored in more depth in Chapter 7). Moreover, the personal narrative of the activist implied that being vegan is an option, framing veganism as a something worth trying.

## Resisting the vegan narrative

Not all students responded with curiosity, however, and some showed fierce resistance to a vegan narrative. During the third lesson in religious education with a class in Year 2, a discussion regarding animal production and consumption occurred. In the two previous lessons, in which the students engaged with CAP, they were introduced to CAP and discussed Christian and Islamic religious texts focused on human-animal relations. During the third lesson, the teacher addressed the practice of killing and eating nonhuman animals and how the religious texts the students had read relate to the animal industry of today. The students' own eating and consumption practices were addressed, and the teacher initiated a discussion regarding the conditions within animal factories. Some students and the teacher acknowledged that the conditions might be worse than people think, or at least than what the industry wants people to think (audio recording from lesson, November 25, 2022). However, another student suddenly interrupted the teacher when he was talking and said:

They live in a big house with a lot of chickens, but it is okay since they will be eaten anyway. So, it does not matter. I can only say I hate... No, one cannot say like that. But I hate vegetarians and stuff like that, since they are telling everyone to stop eating meat, since it is a pity about the animals. But they, well, those animals are created to be eaten. For fuck's sake, of course they should be eaten then. That is what I think. (video recording from lesson, November 25, 2022)

Similar to some other instances in the data when students were asked to reflect upon the circumstances of nonhuman animals in animal production and consider human food practices, this response resonates with an “animals-*for-us* position”

(Pedersen, 2021, p. 172, emphasis in original; cf. 2019b; Wallin, 2014), framing some species of nonhuman animals as meat-to-be. Some of the other students started laughing and the teacher replied that it is possible to think that way. A moment of turbulence occurred in the classroom before the teacher moved on with the lesson. This reaction could be understood as a response to how the openly normative pedagogy of CAP was carried out during this lesson, as well as a more direct response to the teacher since he previously shared his own position in relation to not eating other animals.

In the example above, the teacher did not tell the students what to do but shared his own position and asked them to reflect on the animals' situation. Nevertheless, this could be understood in terms of an implicit (and to some possibly explicit) questioning of the students' own omnivorous eating practices (cf. Twine, 2014). When such eating practices are reunited with their inherent violence through the presence of the vegan narrative, it may cause discomfort, as well as "defensive discursive practices" intended to consolidate animal consumption as the norm (Twine, 2014, pp. 628-9; cf. Darst & Dawson, 2019). These kinds of responses could appear as a result of the notion of nonhuman animals stressed in the CAP module. It could also be a response to experiencing being told what to do, something the student associated with vegetarians. For instance, Almiron (2019, p. 1107) acknowledges that morally framed arguments may cause resistance if they tell people to have different values to those they currently hold (such as refraining from eating meat). Drawing upon Taft (2016), Almiron (2019, p. 1107) relates this to people not liking when others "preach to them." In this instance in the classroom, vegetarians were held responsible for the (possibly) negative feelings associated with interrupting normative eating practices and disturbing the taken-for-granted idea that the killing of nonhuman animals for food is legitimate (cf. Twine, 2014). Simultaneously, the idea that (some) animals exist to be eaten was reinforced in accordance with the meat norm (cf. Twine, 2014). Although a critique of some values and behaviors that are "openly discriminatory and in conflict with mainstream social justice values" may be useful or even "mandatory," such critique may, nevertheless, fail in its intended outcomes when it comes to vegan advocates (Almiron, 2019, p. 1107, drawing upon Freeman, 2014). In this moment, the uncontrollability of education (Biesta, 1998; Britzman, 2003) becomes apparent, since CAP here seemed to reinforce rather than interrupt the meat norm through the vegan narrative being met with forceful resistance (cf. Bohm et al., 2015; Lindgren, 2020).

## Conclusion

Experiences from this project make visible how anthropocentric perspectives are prevalent in education and familiar to students, which ultimately challenges the need to represent these perspectives in ESE and instead calls for introducing non-anthropocentric and non-speciesist perspectives that students may not otherwise encounter. This came to the fore when the participating teachers shared their experiences. Anthropocentric narratives that circulate in society, furthermore, resurfaced in the classroom on several occasions, such as when some animals were conceptualized solely as “production animals,” often in line with the notion of the “happy oppressed” (Twine, 2014). The introduction of personal narratives of adopting veganism and engaging in activism interrupts these anthropocentric narratives and contributes to ESE by allowing students to engage with vegan knowledge and perspectives. It enabled some students to explore the perspectives of vegans and critically address human-animal relations. A question that might be raised, especially in relation to this approach, is whether the aim is to make the students like the CAP educators (like “we are”) or enable for them to become who they want to be. Although CAP as a pedagogy and CAP educators strive for a society of interspecies sustainability, with which some ways of living, such as veganism, are more compatible, this pedagogy entails an awareness about the ethical implications that comes with the power position of the educator, as well as ramifications of living in a society with a prevailing meat norm. Twine (2014) suggests vegan “killjoying” as a continual process and crucial for prefigurative politics; in this study, such an approach made alternative human-animal relations appear within reach and allowed some students to explore them. Thus, a normative pedagogical approach may in this way enable rather than disable certain ways of thinking, being, and acting by introducing veganism to existing anthropocentric ways of living.

What further became evident was that discussing (and teaching for) animal rights is more often understood in terms of “moralizing” or “bias” compared to advocating for human rights (cf. Pedersen, 2010a; Weber et al., 2022), or at least some forms of human rights. Although participants pointed to nuances and complexities in terms of questions relating to “moralizing,” presenting “both sides,” being “professional,” or being “neutral,” and critically addressed what is perceived as “biased,” certain norms and idea(l)s in relation to the role of the teacher still impacted possibilities for teaching CAP. Insights from workshop discussions suggest that the idea(l) of the neutral teacher is particularly constraining

and disciplining for teachers (cf. Fien, 1994; Pedersen, 2010a; Sjögren, 2016; Weber et al., 2022). Still, there seemed to be room to be “carefully unneutral,” to use the words of one of the teachers, although the associated potential and risk varied between subjects, student groups, teachers, and schools (cf. Miller, 2015).

In line with its normative character, CAP (implicitly or explicitly) calls upon those present to do something about current forms of animal exploitation. This poses certain challenges for both educators and students. It means entering possibly uncomfortable situations, even provoking them, with the inherent risk of being placed in the position of the “vegan killjoy” (cf. Twine, 2014) because of what one decides to present or withhold. The stereotype of the vegan killjoy was not only ascribed to individuals but sometimes it seemed to the pedagogy itself, turning it into a “vegan killjoy pedagogy” (cf. Twine, 2014). This pedagogy resonated differently with different students. Sometimes, it fostered curiosity and offered a starting point for critically addressing current human-animal relations by exploring the vegan killjoy position, and at other times students (sometimes fiercely) rejected the position and its related perspectives. Resistance and critique were especially common when students felt that they were being told what to do by others, such as vegans or vegetarians in general and the CAP educators in particular (cf. Almiron, 2019; Lindgren, 2020).

Both teachers and students seemed to be aware that one does not leave the safe space of presumed objectivity and neutrality behind without risk, although some found it important to do so. Making oneself visible as an educator seemingly opens oneself up to be questioned by students, other teachers, guardians, and leadership. This threat is always present for the “vegan killjoy educator,” who risks being accused of the discomfort they may cause by critically addressing animal exploitation or consumption of animal-derived food. Hence, I consider a certain level of boldness to be needed to teach CAP: boldness to accept the risk of discomfort and turbulence that CAP may cause in classrooms and schools, to deal with one’s own entangled relationship to other animals together with students, and to handle the feelings that may arise when teaching a topic with which one is personally engaged (cf. Tallberg et al., 2022).

## Chapter 6: Addressing animal production

Previous research suggests focusing on human food systems to provide a starting point for critical pedagogy in ESE and calls, especially, for increased attention in education regarding animal production (Dolby, 2020; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Lloro-Bidart & Sidwell, 2020; Pedersen, 2019b; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021). The approaches within ESE differ, however, and not all include both humans and (all) other animals in their considerations. For instance, Darst and Dawson (2019) acknowledge how some approaches only address how the animal industry impacts the climate and environment, including “wild” species, human health, and social injustices affecting humans. Other approaches, on the other hand, such as those anchored in animal rights, also address the suffering of so-called “farmed animals” as an important issue in and of itself (Darst & Dawson, 2019). In line with interspecies sustainability, these approaches consider and understand “farmed animals” as direct victims of climate change rather than as causes (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016). However, Darst and Dawson (2019) consider specific challenges, such as the risks of denial, tension, and unwillingness of students to engage in discussion, to arise when addressing meat consumption through an approach anchored in animal rights. They therefore suggest addressing meat consumption indirectly to avoid such responses. In contrast, Lloro-Bidart (2019, p. 55) maps out “interspecies food justice pedagogies,” urging critical food studies education to use intersectional approaches that include nonhuman animals and address animal oppression (cf. Russell, 2019).

In this chapter, I explore what happens when attempts to approach animal production through intersectional perspectives, starting from the notion of “interspecies sustainability” (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021) and “interspecies food justice” (Lloro-Bidart, 2019), are enacted in the classroom. As in the previous chapter, I draw upon data from workshop discussions with teachers, animal rights activists, and CAS scholars, as well as separate student workshops. I also draw upon lessons carried out within the

subjects of natural science and Swedish as a second language, as well as some from social science, addressing what didactical conditions different subjects provide for engaging with interspecies sustainability. The empirical examples consist of attempts to bring up aspects of “interspecies food justice pedagogies,” partly informed by intersectionality (cf. Lloro-Bidart, 2019), as well as address animal production through interspecies sustainability in upper secondary classrooms. They also include instances when intersectional dimensions related to CAP are brought up by participants, addressing what participants’ situatedness enables (or disables). As such, these learning activities do not necessarily fully embrace an intersectional approach, but the lessons are inspired by an intersectional perspective in terms of what is brought up and how. Moreover, I do not use intersectionality as a tool of analysis, although I highlight intersectional dimensions in the empirical contexts. Rather, I explore possibilities and challenges of using intersectionality in didactical practices when addressing animal production in ESE.

### “Vegetarians are rich influencers”—engaging with class dimensions

When engaging with the CAP modules, concern for animal rights was sometimes framed in opposition to concern for human rights. This could, for instance, be seen in a question by a student written on a Post-it note during the first lesson of the CAP module with the natural science class in Year three, when the educators collected questions, reflections, and suggestions from students.<sup>17</sup> The note read:

Shouldn't one know about and fight for human rights around the world before starting to fight for animal rights? Several million [humans] die from famine, conflicts, etc. Shouldn't one fight for their rights? What is to be prioritized, really? (Post-it note written during lesson, November 11, 2022)

Similar statements were also made in other classes in this school, and I have encountered different versions of this idea multiple times while engaging in advocacy for nonhuman animals. Hence, this notion seems to circulate in society and resurface in the classrooms. Statements like this might come to the fore as a form of “whataboutism,” delegitimizing certain struggles by framing other

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<sup>17</sup> Using this strategy was one way to create space for all students to impact the content and structures of the lessons during the CAP modules, rather than only those students participating in workshops. It was also helpful for trying to grasp where the students were in relation to CAP at the outset of the modules.

struggles as more important or dismissing engagement with a specific question if it does not deal with certain other issues, even if those making the criticism are not engaged in the issues highlighted. In the case of animal rights, such notions risk reproducing anthropocentrism and speciesism through issues connected to human rights being framed as more important. However, such statements may also surface out of a genuine frustration and critique of a lack of attention on certain issues related to humans. The repetition of different versions of such statements in the classrooms suggests that many students found it difficult to (at least initially) make connections between animal oppression and human oppression. This created challenges for CAP and specific conditions for didactically engaging with intersectionality in the classroom, since the connections between oppressions of nonhuman animals and humans did not seem obvious to the students from the start.

The three first CAP lessons with the two social science classes and one natural science class in School 2 conceptualized animal rights as a struggle among other social justice struggles, and the third lesson focused on the centrality of human-animal relations for sustainability, with a particular focus on animal production. The lesson included a lecture by me, interactive discussions, brainstorming sessions, and time for questions and reflections. One aim of the lesson was to enable students and educators to address and build upon connections between different struggles concerning both humans and nonhuman animals and to go beyond an understanding of a focus on certain issues detracting from others (as put forward on the Post-it note). The lecture addressed how environmental problems and climate change relate to animal production and social injustices connected to the meat industry and how responsibility for and the effects of climate change are unevenly distributed, with vulnerable groups of humans and nonhumans especially impacted, despite privileged groups of humans often having the greatest impact. Starting from an intersectional approach, the lecture also addressed how linking some groups of humans to nonhuman animals is a method for justifying oppression, building upon the already presumed inferiority of nonhuman animals. In this way, the link between the oppression of humans and nonhuman animals was addressed.

However, during discussions, after these aspects were introduced, the connection between the oppression of humans and nonhuman animals was not picked up by the students who shared their thoughts or asked questions. Instead, they focused on aspects such as veganism and environmental issues. Meat consumption, in particular, was addressed, which is in line with the experiences of

Russell (2019), a theme to which I will return. It may have been the first time many of the students encountered such reasoning, and for some it may have been introduced in an overly academic manner. Additionally, many students in the project preferred working more interactively to listening to lectures. Hence, providing space for students to explore the issues themselves rather than telling them “how it is” in a lecture could have enabled different responses. In this regard, I might have failed to start where the students were and instead begun where I wished the students would be (cf. Russell, 2019, p. 38).

Some of the intersectional dimensions of human-animal relations addressed during the lecture, however, were picked up as the lessons continued, as well as within workshop discussions and student assignments. Although most students did not pick up on the intersectional dimensions of animal production I introduced, they still engaged with intersectional aspects, particularly class dimensions. At the end of the lesson in which the natural science students carried out their final assignment of the CAP module, giving presentations on different species that humans exploit for food, one of the students stated that all vegetarians are “rich influencers” (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). A similar statement was also made by one of the students in the social science class in Year 2 during a workshop discussion with two other students and me. She stated that:

It is so easy for those with a lot of money to be vegan. Well, of course, there are many YouTubers and such that are vegan. It is easy for them to buy stuff like that. They can buy a more expensive yoghurt but how should we be able to if we only kind of... (audio recording from workshop, November 30, 2022)

The other students in the workshop agreed that economic factors can make vegan food inaccessible. Here, vegetarianism and veganism were framed as being more within reach for some people than others, pointing to a class dimension. Given that class is multifaceted and relates to several aspects of people’s lives, the first utterance does not necessarily need to be connected to economic considerations. However, they may impact the kinds of food available to different groups of people due to cost, as highlighted in the second statement. Certain ways of living can furthermore be connected to different class affiliations reproducing fixed ideas about class relations, since class is broader than simply the material resources available to a person and can be understood in terms of an ongoing process through which economic inequality is constructed as a natural phenomenon (Martinsson & Reimers, 2020, pp. 19-20). The statement that vegetarians are “rich influencers” can be seen to connect vegetarianism or veganism to a specific

lifestyle. This idea echoes critiques against (and within) some parts of the animal liberation movement; focusing on and framing veganism in relation to new vegan products reduces nonhuman animal liberation to a brand, one that is being coopted by capitalism, depoliticizing the movement (Boscardin, 2017, p. 270). Students' notions of who vegetarians and vegans are can be instructive since they highlight uneven access to plant-based food and reflect problems in how vegans/vegetarians and veganism/vegetarianism are portrayed, as well as the lack of representation in terms of vegans and vegetarians of color and/or working-class vegans and vegetarians, which can be the case among influencers, companies, and some parts of the animal liberation movement (cf. Harper, 2012). Robinson (2020), for example, problematizes how veganism is often constructed as "white," and a product of class privilege, which she considers to create barriers for Indigenous people to embrace (Indigenous) veganism, since it is framed in opposition to Indigenous cultures. A similar problem can be identified in relation to Black people and persons of color in general.

The statement about vegetarians being "rich influencers" was made in a passing manner that did not offer much space for direct engagement in class. Since this comment was made during the fourth CAP lesson with the natural science class, it seems that the previous three lessons introducing CAP, addressing Swedish animal production, and engaging with human-animal relations and sustainability issues, as well as preparations for the oral assignment, did not introduce veganism as a question of relevance to all students in the classroom, or at least not as something within reach of all students. This resonates with a statement by the natural science teacher. During a workshop, he stated that engagement with some issues, like animal rights and sustainability, might feel like a "luxury" to the students since many struggle with challenging home conditions, poor mental health, and a precarious position in society (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). During workshop discussions, the teacher said that "many of us are so very privileged compared to our students" and that several students have struggles that are more relevant to them (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). This echoes some statements by students in this school. One student, for example, stated that they did not know much about the conditions in animal factories due to a lack of time, arguing that "the last thing one thinks about is how meat is being produced" (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Another student explained that they knew about animals being treated poorly from reading news articles and that most people probably know to some degree "how they are being slaughtered and how they are becoming food, but the conditions and such one

does not know” but they do not put much weight on it because “it does not concern them” (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). When continuing the discussions about why humans do not know very much about conditions for animals, one student replied: “because we just care about ourselves” (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Here, an idea of humans as individualistic and selfish appeared in the framing of conditions in animal factories as issues beyond their concern. The teachers in this school addressed an overall problem with individualism among students, stating that their students are not very engaged in activism and often arrive at very individualistic stances, much in line with the rest of society, when discussing collective solutions and solidarity during their lessons (audio recording from workshop, May 23, 2022). This further resonates with the idea of the imagined human collective that is unwilling to change, here also framed as selfish, that appeared throughout my empirical contexts.

These discussions from workshops and classrooms indicate the importance of considering differences in the situatedness of students and educators in terms of how it may impact the CAP practices educators choose to introduce to students and how these are in turn received by the students. The risk of certain questions being introduced from a white middleclass perspective deserves particular attention. This can be connected to the events in the classroom more concretely in that both the animal rights activist and I embodied this norm. It is, of course, not only a matter of representation, in terms of *who* introduces the topic in the classroom, but also, or perhaps primarily, about *how* it is introduced. Specific ways of introducing issues related to CAP might render them inaccessible or not of concern (which seemed to have been the case in some of the previous examples from the lessons). Throughout the project, connections between veganism and privileged ways of living were made by students, as previously addressed, and for at least some of these students this critique seemed to also extend to the CAP modules in this project. The importance of considering how different students and student groups are situated in relation to the issues addressed in CAP (cf. Russell, 2019; White, 2019), as well as the potential of including students<sup>18</sup> when

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<sup>18</sup> The risk of some areas not feeling important and relevant in relation to the students’ everyday lives was one of the reasons for engaging students in workshops in which CAP was discussed and developed. Doing so, the other participants and I could learn from and with the students, and some activities they considered important and interesting (such as reasoning exercises and addressing taken-for-granted assumptions on veganism, nonhuman animals, and human-animal relations) were developed in collaboration with these students.

developing CAP lessons (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019; Saari, 2025), is highlighted in these experiences.

Although veganism was sometimes framed as not of concern for everyone during lessons, it was, nevertheless, seen as an important issue for many students who engaged in more depth with questions of accessibility with regard to veganism, vegan food, and meat in student workshop discussions. During discussions in the student workshop group connected to School 2, with five students from the social science class in Year 2, one of the students said that she did not understand why vegan food is so expensive compared to non-vegan alternatives (audio recording during workshop, November 30, 2022). The students in the workshop group sounded rather upset when they asked me if I knew why this was the case. This question created space in the workshop group to address agricultural subsidies provided by the European Union, and I explained that the dairy industry is a major recipient of these subsidies, making some dairy products cheaper than plant-based alternatives. This provided an opportunity to address why the current situation exists by making visible structural constraints that make it a challenge to “even make individual ‘domestic’ changes, let alone work toward more systemic change” (Russell, 2019, p. 48; cf. Breunig, Murtell, Russell & Howard, 2014; Lloro-Bidart, 2018a). During the discussions, one of the students posed the question: “Can you not give contributions to those producing soygurt and oatgurt and such?” (audio recording during workshop, November 30, 2022). By doing so she pointed to possibilities for increasing access to vegan food. This led into discussions on what forms of agriculture should be subsidized, raising the question of whether companies with a significant negative impact on the environment and nonhuman animals exploited in factory farming should receive such subsidies. Thus, this provided an opportunity to address political issues in terms of how economic steering mechanisms can be used to enable or disable access to plant-based food, enabling consideration of alternatives. It also made visible how economic barriers to veganism are contextual with regard to class barriers related to subsidized meat and dairy, which is common in Europe and North America (cf. Robinson, 2020, p. 107). Nevertheless, class does create barriers in terms of access to (some) vegan products in the Swedish context, and these experiences from the classroom indicate the importance of engaging with veganism in CAP in a manner that is sensitive to different cultural and geographical contexts so as to not frame veganism as a “lifestyle phenomenon of the white-middleclass” (Spannring & Grušnovik, 2018, pp. 1195-6; cf. Harper, 2012; Stapleton, 2015). Considering these experiences from the student workshop

discussions, addressing EU agricultural subsidies during lessons and the impact of the availability of vegan food offers an opportunity for working in more depth with intersectional approaches in CAP.

## The significance of place

The impact of place, regarding access to different forms of food and the impacts of and responsibility for climate change, and its potential to foster engagement among students, were emphasized in discussions with both students and teachers. The potential for engaging with questions of human-animal relations and religion also appeared throughout my empirical contexts, as were possibilities for addressing a “critical pedagogy of place” (Gruenewald1, 2008).

Differences between different geographical contexts, for example, was addressed by one student in workshop discussions:

Because in many counties that are somewhat poor, one does not have access to meat, since it is often expensive. So, many people become vegan without wanting to become vegan. They might not even care about animals, but they are just vegans because they do not have access to meat. (audio recording from workshop, November 30, 2022)

Two other students agreed, and one stated that she knew some people in a situation like that due to war. The students continued to give examples in relation to countries they or their parents have previously been living. The impact of place was further emphasized when a student stated that “where one is located affects a lot,” and one student highlighted the uneven burden of climate change in saying “it is rich countries that consume more meat, but it is poor countries being affected by this” (audio recording from workshop, November 30, 2022). Here, the students addressed power inequalities and different interests and could be understood to start embracing and practicing a “critical pedagogy of place” (Gruenewald1, 2008). Crucial to a critical pedagogy of place is evaluating “the appropriateness of our relationships to each other, and to our socio-ecological places” (Gruenewald1, 2008, p. 314). The students in the workshop group considered the impact of actions in one socio-ecological place on another and, as previously addressed, the different opportunities available to people depending on their socio-economic position, even within the same geographical place. In this way the students engaged with intersectional dimensions.

Similar aspects were addressed during a previous lesson on human-animal relations and sustainability. During the lesson, the tendency to deem all humans as

equally responsible for climate change and environmental problems was critically addressed during the lecture with reference to some humans impacting the environment and other species more than others. The uneven burden of climate change and access to healthy (plant-based) food, as well as the issues of food security and climate refugees, were also addressed during the lesson, in addition to the problems associated with high consumption in richer Nordic countries. The student workshop offered space for engaging in greater depth with these issues. These discussions, as well as those addressing differences in resources and access to food, even within Sweden, made visible the nuances and complexities between and within countries, enabling critical considerations of place. Addressing differences in, and sometimes incompatible, interest, power inequality, vested economic interest, and resistance to changes is crucial for effective climate change education (Boström et al., 2018, in Tannock, 2021, p. 229).

Furthermore, the students' situatedness highlights specific possibilities for engaging with a critical pedagogy of place, given that they live in one of the "rich countries" that contribute significantly to environmental problems and climate change, primarily impacting "poor countries." Several of the students also define some of these "poor countries" as their "homelands." According to Gruenewald<sup>1</sup> (2008, p. 317), opportunities to include critical social and ecological concerns into one's understanding of place, and the role of place in education, are enabled through an acknowledgement of experiences having geographical contexts. Here, the students' experiences, situatedness, and concerns enabled this type of understanding. The experience of having lived in a country other than Sweden, or having parents originating from another country while now living in Sweden, created a specific positionality from which to engage with multiple locations or places. Both the students participating in the workshop group and their civics teacher acknowledged the potential of addressing human-animal relations with regard to the countries the students themselves or their parents had previously lived in to foster engagement. Similarly, the students in the workshop group in School 1 enthusiastically engaged in conversations regarding the role and treatment of nonhuman animals in countries in which the students themselves or their parents had previously lived. Several of the students brought up memories of encounters with nonhuman animals from when they had visited these places, as well as accounts of general human-animal relations (or specific ones between human relatives and other animals) in these geographical contexts.

Thus, possibilities for a "critical pedagogy of place" (Gruenewald<sup>1</sup>, 2008) and engaging with intersectional perspectives appeared in these encounters between

CAP, students, and educators. Engaging with place could be one way to follow the suggestion by Russell (2019, p. 38) that “educators need to start where students *are*, not where we might wish them to be” (emphasis in original). One possibility for doing so is by starting from the students’ everyday lives, and the importance of doing so was also brought up by students in my project. For instance, one of the students in the workshop group in School 2 stated that:

If it is something that no one has a connection to whatsoever and never encountered in their everyday lives, then it becomes a bit uninteresting. It becomes hard to understand, kind of. (audio recording from workshop, November 30, 2022)

This indicates the importance of starting from the students’ situated experiences. According to Gruenewald1 (2008, p. 315), educators who aim to make connections between place, the self, and community must “confront the ways that power works through places to limit the possibilities for human and non-human others,” drawing the conclusion that place-based pedagogy needs to be critical. Given the interest shown by several students in my project and confirmed by a teacher, “place” appears as an important aspect when engaging with CAP. Experiences from the workshops and lessons point to possibilities for engaging with a “critical pedagogy of place” (Gruenewald1, 2008) in the context of Swedish urban upper secondary schools with students that have connections to a multitude of countries.

“Place” does not only refer to geographical locations in terms of different countries but also refers to different cultural norms. In several cases, the students’ situatedness presented opportunities for starting from the students’ everyday lives by addressing religion and human-animal relations. In all classes participating in the project, religion was frequently mentioned and presented in the context of current human-animal relations, particularly in relation to Islam and Christianity. For those students who identified as Muslim, the treatment of nonhuman animals in animal factories, including slaughterhouses, as well as their own eating practices, was often framed in relation to their religion. For instance, one student brought up religion during a discussion at the end of the natural science lesson focusing on animal factories and sustainability issues. Starting from a religious standpoint, she stated that she is Muslim and her religion says: “it is okay to kill animals in order to eat meat” (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). This student argued that she does not need to be vegan because meat consumption is accepted in Islam, but she then stated, if one starts from “the rights of the animals” instead

of religion, then “it is really a shame” both how the animals live and how they are slaughtered in the factories (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). This created space in the classroom for addressing how the killing of nonhuman animals for food is perceived differently depending upon the perspective one starts from. Notions of human-animal relations connected to religion, Islam in this case, were, however, also problematized in the classroom, pointing to nuances and differences. For example, I brought up the varying understandings within Islam, as well as different interpretations of scripture, with regard to so-called “production animals” and their treatment, as well as humans’ relationship to nature. Furthermore, the student added: “I do not think there is anywhere in our religion [Islam] saying that we should be doing that, and making them live terrible lives” (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Similar reflections were made regarding Christianity. For instance, one student addressed how some veins of Christianity embrace veganism universally or during specific time periods, relating this to his own religious and eating practices. Occasionally, practices of animal consumption and the treatment of nonhuman animals in production were also related to ideas about Buddhism, such as connections between Buddhism and vegetarianism, as well as the role of cows within the religion. However, none of the students identified as Buddhist themselves, and these discussions concerned ideas about Buddhist religion and practices rather than the students’ own experiences of practicing Buddhism.

Religion is often seen as an “ultimate arbiter of ethical code, including the case of animal killing” (Leroy & Praet, 2017, p. 80, drawing upon Fiddes, 1991), but religious practices are transformative rather than static (Leroy & Praet, 2017, p. 80, drawing upon Stephenson, 2015). Throughout the CAP modules, connections drawn between religion and human-animal relations, as well as nonhuman animals’ place in society, presented both challenges and opportunities in the classroom but almost always sparked engagement among the students. Intersecting aspects of human-animal relations, the role of nonhuman animals, and religion were engaged with to varying degrees in the classroom as they were brought up by students. In relation to the student groups participating in the project, religion offered a point of connection to several students’ everyday lives. This suggests another possibility for introducing CAP, in that human-animal relations and religion constituted an engaging starting point for many students, especially those with lived experiences of practicing religion.

## Animal production as a wicked sustainability problem—is veganism the solution?

In discussions with the natural science class, during the lesson on human-animal relations and sustainability, veganism was brought up for discussion in relation to both environmental and social sustainability. Whether veganism was framed as a “solution” or not seemed to change with the “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). Throughout the discussions, there was a constantly shifting balance in terms of providing room for complexity and engaging with multiple ways of taking action versus a demand for a “100 percent solution.” For instance, one student addressed that various fruits, including avocados, demand a large amount of natural resources and, similar to animal products, are damaging for the environment. “If one thinks that way, one should not eat anything, really, since everything needs to be [...] farmed,” the student continued (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Later in the discussion, the student stated that it would not solve the environmental problem if everyone became vegan since natural resources would still be used, therefore it is not a “100 percent solution,” the student concluded. This could be seen as a version of the “all or nothing” reactions that Darst and Dawson (2019, p. 220) have encountered in relation to addressing meat consumption in education. They acknowledge that it is psychologically more comfortable dismissing vegetarianism and framing meat consumption as an “all or nothing” issue instead of confronting the underlying ethical dilemma inherent in the question (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 220). This resonates with an instance in the classroom in which veganism was framed as not being an option if it does not solve all environmental problems. Thus, rendering the ethical dimensions of veganism unnecessary to engage with in their complexity, ruling out veganism as an option in this moment in the classroom.

However, in contrast to the experiences of Darst and Dawson (2019), this was not the response of the “typical student” in my project. Instead, my empirical material included greater complexity and nuance. For example, the validity of not engaging with veganism was challenged when another student stated that while veganism might not be a solution to all environmental problems, animals would not be harmed if people became vegan (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). This is the “main aim” now, the student stated. Hence, whether veganism was framed as a “solution” or not shifted depending on whether the focus was on environmental problems or the wellbeing of nonhuman animals. When animal production was addressed from an animal standpoint, as emphasized

in CAP, the perspectives of nonhuman animals and the need to limit harm appeared to be central. In this way, an animal standpoint created space for practicing interspecies sustainability through addressing the suffering of nonhuman animals used in food production and emphasizing the importance of ending this harm (cf. Bergmann, 2019; Probyn-Rapsey, et al., 2016; Saari, 2021). This contradicts the experiences of Darst and Dawson (2019, p. 224), who state that if the “problem” is defined in terms of animal exploitation and suffering, communication becomes more difficult due to the irreconcilable conflict between underlying “nonnegotiable values.” In the discussions in the natural science classroom, while moments of strained communication did occur, some students also explored a CAS perspective in relation to the issues addressed in the same discussions. When engaging with animal production from a CAS perspective, the problem was defined in terms of animal suffering, which enabled rather than shut down discussions. This resonates with previous research addressed by Almiron (2019, p. 1110), who states that “the environment is not a major motivator for change,” while animal suffering often is claimed to be more motivational (cf. Braunsberger & Flamm, 2019). This engagement with veganism can be seen as an example of “vegan education,” and in this instance in the classroom veganism was discussed (and framed) as a response to societal problems (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023, p. 7).

The relationship between sustainability and human food systems can be understood in terms of a “wicked problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973), in that wicked problems are unique and do not have an “enumerable set of potential solutions” (McCrory & Reiss, 2023, p. 86). In this regard, the demand for veganism to provide a “100 percent solution” to environmental problems can be understood in terms of one of the impossible premises of the classroom, in that hardly anything can be said to constitute a “100 percent solution” to the problem of sustainability given its wickedness. The demand of a “100 percent solution” to environmental problems from students engaging with different courses of action presents a challenge for CAP, and ESE overall, in that it may hinder an exploration of different (possibly contradictory) courses of action in relation to environmental problems, climate change, and social injustice. However, there were also moments in which there was potential for engaging with complexity in the classroom. One such example occurred at the end of the natural science lesson when a student

used the game of Jenga<sup>19</sup> as a metaphor for environmental issues and meat consumption:

If you stop eating meat you will pull one and it will kind of create imbalance. [...] You will not solve the whole problem but still a little, a little part of it. There will never be a solution for everything. (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022)

On the one hand, a potential imbalance in terms of reduced meat consumption was highlighted, which resonates with a number of utterances by students in this project in addressing uncertain futures and imagined risks of imbalance if current eating practices were to change (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, ceasing to eat meat was also framed here as part of a solution, without the need for it to constitute a complete solution. Hence, starting from the idea that “there will never be a solution for everything,” to use the words of the student, could enable space to engage with a multitude of incomplete possibilities and strategies for enabling change toward interspecies sustainability and justice. Thanks to the existence of diverse ideas and experiences among both students and educators, that sometimes come into tension with each other, space is created for complexity when engaging with animal production as a sustainability problem in the classroom.

## Complicating the difference versus sameness approach

An understanding of humans as either different from or similar to other animals appeared on several occasions in my empirical data, and both ideas seemed to enable as well as disable critical reflections on human-animal relations. This idea was discussed, for example, during a workshop with two teachers, one activist, and one scholar when I gave a presentation on possible theoretical starting points for CAP to share knowledge and create a point of departure for discussion. Doing so, I stated (with reference to Wallin, 2014) that anthropocentrism inherent in (Western) education makes any notion of nonhuman animals as anything other than resources for human exploitation impossible within education. The natural science teacher in School 2 did not agree that it was “impossible” (audio recording from workshop, August 19, 2022). On the contrary, he considered biology

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<sup>19</sup> Jenga is a game in which players take turns to remove blocks from a tower of 54 blocks. Each block removed is placed on top of the tower. This creates an increasingly unstable structure, and the game ends when the tower falls over.

education to make visible that humans are animals too and stated that: “The basis in terms of natural science is that we are all equal in some sense” (audio recording from workshop, August 19, 2022). Here, natural science was framed as possibly enabling space in upper secondary school to interrupt a separation between human and nonhuman animals stemming from an anthropocentric worldview. This is didactically important, since it relates to the specific didactical conditions natural science provides for addressing and resisting anthropocentrism, and throughout this chapter I will point to several examples in which natural science enabled this kind of space in the classroom. This is, perhaps, particularly interesting since knowledge produced within natural science has also enabled and reinforced human exploitation of nonhuman animals (Franklin, 2007).

However, the idea of humans as an animal among other animals, as previously referred to by the students’ natural science teacher, gave rise to different responses in the classroom and resulted in a variety of conclusions being drawn by students. One example is from a discussion in the natural science class that took place after the lecture, during the lesson focused on human-animal relations and sustainability, in which one student stated that lions cannot become vegans and asked why humans cannot eat meat if lions do (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Here, humans were framed as an animal among others, or more specifically as a meat-eating animal. Comparisons with the (meat-)eating practices of lions is something vegans often encounter in various forms, a comparison that circulates in society and had here taken hold in the classroom. Upon such a comparison, the idea of humans as an animal among other animals serves as a justification of humans eating meat. This can be seen as an example of how an influenceable culture is made into an untouchable nature (Gålmark, 2005, p. 70). Upon this utterance, I asked the students whether they saw any difference between the meat consumption of lions and humans, whereby the student replied: “They eat meat, we eat meat. They kill animals, we kill animals” (audio recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). The student continued by saying that humans can continue eating other animals if lions do. “If you tell them [lions] not to eat meat, then I can consider going vegan,” the student concluded. In this moment, resistance to the idea that humans should be vegan, or perhaps toward a normative pedagogical approach that might come across as being told what to do (or both), appeared (cf. Almiron, 2019). This moment of opposition resonates with the experiences of Darst and Dawson (2019) that addressing meat consumption through an approach anchored in animal rights may cause tension, although the

student in this case, unlike those in the study by Darst and Dawson, seemed interested in engaging in discussions.

The discussions that took place among the students in this class upon the comparison between lions and humans did not only serve to legitimize the meat consumption of humans but also created space for critically addressing it. This was enabled when other students acknowledged differences between the meat consumption of the two species. For instance, another student raised her hand and said: “They [lions] do not breed [other animals]. They just kill what they need,” explaining that humans use industrial processes and kill more animals than we need (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). A reference was also made back to the second lesson of the CAP module, during which the activist addressed animal production in Sweden, when the student stated that: “we saw images of killed cows and pigs yesterday too, in those factories, and lions do not do it that way” (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Another student raised their hand and said: “And we mass produce [...]. We have a larger impact on the environment and everything.” (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). Hence, what was addressed during the CAP lessons created a point of reference for critically addressing human meat production and consumption. When the students focused on how human behaviors and practices enable animal oppression rather than focusing on the nonhuman animals themselves, some of the students’ ways of approaching animal production can be conceptualized as a way of putting into practice Pedersen’s (2019b) more practical employment of MacCormack’s (2013) “gracious pedagogy” of leaving other animals alone.

However, nonhuman animals, or more precisely lions (in comparison to humans), again came into focus when one of the students stated that she considers humans to be more intelligent than lions in a biological sense. This brought me to ask: “do you think this intelligence comes with the right to use or a responsibility to...” and before I got to finish my question, the student responded: “with responsibility” (video recording from lesson, November 23, 2022). In the discussion in the classroom about the meat consumption of lions and humans, the understanding of humans as an animal among other (meat-eating) animals reproduced current exploitative relations between humans and nonhuman animals used for food production. While in this instance, the idea of “human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2008) enabled critical reflection of current practices of animal industrial farming, the presumed exceptional position of humans instead reproduced exploitative human-animal relations by legitimating the use of nonhuman animals for human interests in other instances (see, for example,

Chapter 7). Thus, the idea of human exceptionalism (Haraway, 2008) may catalyze arguments in both directions in the context of pedagogical practice. This is particularly interesting considering that human exceptionalism is often closely connected to an anthropocentric worldview and considering the obstacles that anthropocentrism creates for ethical human-animal relations. In this sense human exceptionalism changes slightly in character in relation to my empirical material compared to the original notion of the concept.

## Taking a pig standpoint: anthropocentrism and learning species-specific qualities

The natural science students were able to pick up on the initial three lessons of the CAP module, apply their previous knowledge, and study (for some) new sources of information while working with an assignment called “Eating animals” focused on different animal species that humans exploit for food. The students worked on this assignment individually or in groups of up to three students, producing a written text and carrying out oral presentations in front of the whole class for about ten minutes each. The aim was for the assignment to increase the students’ knowledge about some animal species, their biology and natural behavior, as well as areas of animal exploitation, the production of animal-derived foods and its impact on the environment and climate, and the work of societal actors, such as the food industry, NGOs, and researchers. From a CAP perspective, the aim was further to enable students to explore an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) by asking them to learn about different animal species and consider the possibility for them to behave naturally within the industries.

If the previous example of comparing humans and lions highlighted how “human-animal continuities” (Noske, 1997), and a conceptualization of the human as an animal amongst others, legitimize the exploitation of other animals for food, I here show how addressing continuities enabled ethical consideration for nonhuman animals exploited for meat. Continuities between pigs and humans, for example, were brought up when one group of three students presented their group assignment on pigs and the pig industry, in which pigs are exploited and killed for their meat. The first presentation slide included an image of Piglet in Winne the Pooh. The natural science teacher made a comment about the image, to which one of the students responded: “we humanize them [...] we have an agenda” (audio recording from lesson and presentation slides, February 8, 2023). During their presentation, the students critically addressed the stereotype that pigs are “dirty.”

One of the students told their peers, the natural science teacher, and me that: “in opposition to what many people think, pigs are in fact very clean and organized animals,” stating that pigs roll around in mud at the farms since they do not have access to water to swim in, clean up, and like picking flowers to decorate their homes (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). The presentation slide included an image of a piglet with a flower in their mouth. In terms of choosing images and information for their presentation, there were many different options available, and in choosing this content for their presentation, it could be understood to constitute a counternarrative to certain stereotypes of pigs.

Furthermore, one of the presenting students addressed the extensive emotional lives of pigs, stating that they are emotionally intelligent when not living under factory conditions and have more developed cognitive abilities than three-year-old human children and the same level of creativity, curiosity, self-consciousness, and playfulness (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Hence, the students acknowledged human-pig continuities (cf. Noske, 1997), which seemed to create space for taking an animal standpoint. This seemed possible when, after their presentation, I asked the students what they thought about the conditions in the pig industry in light of what they had learnt about pigs while completing this assignment. The student, who talked about the emotional lives and intelligence of pigs, then considered the pig industry from the pigs’ perspective, replying that since pigs are so intelligent it is “extremely horrible, especially for them” (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Gruen (2013, p. 223) acknowledges that work identifying cognitive, behavioral, and social similarities between humans and nonhuman animals can help humans understand other species better. In this example, the intelligence of pigs, and perhaps also comparing them to humans, made this student conceptualize the conditions in animal factories as “extremely horrible.” A study by Knight and Barnett (2008, p. 34) showed less support for the exploitation of nonhuman animals if they were perceived to possess high mental capabilities. This resonates with another study stating that perceived animal intelligence has a significant impact on whether people feel disgust at the thought of eating nonhuman animals (Ruby & Heine, 2012, p. 50). Pointing out similarities between humans and nonhuman animals is understood by several scholars to enable moral concern, empathy, animal welfare, and conservation caring (e.g., Butterfield et al., 2012; Chan, 2012; de Waal, 1999; Sherman et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2023; Young et al., 2018). Granting nonhuman animals ethical consideration based on continuities with humans, however, is also criticized within CAS. For example, scholars speak of the importance of not assimilating nonhuman animals into

human-oriented frameworks; only granting other animals recognition based on their similarities with humans (Gruen, 2013, pp. 224, 231; cf. Bailey, 2007; MacKinnon, 2012), and engaging with nonhuman animals in a manner that ignores their differences, could risk people enacting ontological violence by not being attentive to their needs and desires (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 266). Intelligence as an argument for respecting other animals risks reproducing a human-headed ranking of life-forms (Crary, 2018, pp. 122, 130), as well as an anthropocentric logic. Instead of focusing on similarities as grounds for moral consideration, Crary (2018, p. 129) urges humans to include different animals in moral reflections as “beings who call for specific forms of attention not as ‘lesser’ beings but just as the kinds of beings they are.” Nevertheless, on this occasion, the comparison between pigs and human children in terms of intelligence helped create a starting point for critically addressing the pig industry. Hence, a didactical possibility was enabled through this (possibly anthropocentric) comparison, pointing also to its possibilities within educational practice for granting other animals (pigs in this case) ethical consideration.

In the next moment, pig-specific traits (and discontinuities from humans) offered a starting point for ethical consideration. One student explained that pigs have very “strong noses,” which makes it difficult for them to cope with the strong smells in the confined spaces of factories (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). In this moment, increased knowledge of pigs made it possible to take a pig standpoint and imagine what factories are like from the pigs’ perspectives. According to Harding (2009, p. 194), it is important to gain a rich and nuanced understanding of others’ life worlds to be able to think from their standpoint. Working on the assignment, the three students learned more about the life worlds of pigs, enabling ethical considerations based on “the kinds of beings they are” (Crary, 2018, p. 129). This, however, can be contrasted with the work of MacCormack (2013, p. 13), who considers all attempts to create knowledge about the nonhuman to trap the nonhuman in anthropocentric discourse, since she regards all human perceptions of the nonhuman to remain anthropocentric no matter the intent. It is, furthermore, crucial to acknowledge how knowledge about other animals produced within natural science has enabled tremendous exploitation (cf. Franklin, 2007). Nevertheless, this moment in the classroom indicates the potential in learning about species-specific behavior, since it created space for students to consider the meat industry from a pig’s perspective.

According to Gruen (2013, pp. 224, 226), being responsible means being responsive, and she addresses the importance of acting upon the other’s situation.

Given the students' initial statement about "having an agenda" with their presentation, we can interpret their presentation as a way to try to act upon the pigs' situation, enabled through taking a pig standpoint. According to this (to us unclear) agenda, stereotypes about pigs were addressed, the meat industry was considered from the pigs' perspective, and a pig standpoint was communicated. Hence, the students could be understood to engage in counterstorytelling by drawing attention to the victims of systemic oppression, possibly contributing to an understanding of oppression from the perspective of those who are oppressed (Kahn, 2011, p. 55, drawing upon Yosso, 2006).

## (De)domestication

In the assignment, the students were asked to consider domestication of their chosen species in terms of when humans started to exploit the species, breeding, and how the animals' biology has been impacted compared to the species' origin. Hence, the focus was partly on how human practices have impacted nonhuman animals. In some of the students' presentations, domestication was critically addressed and sometimes resisted, and "dedomestication" appeared within reach. During an oral presentation by three students focusing on pigs exploited for meat, one of the students, for example, acknowledged that pigs and wild boars are closely related: "Genetically, they are so close that when a domestic pig becomes feral, they integrate the same life habits as the wild boar. [...] They start living in the exact same way" (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Drawing upon the ethologist Price's (1999) definition of domestication, Björck (2019, p. 45) defines *de-domestication* as the restoration, both social and physiological, of some of the changes brought about through domestication enabled by a free life. In this moment in the classroom, the re-wilding or de-domestication of pigs was considered as a possibility. Hence, for pigs, an alternative to a short life lived within the walls of a factory existed, at least briefly. This possibility reappeared later in the presentation when one of the students stated that pigs have extensive emotional lives, acknowledging that they are emotionally intelligent when they "live naturally as they should" (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). In this moment, the lives pigs live in animal factories were framed as unnatural, while some (other) ways of living were framed as the way pigs "should" live, indicating that pigs should live different lives to those they have in factories. Hence, the idea of pigs living "naturally as they should" exists in competition and tension with, and as a counternarrative to, the "meat norm" (cf. Gålmark, 2005), according to

which pigs exist only to be food for humans. These openings for other possible lives for pigs interrupted the idea of animal industrial farming as “natural” and “normal” (cf. Joy, 2010). Not only did this interrupt the idea that only wild species should receive care and concern, common among some environmentalists (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 233), but it somewhat blurred the line between wild and domesticated species altogether.

Several of the student groups addressed how their chosen species’ biology has been impacted by breeding through the process of domestication, pointing out human interests (especially economic) as driving forces. The students focusing on pigs, for example, included text on their presentation slide that read “bred to be fatter → more profitable for humans” (presentation slide from lesson, February 8, 2023). Similarly, two groups focusing on sheep and cows respectively addressed how human breeding has impacted the biology of their species to improve the production of meat, milk, and wool. One of the students focusing on sheep explained that individuals with desirable qualities were selected for breeding “for us to exploit” (video recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). On these occasions, human interests in general, and economic interests in particular, were framed as drivers of animal breeding, which made visible the political economic system as a contributing factor for current exploitative human-animal relations. This was perhaps even more clearly expressed when a group of two students explained how the bodies of chickens have been impacted by breeding, stating “in order to extract as much meat as possible in as little time as possible the chickens have been bred to grow fast” (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). One of the students explained that the skeleton of the chickens cannot keep up with the speed of growth, since “at the age of five weeks chickens living in factories are almost twice as big as wild chickens,” acknowledging that many chickens are sick and almost all limping by this time (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). In the example of the chickens, as well as in the presentations about pigs, cows, and sheep, it became clear that these species, like other animals exploited for food production, have a commercial purpose written into their flesh (Franklin, 2007, p. 350). Thus, many individuals across and within different species that humans exploit for food have historically shared group-based experiences due to domestication. According to Collins (1997, p. 375), addressing historically shared group-based experiences makes the power dimension of standpoint theory explicit. Power relations between humans and other species domesticated for food were made visible throughout the students’ presentations. This further highlighted

that different species of nonhuman animals are similarly positioned within the “animal-industrial complex” (Noske, 1997; developed in Twine, 2013).

During a whole class discussion at the end of this lesson, the issue of responsibility was addressed when the teacher asked about the responsibility for ensuring that animals used for food are treated well, suggesting it can be attributed to private individuals, industry, or politics (video recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Several students acknowledged the responsibility of industry and the state, while also addressing the impact of consumer demand. A problem was identified in terms of the industry seeking to generate as much profit as possible, and one student stated that: “if they [the animal industry] can get away with having bad conditions for the animals they will do so” (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). During this discussion, space was created in the classroom for considering responsibility for the animals’ situation and what could impact it for the better. One student suggested that there should not be a “free market” for animal-derived products and that the state should instead be in control, suggesting that this would be a preferable alternative in terms of animal rights issues (video recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Here, neoliberal market principles were critically addressed and reflected upon, pointing to possible courses of action. Hence, a critique of the political economy and, to some extent, animal production was enabled. Such a critique is a core part of CAS (Best, 2009, p. 19), and, therefore, this assignment could be understood to enable students to engage in CAS analysis.

A short amount of time was allocated for questions at the end of each presentation. At the end of the one on chickens, I asked the students about their thoughts having learned about how the bodies of chickens are impacted by breeding. One of the students replied that he did not know chickens had changed that much in such a short amount of time and said: “like we explained, it is also a shame since it creates many problems for the chickens, and they are also intelligent beings, and they also feel pain and have feelings” (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Here, chickens, similarly to humans, were framed as intelligent and having feelings, including the ability to feel pain, which makes visible “human-animal continuities” (Noske, 1997). Considering how domestication and breeding have impacted chickens created space in the natural science classroom to consider the pain it has caused them. Hence, here, chickens appeared as subjects in the classroom through knowledge produced within natural science, and taking an animal standpoint, or a chicken standpoint, appeared within reach. While such knowledge production in natural science has been decisive for the breeding

described by the students in their presentations, it also enabled students to address this breeding, sometimes in a manner that created space for chickens to appear as subjects in the classroom. This reflects how scientific knowledge and practices are intertwined with ethical questions (McCroory & Reiss, 2023, p. 1). It should, however, be noted that there were shifts between conceptualizing the chickens as individuals and a source of protein from one moment to the next depending on focus. This happened, for example, when the group focusing on chickens switched from talking about the domestication of chickens to discussing positive and negative health effects on humans of eating chicken. From one slide to the next, the living (and suffering) chickens were turned into food when an image of a grilled chicken on a plate appeared on the screen. Hence, the subject position for “production animals” seems very precarious and temporary in the upper secondary natural science classroom when domestication is addressed. Even when addressed within a CAP module, the subject position is not a given, although it does seem possible to approach “production animals” as subjects in some moments and to critically address their exploitation and even envision dedomestication.

## Meat normativity and vegaphobia

As part of the assignment, the students were asked to consider their chosen species in terms of “food.” In relation to this question, there also seemed to exist different standards for vegan and omnivorous diets. These parts of the students’ presentations often resembled the subject “home and consumer studies” (see Bohm et al., 2015 for a study describing discourses of meat within this subject in five Northern Swedish schools), when the students described different dishes that can be made from their chosen species. One group stated that cattle can be turned into “beef, hotdogs, and steak,” while another group explained that sheep can be eaten “grilled, fried, cooked, and used in other kinds of dishes” (audio and video recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). Hence, on these occasions, cattle and sheep were only present in the classroom in terms of how they can be cooked and turned into food for humans to consume. Additionally, the student groups described the health benefits and risks of eating animal products, addressing risks of heart and vascular diseases, cancer, and even death. Hence, nonhuman animals appeared either as health benefits or as health risks, both considered from a human perspective. Considering the health risks mentioned, one group, focusing on cattle, suggested eating “moderate amounts of beef,” “lean cuts of meat,” or vegetarian alternatives (audio recording from lesson, February 8, 2023). The group concluded

by saying that a “varied diet” is therefore recommended to avoid the health risks associated with beef. Hence, although an alternative to eating cows was presented in terms of “vegetarian alternatives,” a “varied diet” including meat from nonhuman animals was the recommendation put forward. In this way, eating meat is framed as normal and recommended, reproducing the normativity of meat consumption (cf. Joy, 2010; Twine, 2014).

At the end of the second lesson, during which oral presentations were carried out, the students and educators engaged in a short discussion focusing on the students’ learning processes and thoughts about animal production and veganism. During the discussion, I asked whether the knowledge they had gained from natural science about these animals has impacted how they view the animal industry (video recording from lesson, February 14, 2023). The focus of this question was different to that of the natural science teacher after the first lesson, which focused on the treatment of nonhuman animals in food production. While the question posed by the teacher created space for considering systemic dimensions of animal production, this one risked shifting focus to individual responsibility and individual students. Two students started by replying “no, not very much,” to which I asked why they thought it had not had an impact (video recording from lesson, February 14, 2023). After some discussion, I asked whether it might be hard to acknowledge some things since it might require change. As a response to the question, one student replied that he just sees more pros to eating meat compared to being vegetarian or vegan. Hence, the change I referred to seemed to be interpreted as veganism or vegetarianism, which can be related to the context of the CAP module and me being vegan. My question suggests that increased knowledge about the conditions within animal production will lead to a change in attitudes and behaviors, and previous research calls for skepticism regarding whether mere knowledge about the situation within animal factories will make people change their behavior (Salih, 2014; Sanbonmatsu interviewed in Maurizi, 2013). Furthermore, the question seemed to cause resistance, or at least a form of rejection. According to Twine (2014, pp. 628-9), the mere presence of a vegan can cause “defensive discursive practices” intended to “consolidate the normative meaning of animal consumption, human/animal hierarchy and the hegemony of their affective community.” In this instance in the classroom, the vegan, me, held a position of power as an educator, researcher, adult, and invited guest of the school, which may have impacted how my statements were interpreted and responded to by students. A rejection, nevertheless, seemed possible in this moment, and Twine (2014, p. 628) connects the “troubled interaction” between

vegans and omnivores to the implicit or explicit questioning inherent in the encounter. The rejection could further be connected to being questioned and experiencing my question as being told what to do (cf. Almiron, 2019).

Some students and I engaged in a discussion on vegan and omnivorous diets. Drawing upon information from their own oral presentations, some students emphasized certain nutrients that humans can get from meat, but whether meat is needed as a source of protein was contested. For example, one student explained that people in Sweden do not generally have a problem getting enough protein, and another student stated that protein is not a problem for vegans, pointing to plant-based sources. Nevertheless, nutrients were acknowledged as a problem, and one student continued by stating that she “does not know any vegan that does not take supplements” (video recording from lesson, February 14, 2023). The idea of a vegan diet as lacking, or even a disturbed eating practice, circulates in society (cf. Gålmark, 2005, pp. 56, 76) and resurfaced in the classroom discussions. Although several students addressed the risk of meat as a cause of cancer, heart and vascular diseases, and ultimately death in their presentations, a varied omnivorous diet containing meat was not framed as problematic, while veganism seemed excluded as a possibility on the grounds that many vegans take supplements. Hence, the idea that animal-derived protein is the only sufficient and essential form of protein was reproduced (cf. Gålmark, 2005, p. 56). This is in line with experiences by Bohm et al. (2015, p. 108) that the centrality of meat is “so dominant that even conscious questioning ended up strengthening it.” Once again, an impossible premise appeared in the classroom in relation to veganism, in this case in terms of the need for vegan and vegetarian diets to not require supplementation to be considered viable options, which can be compared to the “all or nothing responses” encountered by Darst and Dawson (2019) when critically addressing meat consumption.

These moments, in which deficiencies in vegan and vegetarian diets were addressed and compared with omnivorous diets, can be understood as moments in which “animal consuming practices rehearse and reproduce their meanings in competitive tension with vegan practice” (Twine, 2014, p. 632). Twine (2014, p. 632) conceptualizes these as “naturalization strategies,” often ignoring and undermining evidence of people eating healthy vegan diets. Vegan diets were here framed as “unnatural,” and through this interpretation vegans became the marginalized “others” (cf. Cole & Morgan, 2011). Cole and Morgan (2011) address how such portrayals of veganism and vegans can be understood in term of “vegaphobia” (cf. Gålmark, 2005, p. 74). Ultimately “the derogation of veganism

helps non-vegans to avoid confronting the ethics of exploiting, imprisoning and killing nonhuman animals” (Cole & Morgan, 2011, p. 149; cf. Gålmark, 2005, pp. 71-74). This makes visible the risk inherent in the reproduction of some meanings of veganism, as well as the importance of addressing these meanings. In this sense, limited time for discussion, reflection, and exploration of vegan diets and the meanings of veganism created a challenge for CAP in upper secondary school. In this regard, focusing on vegan diets could have been a suitable next step of the CAP module were more time allocated, creating space for “vegan education” (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; cf. Andrzejewski, 2003). The experiences from the lessons with oral presentations of the assignment “Eating animals” also indicates a risk that the animal perspective gets lost when focusing on human health and vegan diets, leaving no room for other dimensions of veganism. In other words, there is a risk of the animal standpoint being lost. Hence, *how* these issues are addressed in the classroom is crucial.

## Non-anthropocentric fictional reading

The students in this project encounter so-called “production animals” not only in contemporary societies, primarily Sweden, but also in historical ones. Here, I will focus on work done with students in Year 1 in School 1 based on the short story “Oxgraven” in *Oxgraven och andra statrnoveller* [The grave of the ox and other stater short stories] written by Ivar Lo Johansson (1984) in their course Swedish as a second language. The short story is about an ox, Mulle, used for labor at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Sweden. Mulle is subjected to violence when the humans in the story try to get him to work pulling a plow. This text was chosen since it concerns animal production and actualizes questions regarding anthropocentrism and interests of economic profit. Before engaging with the short story, the students were briefly introduced to CAS, CAP, and animal rights.

The story of Mulle, however, is often understood in terms of a metaphor for the stater system<sup>20</sup> that prevailed in Sweden at the time, and the ox is often read as

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<sup>20</sup> The stater system was initiated in Sweden in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, becoming increasingly common in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was abolished in 1945. A stater was a farmer who worked and lived (with their family if they had one) at a large agricultural farm owned by someone else. Most of their salary was paid by the owner of the farm in the form of accommodation, clothes, and food. A stater’s contract was for one year, but it was common for them to fall into debt, which made them practically serfs. Ivar Lo-Johansson was a Swedish

a metaphor for human characters. When animal representations are reduced to metaphors, the animal is subordinated, and human exceptionalism is reproduced (Drew, 2022, p. 189). This was addressed during one of the workshop discussions with a teacher, a scholar, an animal rights activist, and me, when a participant acknowledged that literary studies and reading are very much focused on understanding human culture and that animals are often used as metaphors, supporting a narrative focused on humans, or placed in the background (audio recording from workshop, August 15, 2022). Björck (2019) understands this as a privileged reading style that should be explored and problematized. Contrary to such a reading style, CAP strives to make nonhuman animals present as subjects in education. Hence, human-animal relations and the role of nonhuman animals in society are addressed, not as metaphors for human actions and events, but as important issues in and of themselves. Exploring what happened when engaging with this short story in school I consider whether late modern literature, in this case the short story of “Oxgraven,” can enable alternative ways to understand and think about the relationship between humans and “production animals” (cf. Björck, 2019, p. 10). I am especially intrigued by Björck’s (2019, p. 10) question regarding whether cultural figurations can enable other forms of readings than those that reproduce our current relationship, “readings that can contribute to another future than one in which the oppression of animals just continues.”<sup>21</sup>

The students engaged with the short story for about two months, working with it during the majority of the three lessons they had in Swedish as a second language each week. The old-fashioned Swedish language used in the short story, and the students’ level of Swedish, made it suitable to carry out an extensive assignment around the text, since it took a long time to read and discuss the short story. The level of Swedish varied between the students on the course, but many struggled to read a few sentences in a row in Swedish, especially the old-fashioned Swedish of this text. The work with the short story began with me introducing the author and the stater system to the students. The text was read aloud to the students during two lessons, and we paused at tricky words or keywords, discussing together in the class what they meant and what had happened in the text. In the initial stages of the course, when working with a text for the first time, the teacher found it productive to point out to the students that they would not be examined, initially,

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working class author who was part of the “stater school,” publishing novels about the living conditions of the staters and farmers around the year 1930.

<sup>21</sup> My own translation from Swedish—“läsningar som kan bidra till en annan framtid än den där förtrycket mot djuren bara fortgår.”

with the aim, instead, being to create space to approach the text together. The manner through which we engaged with the short story in the course was discussed during workshops with the teacher, one activist, one scholar, and me. Drawing upon literary studies, one aim of engaging with the short story was to focus on what happened in the text and enable reflections on the object and subject status of the characters in the story. Another, more CAP-specific aim, was to try and read the text in a manner that brought forward the human-animal relation in a new or different way. One of the workshop participants acknowledged that this can enable “reading the animals for what they are themselves” and help address the question “what can we do with a new outlook?” (audio recording from workshop, August 15, 2022).

Questions were regularly used when engaging with the text, since the students’ teacher found questions to be a helpful aid to keep students focused on the story. During the third and fourth lessons, the students worked with questions developed during one of the workshops by their teacher, the scholar, the animal rights activist, and me.<sup>22</sup> The first question was “how is the ox treated in the novel?” and aimed to enable reflections regarding how the ox was treated that could be connected to historical and contemporary treatment of nonhuman animals in different geographical places. The second question was “why do they want to keep the ox alive?” which we hoped would make it possible to address how nonhuman animals are used for different forms of production for human purposes, historically and today, as well as enabling engagement on capitalism. “Who decides over whom?” was the third question, and the goal of this question was to enable students to reflect on power relations between both humans and nonhumans. The last question the students worked with was “why do the oxen not want to graze at the grave of the ox?” aiming to create space for students to take an animal standpoint and consider the emotional lives of nonhuman animals. Continuing the work with the short story analysis, the class was divided into two groups, each reading and discussing the short story together with their teacher or me. Hence, the collaborative character of the CAP project made it possible to work in smaller groups with an educator in each group. The division of groups was based on the students’ level of Swedish. Those who struggled most with the Swedish language were placed in a smaller group consisting of four students to be provided extra support. Dividing the class into smaller groups enabled deeper conversations,

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<sup>22</sup> The students also worked with the following questions in writing during previous lessons: “What do you think the novel is about?” “What kind of feeling do you get from reading the novel?” “What is the message of the novel?” “Who is the narrator of the novel?”

engaging all participating students in reading and discussing the text, and provided time for the students to develop their reflections.

The language of the short story combined with the students' level of Swedish created both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, it took a significant amount of time to work through even relatively short excerpts of text, and it was tricky to create a flow in the reading. On the other hand, the confusion made us pause and consider in more detail the events of the text. For example, a group of four students and I discussed what happened when the humans in the story set fire to the bushes around the ox:

I explained that when the fire started, the ox stood up and ran out of the ring of fire while one of the humans yelled “capture the ox and brace him by the carrier.” One of the students asked if they were doing this so that the ox would start working again, and I answered affirmatively. The student continued by saying: “he was very tired so [...] one puts a fire around him so that he ran and could stand up [...] and now when he is up, they fasten things again. I summarized that the humans did not want the ox to die but that they also did not just want him to stand up. The students filled in concluding that the humans wanted the ox to work. (summary from audio recording during lesson, September 28, 2022)

Hence, the short story enabled students to address how the treatment of the ox in the text was a result of humans' exploitation of oxen for labor. This example also makes visible the role of both students and educators in facilitating certain perspectives and creating space for reflection. Here, consideration of the ox's perspective was introduced by one of the students. In focusing on the feelings and perspective of the ox, space was created for taking an animal standpoint, or rather an “ox standpoint.”

This instance in the upper secondary classroom, in addition to several others throughout the course of working with the short story, can be seen as an example of the reading strategy aiming to bring forward the human-animal relationship and the situation of the nonhuman animals in the text. This can be understood in terms of a non-anthropocentric gesture in engaging with the suffering of the nonhuman animals within the stater system instead of automatically reducing it to an (exclusively) human story (Björck, 2019, p. 41). The level of Swedish among the students, as well as the text being brought up within a CAP module, made the students approach the text from a literary perspective. As previously noted, it is rather common that nonhuman animals are used as metaphors for human actions, emotions, and events in literature, but seldom are they present or approached in their own right (Björck, 2019; Drew, 2022). However, in this class, the oxen did

seem to appear and be approached from their perspective. According to Björck (2019, p. 12), it is crucial to consider what space students are provided to recontextualize animal-human power relations. In this case, engaging with this short story in a CAP module created space for the students to address and, as we shall see throughout the analysis, sometimes also resist these power relations.

Moreover, Nussbaum (1995, 2008) emphasizes the significance of fiction for developing ethical competence and the opportunity it provides to develop “sympathetic imagination.” This “sympathetic imagination” refers to a sensitivity to others’ situation, enabling a greater understanding of the motives and choices of others, providing opportunities to see that many problems and possibilities are shared (Nussbaum, 2008). This reflects that the diverse situatedness of people does not only impact practical choices but also “desires, thoughts, and ways of looking at the world” (Nussbaum, 2008, p. 144). In some sense, this “sympathetic imagination” resonates with taking an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), and working with the fictional text “Oxgraven” made an animal standpoint present in the classroom. The possibility to view things from the perspectives of others through engaging with fictional texts, for instance, was brought up in one of the students’ short story analyses: “I think the short story is actually pretty good since it explains a lot how it feels for the oxen, and one gets a much better perspective regarding how it is for them” (short story analysis, October 19, 2022). This speaks for the text enabling an “ox standpoint.”

During another lesson in Swedish as a second language, ten participating students were divided into two groups of five. A trainee teacher and five students discussed the text in another room, while the other five students, their teacher, and I engaged in discussion in the classroom:

The teacher: Why do they [the oxen] not want to eat the grass where the ox is buried?

Student 1: The ox might feel... How do you express it?

Student 2: Sad if they do it.

Student 1: Some type of [...] guilt [...] I live. I eat.

[...]

Student 1: If I were the ox, I would not do it, since I think the same thing. The guilt would...

[got interrupted by another student]

Student 1: I would not want to eat above my dead friends.

(audio recording during lesson, October 3, 2022)

Here, oxen entered the classroom as individuals with emotional lives and friendship ties through the students putting themselves in their position. Attributing to the oxen feelings of guilt could be understood as a form of anthropomorphism, and anthropomorphized animal representations have been critiqued by scholars of CAS for “appropriating animals in service of anthropocentric objectives” (Drew, 2022, p. 184). However, Noske (1997) warns against deeming all comparisons between non-physical human and nonhuman animal features to be “misplaced anthropomorphism” (Noske, 1997, p. 89), and anthropomorphic explanations deserve attention (de Waal, 1999, p. 274). In the scenario from the classroom, nonhuman animals could be understood as being ascribed human-coded emotions, which is not necessarily anthropomorphism but still entails the risk of disregarding that species’ or individual’s unique ways of being (cf. Crary, 2018; Gruen, 2013). Another risk with anthropomorphism is granting other animals moral consideration on the grounds that they are “like humans,” reproducing a human-centered ranking of life-forms (Crary, 2018), as previously noted. Still, there might be potential in using anthropomorphism as an educational strategy, since addressing similarities between humans and other animals is understood to enable empathy, moral concern, and considerations for animal welfare (e.g., Butterfield et al., 2012; Chan, 2012; de Waal, 1999; Sherman et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2023; Young et al., 2018). Acknowledging friendship ties and the emotional lives of nonhuman animals can further be understood as an application of interspecies sustainability, since the oxen were framed here as subjects belonging to intra-species communities (Bergmann, 2019, p. 6). In the classroom, these reflections regarding the emotional lives of the oxen in the short story, moreover, presented the death of the ox as something that mattered, breaking with the notion of some animals’ deaths being unproblematic, all too common within the hegemonic narrative in Sweden and many other places where the systematic exploitation and killing inherent in animal production goes unquestioned. Drawing upon Butler’s (2004) conceptualization of “ungrievable” and “unlivable” lives, one could say that “production animals” are often made ungrievable and so also “killable” (cf. Göransson, 2017). In this discussion with the students, the oxen were, however, framed as grievable and therefore their lives also as livable.

## Staying with the suffering of the oxen

A rather literal reading of the story, on several occasions, enabled a non-anthropocentric gesture in focusing on the suffering of the oxen, rather than

automatically reducing the text to a human story (cf. Björck, 2019, p. 41). Hence, a privileged anthropocentric reading style (Björck, 2019) was disrupted by creating a starting point for addressing human-animal power relations and approaching the standpoint of oxen. This could be seen, for instance, in some of the students' short story analyses, which they worked on as a final assignment after the lessons focused on reading and discussing "Oxgraven" together. On several occasions, they addressed the power relations between the humans in the story as well as between the humans and the oxen, highlighting that the oxen were forced to work. In terms of nonhuman animals or "livestock" used in animal production, Hribal (2003, pp. 435-6) acknowledges that "animals do not 'naturally' become private property, no more than humans 'naturally' come to sell their labor." He therefore considers the word "livestock," which is defined as "any creature kept or dealt for profit," to be misleading, in that it is often written or spoken about in the passive voice (Hribal, 2003, p. 435). Instead, "there is an active history here—one of expropriation, exploitation, and resistance" (Hribal, 2003, p. 436), and this active history of how nonhuman animals become part of the working class is addressed in some of the students' analyses. Unequal power relations and the oxen being used as labor were made visible, for instance, when a student wrote that the turning point of the story was when one of the humans did not want to whip the ox but instead set fire to a bush to make the ox work (short story analysis, October 19, 2022), or when another student wrote that the narrative developed when one of the humans told the others to hit the oxen so that the oxen would start moving and working (short story analysis, October 19, 2022). The poor treatment of the oxen was further acknowledged by several of the students when they wrote about how the oxen were whipped to work. One student compared the situation of the oxen and the humans in the story, and in their concluding remarks wrote: "I think one should read this short story since it is important to understand the poor conditions for animals compared to humans" (short story analysis, October 24, 2022). When practicing a rather "non-anthropocentric reading" (Björck, 2019), the so-called "livestock" became visible in the students' discussions and short story analyses. This was enabled by a literal reading that created space for the students to stay with the suffering of the oxen as part of the stater system, instead of reducing the animals' situation to human-centered stories (cf. Björck, 2019, p. 41).

Fiction is one way to create opportunities for students to take part in discourses that are not available to them otherwise and provide space to practice these discourses (Lilja et al., 2023, p. 1). Considering the possibilities for ESE, Chandavarkar (2020, p. 61) states that "[s]tories set in the past can be used as

teaching tools to raise awareness, change perceptions, and promote behavioural change.” One student wrote that the message of the short story was that no kinds of animals should be treated as the oxen. The student continued:

And that they are not made to be subject to human use, especially those who cannot adapt to the environment they are captured in. I think they should be able to live their lives and [humans should] let them be alone. (short story analysis, October 19, 2022)

The word “captured” indicates a power relation in which the oxen are kept and used against their will, pointing to an “active history” (cf. Hribal, 2003, p. 436). Further, the emphasis on “captured” animals that cannot adapt to the environment of their captivity was likely a parallel to previous discussions on nonhuman animals at zoos that this student and some others engaged in during workshop discussions with me. Hence, the student seemed to connect the situation of the oxen to the situation of nonhuman animals exploited by humans in a different context in the present. In this sense, a story set in the past seemed to raise awareness (cf. Chandavarkar, 2020, p. 61) regarding the situation of nonhuman animals today. Furthermore, when, in their short story analysis, the student stated that animals “are not made to be subject to human use,” that they should “be able to live their lives,” and that humans should “let them be alone,” the oxen appeared as subjects with rights to their own lives. The assignment could therefore be understood to enable space for engaging with a non-anthropocentric pedagogical ethics, as suggested by MacCormack (2013), which calls upon humans to leave other animals alone. Another student wrote that the author wants to say that animals should be treated well since “they have lives like us humans” (short story analysis, October 19, 2022). Here, the oxen again appeared as subjects with lives that should be given ethical consideration, breaking with an anthropocentric notion of the lives of nonhuman animals as less important than the lives of humans. The message of the short story was framed in line with an “animal standpoint,” demanding that humans take the lives of other animals seriously by listening and paying emotional attention to them (Donovan, 2006, p. 305), as communicated in the CAP module. This could be understood in terms of practicing interspecies sustainability in “[r]especting that nonhumans covet life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness just as humans do” (Bergmann, 2019, p. 6).

Writing a short story analysis created space for several students to consider human-animal relations beyond the specific text by providing a starting point for reflections. Further, the text seemed engaging in terms of the animals’ situation,

and Björck (2019, p. 11) acknowledges that humans can perceive fictional human and nonhuman beings as real in some sense and therefore also ethically engaging. When approaching texts with animals that actually exist, a connection between the narrative and the world of the reader is created, or “the reality is summoned”<sup>23</sup> (Björck, 2019, p. 12). This could be seen as one way for students to encounter “what is real” (Biesta, 2022, p. 50) in terms of the situation of nonhuman animals today. This encounter enabled concrete ethical and social questions to be put into motion (Björck, 2019, p. 12), as became visible in the short story analyses. According to Chandavarkar (2020, p. 62), courses should create a bridge between “real-world sustainability challenges” and the fictional story being studied, and when the students considered the current situation of nonhuman animals in today’s society it seems as if the CAP module has enabled a connection between the story of “Oxgraven” and the “real-world sustainability challenge” of animal exploitation. In their short story analyses, several students made connections between the human-animal relations in the short story and those in current society, although the conclusions differed between the students. Nevertheless, working with this short story analysis created space for several students to engage with a CAS perspective on human-animal relations and the lives of nonhuman animals. This further provided a starting point for exploring a CAS perspective in assignments introduced after the students carried out these short story analyses. Hence, in this assignment, CAP contributed to ESE by enabling students to address human-animal power relations and the lives, actions, and emotions of nonhuman animals, and possibly envision a different future to one in which animal oppression simply continues (cf. Björck, 2019).

## Conclusion

The students’, as well as the educators’, situatedness presented both challenges and possibilities in terms of the opportunities for engaging with animal production starting from “interspecies sustainability” (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021) and to some extent from intersectional perspectives. It impacted the pedagogical practices envisioned and how they were received. The students’ situatedness in terms of their connections to countries other than Sweden, level of Swedish, socioeconomic position, and experiences of religion created specific, but diverse, points of departures for engaging with animal

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<sup>23</sup> My translation from Swedish—“verkligheten åkallas.”

production in different subjects. The different subjects furthermore offered different didactical possibilities for engaging with animal production. While the natural science students engaged with contemporary animal production and the exploitation and environmental impact it entails, the students studying the course Swedish as a second language encountered production animals in a historical context. Both the natural science specialization course and Swedish as a second language provided space for working with a theme of the teacher's choosing. However, the heavy focus on competences in Swedish as a second language provided more space, in terms of both time and opportunities, to engage with CAP in different ways. Throughout the analysis, it became clear how knowledge produced within natural science can enable exploitation of domesticated nonhuman animals but also function as a tool for critically addressing this exploitation, which highlights the complexities of representing nonhuman animals in education (cf. Saari, 2021).

In contrast to Darst and Dawson (2019), my analysis makes visible the complexity of reactions to addressing animal production (and meat consumption) from a perspective anchored in animal rights and interspecies sustainability. On several occasions, taking an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) enabled critical engagement with the topics, assignments, and questions introduced in the CAP modules. Similar to the experiences of Russell (2019), the topic of meat consumption interested the students as it was particularly relevant to them. Engaging with eating practices offered a concrete way to start where the students are (Russell, 2019, p. 38) and relate to their everyday lives and situated position. The importance of starting where the students are constitutes a didactical challenge in terms of trying to start from the students' own experiences and interests while introducing new perspectives. These aims are not necessarily in tension. It is possible to introduce new perspectives that resonate with the students' everyday lives and previous experiences, but the challenge is doing so in a manner that creates space for students to make connections. Furthermore, diverse situatedness of the students, as well as differences between the students and educators, impacted what connections were made and how. Hence, it is a challenge to introduce CAP in a manner that resonates with all students in the classroom and enable critical reflections.

Since many students have not considered their relationships with other animals to a significant extent, as seemed to be the case in my empirical contexts, Russell (2019, p. 38) suggests offering a variety of entry points for enabling students to do so. Simultaneously, the CAP educator needs to be open to picking up and engaging

with the multitude of entry points created by the students' experiences and situated positions (cf. White, 2019). At times, it seemed as if, as educators, we started where we wished the students would be, rather than from where they were (cf. Russell, 2019). Thus, not all (intersectional) starting points provided in the CAP modules resonated with the students. However, the intersectional dimensions did not disappear in the encounters with students but rather were transformed through the interactions between the CAP educators, the nonhuman animals appearing in the pedagogical practices, and the students, with their diverse situatedness and experiences. In a way, the educators were forced to start where the students were, even if sometimes failing to do so initially.

## Chapter 7: Addressing animal slaughter in schools

Death and dying are addressed in ESE, for example in relation to grieving biodiversity loss and the potential extinction of the human species (e.g., Affifi & Christie, 2019; Andreassen Lysgaard, Bengtsson & Hauberg-Lund Lugesen, 2019; Ojala, 2016). When considering death and nonhuman animals in ESE, the death of endangered species is often in focus. Several students in my project stated that they have talked about these species in sustainability education but that less attention had been given to nonhuman animals killed in animal production. If addressed at all, the focus was on the impact of animal industrial farming on the environment, ecosystems, and the extinction of entire species, but never on the beings killed at slaughterhouses. In contrast, the CAP modules in this project approached nonhuman animals exploited in food production as direct victims, rather than causes, of climate change in line with interspecies sustainability (cf. Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016).

If the previous chapter focused on the exploitation and killing of so-called “production animals” more broadly, this chapter zooms in specifically on the act of killing.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it contributes to a growing body of literature on animal slaughter in educational practice and theory that addresses the slaughter of nonhuman animals for food in a pedagogical context (Algers & Berg, 2017; Aslanian & Moxnes, 2021; Bruckner & Kowasch, 2019; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2015; Tallberg, Välikangas & Hamilton, 2022; Winks, 2022). Some approaches to ESE that address meat consumption or the killing of nonhuman animals for food argue for including the “more-than-human” in education but refrain from “moralizing” about human-animal relations (Bruckner & Kowasch, 2019; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019; cf. Aslanian & Moxnes, 2021; see Pedersen, 2019b, for a critical analysis). Others start from a place of open solidarity with nonhuman animals in critically addressing animal slaughter in

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<sup>24</sup> Some parts of this chapter have previously been published in the article “Addressing animal slaughter in school: the significance of an animal standpoint” in *Ethics and Education* (Kallaste Håkansson, J., 29 April 2025). See: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2025.2489913>

education (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2015; Russell, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; Winks, 2022).

This chapter contributes to previous research by drawing on student workshop discussions and two lessons with two social science classes in which students encountered a three-minute video clip from inside a Swedish KRAV slaughterhouse,<sup>25</sup> produced by an animal rights organization. The use of images and video of nonhuman animals in animal production has previously been studied, especially within higher education (e.g., Tallberg et al., 2022; Russell, 2019; White, 2019). Tallberg et al. (2022) acknowledge the potential of using documentaries about animal industrial farming to enable compassion through an affective and embodied form of knowledge, and Russell (2019, p. 46) suggests that video clips are “pedagogically powerful.” There are, however, also some risks associated with this method, including student disengagement (cf. Aaltola, 2014; Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014; Martin, 2014; Mika, 2006). Additionally, previous research addresses ethical concerns in relation to students witnessing slaughter in education (e.g., Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014; Winks, 2022; cf. Andrzejewski, 2003; Russell, 2019). However, possible feelings of discomfort are not considered solely negatively, and the potential for feelings of discomfort to enable critical reflections on social norms and practices is also acknowledged (Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Twine, 2014; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012; Winks, 2022). Building further on previous research, this chapter explores what happens when the killing of nonhuman animals at slaughterhouses is centered within ESE in upper secondary school from a position of open solidarity with the animals themselves, or more specifically from an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011).

## Working with slaughterhouse videos in schools

During the lessons focused on in the analysis, students in a social science class in Year 2 and one student in Year 3 watched a three-minute video clip from inside a Swedish KRAV slaughterhouse. During the lessons, the activist introduced the video material and addressed differences between a perspective on animal

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<sup>25</sup> KRAV is a certification used in Sweden complying with EU regulations for organic production. KRAV states that “Slaughter must be carried out in as calm an environment as possible and in KRAV-certified slaughterhouses that are adapted to the needs and behaviour of the animals” (KRAV, 2023). The general idea among the public in Sweden is that KRAV-slaughterhouses have a higher standard than slaughterhouses with no KRAV-label. For a study on the processes through which nonhuman animals are perceived as food within organic animal production in Sweden see Velandér (2023).

slaughter anchored in animal rights and one starting from animal welfare. Doing so, she introduced the idea that the practice of killing other animals for food might be ethically questionable or wrong in and of itself (video recordings from lessons, December 2 and 7, 2022). Thus, the participation of the activist enabled a critical perspective, anchored in animal rights activism, to enter the students' education. After initial discussions directly after watching the video clip, a quadrilateral exercise was carried out, focusing on debates around camera surveillance in slaughterhouses. These debates were sparked in Sweden when footage of the conditions in a slaughterhouse was made public in 2021. During the exercise the students placed themselves in accordance with four options in terms of what they thought camera surveillance would lead to.<sup>26</sup> First, they engaged with the questions with no specific guidance. Then they were asked to consider the questions from the perspective of the nonhuman animals killed at the slaughterhouses. The questions sparked debate among the students and the discussions were often intense. On some occasions, students changed corner after having discussed for a while. In addition to being connected to the aims and central content of the students' courses, the aim of the lessons was to make visible common practices at Swedish slaughterhouses to raise awareness and provide a starting point for critically addressing the exploitation and killing of nonhuman animals for food.

Before showing the slaughterhouse video in class, it was discussed between the activist, the students' civics teacher, and me, and I also discussed it in separate student workshops. The teacher acknowledged the importance of working with current social issues in the classroom, explaining that she often uses social media to introduce such topics in her teaching, sometimes including violent images (audio recording from workshop, November 4, 2022). Interestingly, the activist and I seemed more hesitant regarding possible (negative) reactions from students and their guardians than the teacher. She considered it important to increase the students' knowledge on animal production and saw video material as one way to bring parts of society into the classroom. Drawing upon my own experiences of working with CAP in higher education,<sup>27</sup> and discussing my project in academic settings, the idea of showing video material from animal industries, particularly from slaughterhouses, produced by animal rights organizations in upper secondary

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<sup>26</sup> The four options were: 1. the suffering for the animals will decrease; 2. create a false sense of safety; 3. stop the killing, and; 4. no difference.

<sup>27</sup> The reactions to a CAP module developed for a master's program in ESD are explored in a book chapter I co-authored with Helena Pedersen and Arjen Wals (Pedersen, Håkansson & Wals, 2019).

schools seems to stir up more reactions, anxiety, and discussions within higher education (cf. Pedersen, 2021; Pedersen et al., 2019) than it did in practice in these upper secondary schools. As previously mentioned, the school in which the slaughterhouse video was shown had a habit of addressing so-called “controversial issues” and inviting people from civil society as guest lecturers. They did so to give their students contact with a multitude of different perspectives, hoping it would spark engagement.

There are, however, risks associated with using graphic images, and Corman and Vandrovcová (2014, p. 136) acknowledge that students may experience negative emotions that can be disengaging if not handled in a sensitive manner. Moreover, Aaltola (2014, pp. 20, 23, 26, 28-9) addresses some major risks in terms of desensitizing and normalizing violence and making suffering into a spectacle and a source of aesthetic amusement, as well as “compassion fatigue”—“the wearing out of the ability to care about suffering.” Another risk is that of violating the privacy and personhood of nonhuman animals by portraying them in moments of extreme violence, vulnerability, and sometimes death (Aaltola, 2014, p. 24).<sup>28</sup> In line with the thoughts of Aaltola (2014, pp. 23, 29), the educators’ aim with the lessons was to put emphasis on critiquing and acting upon the causes of the suffering of nonhuman animals at slaughterhouses to avoid “othering” them. The previous lessons were considered to provide context from which to approach the video and to guide and support the students in navigating the material. Three introductory lessons with each class, focused on CAS, CAP, animal ethics, and animal rights, addressed animal production in Sweden and the connections between human-animal relations and sustainability, including animal production and intersectional dimensions of the entangled oppression of humans and nonhumans. Additionally, the students in Year 2 had one lesson addressing common assumptions about human-animal relations and veganism, and the students in Year 3 had one lesson addressing the animal welfare law and one focusing on civil disobedience, specifically in terms of animal rights activists documenting the conditions in animal factories. These earlier lessons could be understood in terms of “beginnings” (Biesta, 2022, p. 48) introduced by the differently positioned CAP educators.

Providing context for engaging with animal slaughter is of ethical significance in relation to both students and nonhuman animals. It is important to provide

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<sup>28</sup> This also relates to considerations of what is given back to the individual animals (Rosiek, Snyder, & Pratt, 2020). See the discussion on ethical considerations in Chapter 4 for a more in-depth reflection in this regard.

tools for students to deal with what is put into motion when encountering the video material, including possible feelings of discomfort. The risk of students experiencing discomfort and anxiety was discussed, but as educators we tried not to anticipate what they would feel. Instead of trying to foresee whether students would consider the video “difficult” to watch, the aim was to create space to engage with whatever might come up. Possible feelings of discomfort were, moreover, not understood as negative per se but as possible enablers for critical reflections on taken-for-granted assumptions, habits, and behaviors (Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012; Winks, 2022). In relation to this, Ojala (2013, p. 172) states that emotions such as worry and anxiety can enable humans to be reflective and motivate them to question habits and take part in deliberative processes. In this sense, emotions can be seen as a productive part of the ESE classroom (Ojala, 2013; Tryggvason, & Mårdh, 2019). However, Jensen (2002, p. 330) states that providing information about ecological problems and climate change without considering their root causes or possibilities for solving them may lead to “action paralysis,” and this risk was considered in relation to addressing animal slaughter. Likewise, Andrzejewski (2003, p. 25) states that it is important to provide specific and powerful possibilities for students to take immediate and long-term action (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012), especially when working with videos and footage depicting animal suffering. In the encounter with the animal rights activist, the students also encountered veganism and different activist strategies as responses to the realities of slaughterhouses. Thus, they did encounter not only what could be framed as the problems of animal production but also possible strategies for change. This was one of the reasons for involving an animal rights activist in the lessons. However, students do not enter lessons as “empty vessels,” rather they are affected by narratives about animal production circulating in society. They also bring their own experiences, opinions, and values. Thus, there were several aspects impacting the possibilities available to students for picking up and exploring the “beginnings” introduced in the CAP modules.

Showing video material from animal industries was also discussed during workshops before and after the lessons with five students from the social science class in Year 2 who took part in the lesson,<sup>29</sup> and the topic was also briefly discussed in class during the lessons in question. The students taking part in the workshop group stated that they found the material difficult to watch but still

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<sup>29</sup> These discussions are considered also in the methodology chapter when looking at ethical considerations and the research design.

considered it important to show video material from animal factories in schools (audio recording from workshops, November 23, 2022 and February 8, 2023). There was a sense of ambivalence in relation to the material: one student initially considered it “bad” to show these kinds of videos, but later stated that: “the whole world needs to see this” (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2023). Collectively, the students in the workshop identified having strong feelings when encountering videos of animal suffering to be a positive thing. Relatedly, they addressed the potential of feelings for fostering change, considering something to potentially be put into motion when showing this type of material, with one student explaining: “because a lot happens with feelings” (audio recording from workshop, November 23, 2022). It should, however, be noted that certain emotions and not others seemed to be understood as appropriate “strong feelings” by the students, such as, for example, sadness, disgust, or anger.

Moreover, feelings of guilt in relation to addressing animal slaughter were discussed in the other student workshop group with five students in Year 1 from School 1. When one of the students suggested a study visit to a slaughterhouse, several of the students in the workshop concluded it would make them reflect a great deal, and according to some “too much,” about animals killed at slaughterhouses (audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022). They anticipated that this would impact their ability to eat meat by fostering a “guilty conscience” or feelings of guilt. During the workshop, I asked whether having a guilty conscience about eating meat after witnessing the conditions in slaughterhouses would be good or bad. The initial response by one of the students was that it would be bad, but he then reconsidered:

Well, no, it is good. It is hard. It means that you understand. Well, how should you express it? If you have a guilty conscience. It means that... Well, that... It is good since you think about the animals. (audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022)

When the discussion was revisited during the next workshop, two of these students, again, drew the conclusion that feelings of guilt would be positive for their potential to change the situation of nonhuman animals at slaughterhouses (audio recording from workshop, November 15, 2022). Hence, guilt, and a guilty conscience, was alternately framed as something to avoid or as a positive catalyst to change views and behaviors in relation to nonhuman animals.

All these students ate meat themselves but discussed meat consumption in a reflective and nuanced manner, thinking about possibilities and challenges for

achieving change. This is counter to the experiences of Darst and Dawson (2019) but in line with Russell (2019), as well as Saari (2021, p. 190), who acknowledges that students often approach animal issues with “open curiosity.” All students participating in workshops identified feelings of discomfort when encountering animal suffering to be positive, at least to a certain extent, with some framing guilt as a reasonable and possibly productive response. This contrasts with some approaches to sustainability education that are very concerned about the risk of causing anxiety or guilt (or both) in students (e.g., Ideland & Malmberg, 2015). When such arguments are used for not engaging with animal issues in education, Saari (2021, p. 190) states that it often relates to an idea of preserving the “innocence” of students (e.g., Tammi et al., 2020), while the students themselves are often open and curious when navigating topics like meat consumption. Similar to Saari (2021), I argue that avoiding certain issues is often more about the discomfort of adults in dealing with these “difficult questions” than student wellbeing. In a sense, the students in workshops could be understood to partly embrace and suggest a “pedagogy of discomfort” (Boler, 1999) in relation to engaging with animal slaughter (cf. Twine, 2014; Winks, 2022) or a “pedagogy of visual disturbance” in suggesting making visible the process of “animals-becoming-meat” (Rowe, 2011; cf. Martin, 2014). These students existed in an interesting moral space: from an animal standpoint they considered what strategies would be most effective for changing current exploitative human-animal relations but at the same time they were often unsure as to whether they wanted to change themselves. They seemed to be even more unsure whether “other people” would change, hence referring to an imagined human collective unwilling to change.

However, there were also students in the classrooms who stated they did not think this kind of material should be shown in schools. After showing the video in the social science class in Year 2, one student, for example, suggested it was “inappropriate” and should not be shown in class (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). In this moment, the material was defined as something that should not be shown, while the killing of animals was not, in this immediate reaction to the video, defined as something that should not be done, although the two are not mutually exclusive. Thus, in this moment, the problem highlighted was the act of showing the killing of animals and not the killing itself. This suggests that the video, along with the act of showing it, may be positioned in terms of being a “vegan killjoy” (Twine, 2014). Additionally, two other students in this class agreed that material of this kind should not be shown in class. Another student said that: “I felt bad. I just couldn’t watch it,” and laughed a little bit (video

recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Hence, there were students in the classroom who found it inappropriate to show this kind of video, as well as students who found the material hard to watch. Some students may have held these views simultaneously, but not necessarily.

Transparency about the conditions in Swedish slaughterhouses was also connected to questions of democracy. When discussing possible outcomes of camera surveillance in slaughterhouses, I explained that the proposal to start using camera surveillance in slaughterhouses would not mean that the video material would be shared on social media. One of the students disagreed with me, stating that: “The government has a responsibility to show the public what is happening at slaughterhouses. So, they will publish it” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). When I asked whether the student thought the government would take this responsibility, the student continued: “If they do not do it, there is something wrong with the democracy of Sweden, with the public service of Sweden” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Here, those in possession of such video material were framed as having a responsibility to share it to raise awareness among the public, and not doing so was understood as a democratic issue. Several students in the classroom started talking and shouting at each other, clearly engaged in the discussions. Whether they were engaged in the topic or the act of arguing itself was hard to tell, however, and it may have differed between students. It was apparent, however, that transparency about how the “food” humans eat is raised and killed was important to some of the students. Relatedly, some students believed it was their right to know, arguing that others had a responsibility to inform. This could be read as a call upon sustainability education to raise awareness about the conditions of animal production, including in slaughterhouses. This urge to know resonates with the thoughts of the students suggesting a study visit to a slaughterhouse. According to some of these students, experiencing the situation first hand, including the smell, would be preferable to watching a video, since they believed it would most likely have a greater impact (audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022). Moreover, this can be related to a desire to explore something oneself instead of being told by others what it is like (cf. Almiron, 2019).

As shown, views on whether videos from slaughterhouses should be shown in classes differed among students. All these different opinions, as well as students’ different reactions to such videos, need to be considered by the educators when engaging with this material in upper secondary schools. In line with Butler (2015, p. 99), I ask what it means for our ethical obligations when we find ourselves

“invariably joined to those we never chose and must respond to solicitations in languages we may not understand or even wish to understand.” Although the students could choose to look away or even walk out of the classroom, they were still in some sense a “captive audience.” However, in conversations with the students, it became clear that many of them had encountered this kind of material outside of school, although some told me that they were not aware of all the specifics covered in this project (audio recording from workshop, November 23, 2022). Upon the publication of the book *Rapport från ett slakteri: en veterinärs berättelse* [Report from a slaughterhouse: The story of a veterinarian] by Lina Gustafsson (2020), the practices used in slaughtering pigs for meat became more widely known in Sweden, resulting in increased debate. Moreover, the students in the workshop group in School 2 told me that they had seen this kind of material on social media thanks to activists going into these factories and documenting the conditions (audio recording from workshop, November 23, 2022). One student said that she thought the activists were “brave” for going inside animal factories and documenting the conditions for the animals (audio recording from workshop, December 7, 2022). In Sweden, animal rights organizations, like the one the activist was a part of, have shared footage and films from their investigations inside animal factories, including slaughterhouses, with the public through conventional media outlets and social media. One of the students shared her own experience of how animal rights videos had impacted her:

It is important to watch since then you learn. You know you get... Because before I did not use to watch such things and so I did not care if I ate meat or not. But now when I have seen a couple of videos on Tik Tok, I just think “shit”. So, well... That is why I am afraid to eat meat. (audio recording from workshop, November 23, 2022)

Here, the potential for changing people’s behavior was put forward as a reason to show this kind of material. Killing at slaughterhouses seemed to have reached students, although it is seldom displayed openly by the industry itself. Therefore, some of what the students saw in the video clip may have been familiar to some of them, while other aspects may have been new.

Even if the students had seen similar videos before, they were here encountering the killing of nonhuman animals in the context of upper secondary education, specifically in a CAP module with an animal rights activist. The students in the workshop group stated that they found information about animal factories provided by animal rights activists to be trustworthy since activists have seen for themselves the realities inside these factories. These students acknowledged that

information may be read differently depending on who is delivering it, and one student stated that many students “will not care” if a teacher brings it up and just treat it as an assignment (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2023). In this regard, the openly communicated standpoints of the activist and me seemed to resonate with these students, with one stating in an appreciative manner: “but you, you have a purpose, a goal kind of” (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2023). This can be understood in terms of “ideological authenticity,” which is about expressing what is true and authentic to a social movement. According to Freeman (2014, in Almiron, 2019, p. 1111), this is good for integrity and honesty in communication and perceived as the best advocacy approach to defend nonhumans. This approach seemed to be appreciated at least by these students, as it was transformed into an openly normative pedagogical approach. Moreover, when students encounter what they might already know in a new context, they engage in the process of learning it in a new way (Mayo, 2014, p. 182). I am interested in the possibilities available for students to approach this kind of material in upper secondary school.

## The ambivalent encounter with a slaughterhouse video

Using video material from slaughterhouses was one way to bring the situation of nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses into the classroom. This could be thought of in terms of education that aims to enable encounters with “what is real,” rather than remaining conceptual (Biesta, 2022, p. 50). Watching a video clip, however, is not the same as being physically present for the act of slaughter, and the students could choose to block out both audio and visual stimuli. Moreover, the video clip shown was only three minutes long and offered only a short glimpse of what the animals endured. However, a study visit would also only offer a partial picture. Previous research acknowledges that study visits to animal production facilities often only include selected encounters and information (cf. Linné & Pedersen, 2016), if they are even permitted. Thus, most encounters that people outside of the industry have with animal slaughter in Sweden are mediated in some way. In some sense, videos produced by animal rights organizations using hidden cameras could allow for a more intimate and realistic experience of the lives and deaths of nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses than some study visits. When conceptualizing the introduction of a slaughterhouse video in the classroom as enabling an encounter with “what is the real” (cf. Biesta, 2022, p. 50), I am

referring not to an authentic reality as such but rather an encounter with the exploitation and killing inherent in current relations between humans and nonhuman animals in animal production. Biesta (2022, p. 50) states that enabling encounters with “what is real” is about something real being at stake. Hence, educators should make sure that what students seek to express can meet the world in a way that enables a “reality check” (Biesta, 2022, pp. 53). I am interested in whether the encounter with a slaughterhouse video, produced by an animal rights organization, can create space in an upper secondary school for such “reality checks” by enabling students to address the killing inherent in animal production. Since material provided by animal rights organizations is, for many people, the only way they encounter the conditions at slaughterhouses, it is interesting to explore further the possibilities and challenges related to using such material in ESE.

The lessons started with an introduction by the animal rights activist. She told the students that the material was recorded with a hidden camera over an extended period, since these kinds of exposures otherwise tend to be dismissed as “extreme cases” (video recordings from lessons December 2 and 7, 2022; cf. Saari, 2021). The activist further addressed the animal rights movement’s intention in showing this kind of material in terms of changing society’s treatment of species currently used in food production. In line with a suggestion by the social science students who participated in the workshop group to provide a content warning, the activist described the content of the video before it was shown. She also stated that it may be “disturbing” and hard to watch, saying that it was ok for students to close their eyes (video recordings from lessons December 2 and 7, 2022).<sup>30</sup> When the video started, a rumbling sound from within the slaughterhouse was heard through the speakers in the classrooms. The hidden camera used to record the video had been placed in the ceiling in a corner of the slaughter room. In the first sequence shown, seven sheep were held in an enclosure in the slaughter hall. They looked around with scared and stressed looks in their eyes, their ears moving quickly to listen to the different sounds of the machines, the slaughterer, and their fellow sheep. The scene showed one of the sheep hanging from the ceiling by her hindlegs, blood running from her throat. The slaughterer placed an electrocutor around the head of another sheep, which fell to the ground. This second sheep was also chained by

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<sup>30</sup> In agreement with the students’ teacher and the students taking part in workshops, it was decided not to suggest students who found the video difficult to step out of the classroom due to the risk of them leaving the lesson, which was fairly common in this school. The video clip was also only three minutes long.

her hindlegs and hoisted up next to the other herd members, before having her throat cut open. The five remaining sheep bleated as they tried to turn back the way they came, only to realize they were trapped with nowhere to go.

Most of the students in the social science class in Year 2 watched the video, while some looked away or covered their eyes (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Immediately when the video started, one of the students, for example, turned around and partially hid under the table, while another looked down and covered her eyes with her hand. Some other students looked away so that they could not see the screen, but most watched the video. One student in the front row burst out: “Oh my God!” Another said “bleh,” with a disgusted tone in their voice (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Yet another student laughed. Although many students looked away from the material, most of them altered between covering their eyes and glancing at the video before looking away again. Hence, the video seemed to create a sense of ambivalence. It appeared as though the students tried to look away from the video but were captured by it, drawn back in, almost simultaneously (cf. Håkansson, 2023; Martin, 2014). As mentioned, some students made sounds of disgust and some also had disgusted looks on their faces. According to Miller, something rarely disgusts without also capturing one’s attention—“we find it hard not to sneak a second look or, less voluntarily, we find our eyes doing ‘double-takes’ at the very things that disgusts us” (Miller, 1997, p. x, quoted in Ahmed, 2014b, p. 84). Thus, disgust is an ambivalent feeling in that it involves a desire for the object that is repellent (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 84). Furthermore, disgust is understood as an emotion that may resonate with moral concern for nonhuman animals and can, for example, be evoked in relation to meat consumption (Herzog & Golden, 2009; Kasperbauer, 2015; Rozin, Markwith & Stoess, 1997). The process of looking and turning away could also indicate possible feelings of anxiety, which, according to Martin (2014, p. 99), have the potential for transformation if they enable “ethical revelation and responsibility.”

Most of the students who looked away still took quick glances at the video. This happened, for instance, when the students in the social science class in Year 2 watched a cow being slaughtered in the video (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). A loud bang was heard through the speakers in the classroom when the cow was shot by the slaughterer with a captive bolt stunner behind a wall. The wall was then opened and the cow fell to the floor of the slaughter pit. In the next scene, she was hoisted by her hindlegs and kicked as she hung from the ceiling. One student looked away from the screen and covered her ears with

her hands to block out both the audio and images. She then quickly glanced at the screen, opened her mouth with a shocked look on her face and then smiled. Some of the students started talking to each other, seemingly gauging one another's reactions to what had happened to the cow. In the other social science class in Year 3, another student had a similar reaction to this scene. The sudden loud sound of the captive bolt stunner and the cow falling to the ground made the student scream and cover her ears (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). She then covered her mouth and looked to one of her classmates while she laughed in response to her own reaction. Three additional students, who seemed to be friends with this student, started laughing too. The students then looked back at the screen and stopped laughing as they continued to watch the video with serious and concerned looks on their faces.

On several occasions while watching the video clip students started laughing. This was a rather common reaction. Laughter is ambivalent, and, according to Marander-Eklund (2008, p. 97), one may laugh at something that is experienced as simultaneously macabre and revolting. Thus, the students' laughter when watching the video could just be because it was so revolting. However, laughter can be an expression of a multitude of feelings, such as ignorance, scorn, anxiety, and apology (Marander-Eklund, 2008, p. 98 drawing upon Olsson et al., 2003). Some students might also laugh as an excuse for their own reactions, as previously suggested. According to Stengel (2014, p. 201), laughter can be understood as a "blind discharge" (c.f. Dewey, 1922, p. 65) connected to a breakdown in integrated experience. Stengel (2014, p. 201) links this to "resonance/dissonance of personal experience," and laughter in the form of "blind discharge" can be both concealing and revealing. It risks having a concealing effect by diverting attention from discomfort that could potentially threaten "the self-as-is or the status quo in a sociopolitical situation" (Stengel, 2014, p. 201). However, an uncomfortable moment of "experiential interruption" that is made tolerable by the "cushion of laughter" constitutes a moment of potential growth (Stengel, 2014, p. 201). Therefore, Stengel (2014) advises educators to pay attention to moments of laughter, or rather what comes *after* the laughter.

The students' laughter and other reactions might indicate feelings of being overwhelmed. According to Sontag (in Butler 2015, p. 102), war photography overwhelms and paralyzes, which is associated with the risk of "compassion fatigue" (as addressed by Aaltola, 2014). I draw upon these insights since video material from slaughterhouses can be understood as being similarly violent content to war photography. Like Butler (2015, p. 102), I ask if it is possible that one might

be “overwhelmed and unparalyzed,” and if this could be understood in terms of an “ethical obligation upon [one’s] sensibilities?” The three-minute video clip seemed to put something in motion, with several students reacting strongly and others initially turning away from it, only to be pulled back in. As mentioned before, disgust can cause people to temporarily avoid what has disgusted them, but pain often also causes a moving away. Ahmed (2014b, p. 26) considers pain to seize us back to our bodies, describing the body turning in on itself when feeling pain. Hence, in experiencing pain one also experiences embodiment. The students who shut out both the audio and imagery and hid behind their desks could perhaps be understood as turning in on themselves. Ahmed (2014b) maps out different ways of responding to the pain of others, as well as the pain one might feel upon encountering others’ pain. Sometimes people respond so as to make others into objects of their own feelings, in other words feeling sad *about* the suffering of others (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 21). However, Ahmed (2014b, pp. 30-31) outlines an “ethics of responding to pain” that requires being *with* others in their pain, acting upon that which one cannot really know or feel and pain that one cannot claim as one’s own.

The encounter with the slaughterhouse video seemed to create a sense of ambivalence. Throughout the analysis, an ambivalence is also present in terms of whether the video clip enabled students to critically address (and resist) animal slaughter. Throughout the rest of the analysis, I explore what the suffering and pain of the individuals killed in the video put into motion in my empirical contexts and the possibilities for responding to this pain that seem to be available in the context of upper secondary education. Thus, I explore whether the act of showing video footage from slaughterhouses communicated ethical claims on behalf of the sheep, cows, and pigs killed there, as well as other individuals killed under similar conditions in animal production. Miller (1997; in Ahmed, 2014b, p. 89) states that horrifying things “stick.” If something “sticks” in the moment of witnessing other animals be killed in a slaughterhouse video, I am interested in exactly what. Did the killing of nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses “stick” with some of the students, and what are the implications of this potential “stickiness?”

## Responding with (possible) irony

The slaughterhouse video exists as a form of address to viewers by the individuals killed in the video. However, the students did not choose to watch this video themselves and, like Butler (2015, p. 101), I ask: “Is there a Levinasian

undercurrent in this moment of having to listen to the voice of someone we never chose to hear or to see an image that we never elected to see?” The students dealt with watching this video in different ways. Among the first reactions after the video ended in the social science class in Year 2 was a student who raised his voice and said: “Well this makes me want to become vegan. This was terrible. It was awful... I didn’t know about this before. This was something new to me” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Some of the students sitting close by started talking to each other and laughing. Considering the tone of voice, I interpreted the statement to be ironic. There was a similar occurrence of (possibly) ironic responses by students later during the lesson when discussing the possible impact of camera surveillance in slaughterhouses during the quadrilateral exercise. Some students considered what would happen if images from slaughterhouses were made public and stated that people might not want to work in slaughterhouses anymore. One student acknowledged that people would then lose their jobs, but another student responded: “Yes, but better that than animals being abused. They are as important as we are” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Another student called out: “Animals are as important as I am! I am as important as an animal!” The first student then exclaimed: “Humans and animals—we are one!” Someone started applauding while another student started laughing almost hysterically. From the tone of the students’ voices, I interpreted that they were perhaps mocking those of us in charge of the lesson, or at least being ironic in their replies. Thus, there was a risk of the killing of nonhuman animals at slaughterhouses being turned into a spectacle (cf. Aaltola, 2014). The first student’s statement on wanting to become vegan upon watching the video highlighted a somewhat common idea that if people only knew what was going on inside animal factories they would act in protest of the industry by becoming vegan. Such an outcome was also mapped out and envisioned in the CAP module when the activist addressed the aim of animal rights organizations in showing this kind of video material in terms of changing people’s behavior. Through their comments, these students made it apparent that they were aware of the perspectives and purposes of animal rights activists, and perhaps also of CAP and the reasons they imagined the educators had for showing this footage.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In this pedagogical context, there are multiple ideas behind or purposes for showing this kind of material; some of these may overlap between the activist, the students’ teacher, and me, but others may differ. Since CAP is carried out in solidarity with nonhuman animals, veganism is a desirable outcome, however the goal of these lessons is not primarily to enable students to become vegan.

These (most likely) ironic statements could, moreover, function as a form of protest against the solicitations of the nonhuman animals killed in the video. Animal slaughter was framed here in relation to human eating practices through the introduction of veganism. As previously addressed, humor and laughter can be used to conceal or divert attention from discomfort that risks threatening the status quo in a sociopolitical situation (Stengel, 2014, p. 201). The topic of animal slaughter and what it puts into motion may threaten taken-for-granted exploitative human-animal relations that legitimize animal consumption. It may also create moments of realization if it enables students to critically address their human privilege and current human practices in relation to nonhuman animals used for food production. Such moments of realization can create discomfort, which, according to Kumashiro (2000, p. 7), can result in liberating change or more entrenched resistance. Here, addressing meat consumption from a starting point in animal rights seemingly caused a reaction that could be understood to function as a form of resistance (cf. Darst & Dawson, 2019). In addition (or alternatively) to resisting the ethical demands of the nonhuman animals in the video clip, these responses could be understood to function as acts of resistance toward the specific lesson, how the CAP module was carried out, animal rights activists, or the education system. According to Ahmed (2014a) an atmosphere in a room or that which impress upon us is always felt from a specific point, and so it is always already angled. The angle depends on the affective state from which it is experienced (Ahmed, 2014a). Hence, the context of upper secondary school may influence students' responses. Students that have a prior negative experience of school may exhibit resistance toward issues discussed in CAP due to their feelings about the educational system. The same goes for previous impressions of veganism and animal rights (activists). Thus, the students' encounter with CAP is already angled, and the perceived "ideology of visual" material, such as a slaughterhouse video, could, moreover, hinder possibilities for meaningful interpretation and learning due to preexisting attitudes and beliefs (Martin, 2014, pp. 87, 89).

These responses could further be related to the pedagogy possibly coming across as telling the students what to do rather than letting them discover for themselves (cf. Almiron, 2019). Something interesting happens when CAP is introduced as part of formal education in that a marginalized perspective is introduced from a place of authority. The students' (possibly) ironic responses could be understood as them critically addressing the perceived intentions of the educators, even resisting them. Humor and laughter can function as a social

corrective in that “laughing at something or someone defines it as outside of the social order” (Kuipers, 2011 quoted in McDermott & Lenters, 2021, p. 159). It can even be used to flatten power hierarchies, at least momentarily (McDermott & Lenters, 2021, p. 159, drawing upon Branagan, 2007). The power relation between students and educators is asymmetrical, and responses that state what the educators (presumably) want to hear, but in an ironic tone of voice, are one way to challenge educators’ authority. As in cases explored by McDermott and Lenters (2021), the students in my project tried out something that had not previously been approved or condoned by the educators through their “jokes.” Moreover, Gilbert (2021, p. 70) conceptualizes Gen Z humor as a sort of humor of the oppressed, arguing that the “Zoomer” generation is using humor to grapple with “broken cultural, economic, political, and most crucially educational promises.” In the example, the students could be understood to relate critically to authority in the form of the CAP educators. Although resistance toward animal rights and the CAP educators was not the critical analysis (or response) this lesson, or the CAP module as a whole, aimed to provoke, a critical approach to ideas promoted from positions of power is very much in line with the aims of CAP.

This was, however, a rather messy moment in the classroom, resulting from the introduction of CAP and the reactions the pedagogy provoked in students. I have struggled with how to make sense of this instance in the data, as I struggled to handle the situation in the classroom. Should I even try to make sense of it? According to Britzman (2021, p. 31), something resists its own unveiling “in the midst of learning,” and this goes for both my learning in relation to these instances in the data and the students (possible) learning in the classroom. Still, I have offered some possible interpretations, or perhaps rather described possible effects, of these occurrences. Since I focus on what was put into motion in the classroom and did not engage in conversations with all students, I do not know the intentions of their actions. Thus, this analysis should be read as the (possible) effects of what was being vocalized. Relatedly, McDermott and Lenters (2021, p. 169) address jokes and humor among students in the classroom, acknowledging how they may cause “fragile interruptions.” The previously described instances in the classroom could be understood as moments of interruption in the mundane flow of schooling. Relatedly, McDermott and Lenters (2021) ask what could emerge if students were encouraged to follow jokes or humorous utterances. They also acknowledge that youth, particularly those “racially marked,” often are positioned as “unruly” and suggest trusting youth and engage in “daring conversations” (McDermott & Lenters, 2021, p. 168). It is easy to read the ironic responses as

resistance to the message of the CAP module, or as challenging the educators, perhaps especially the animal rights activist(s). But who is to say that it was an act of resistance toward the message of animal rights or the CAP educators, as previously suggested as one possibility, and not a trying out of a CAS perspective?

Although the statements were seemingly ironic, the possibility to respond to the killing just witnessed on the screen through veganism was vocalized in the classroom. Statements that nonhuman animals should not be abused even if it means people losing their jobs or that nonhuman animals are just as important as humans break with the idea of nonhuman animals existing solely as resources for humans. They frame nonhuman animals as beings with whom one can or must enter into an ethical relation. Thus, this might be an instance when Levinasian ethics could be used against itself in extending the ethical realm beyond the communities understood as the necessary condition and limit for ethical relation (Butler, 2015, p. 107). No matter the intent of the utterances, which I ultimately do not know, such alternatives were still verbalized. Furthermore, it may be that joking statements in line with animal rights are more within reach for some students than discussions in a more “serious” tone of voice, as often used within schooling. Thus, this could be one (less risky) way for students to try out taking an animal standpoint. One response could have multiple possible effects, and it would be interesting for CAP to explore what could happen if these seemingly ironic responses were to be picked up and followed in the classroom (cf. McDermott & Lenters, 2021). However, receptivity is both a precondition and constitutive for action (Butler, 2015, p. 102). The question is whether nonhuman animals could appear as individuals with lives just as important as human lives in the classroom and whether we, who witnessed their suffering, were receptive to their ethical claims.

## The impossibility of an animal standpoint

In the discussions right after the video was shown, several students focused on the methods used to slaughter nonhuman animals. One of the students in the social science class in Year 3 said that she thought it was awful, but she and another student stated that not all slaughter is carried out this way (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). Another student continued by saying this was why she thought people should eat halal. Later, another student declared that what the class had witnessed in the video clip was “torture,” but that the method of slaughter shown was not halal (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). In this

moment in the classroom, halal was framed as an alternative (better) form of slaughter to those shown in the video. Similar statements were made on several occasions in this school, with many students identifying as Muslims. Religion is often seen as an “ultimate arbiter of ethical code, including the case of animal killing” (Leroy & Praet, 2017, p. 80, drawing upon Fiddes, 1991). Therefore, it is not surprising that references were made to religion when the ethics of killing other animals for food was questioned. Religions that justify animal slaughter often ritualize it in various ways, but it should be noted that religious practices are not static but transformative (Leroy & Praet, 2017, p. 80, drawing upon Stephenson, 2015). As previously addressed, religion was commonly brought up by students during the CAP modules, and, in the other school, students addressed Christianity and Buddhism, as well as Islam, in relation to animal consumption. Addressing human-animal relations and religion is one possible way to engage with CAP in a manner that starts “where the students *are*” (cf. Russell, 2019, p. 38, emphasis in original), as acknowledged in the previous chapter. By pointing out that the method of slaughter carried out in the video was “awful” or “torture,” but that it was not “halal,” halal-slaughter was framed in opposition to the violent killing just witnessed. Hence, these utterances seem to distance some students from what they saw on the screen, possibly turning these acts of slaughter into something that did not concern them. Framing certain methods of slaughter, which one supports through purchasing and consumption habits, as different to other forms of slaughter that are deemed to be “bad” is a rather common practice. In relation to some forms of slaughter, an alleged concern for nonhuman animals is used to further a racist agenda. For instance, Al Naher (2017, p. 142) addresses how both halal and kosher slaughter have been framed as “bad” and “barbaric” in the European context. In comparison, the framing of halal as a better form of slaughter, in the Swedish context, could be seen as a way of justifying one’s own purchasing and consumption habits with regard to the killing of nonhuman animals, but it is not used to promote a racist agenda that reinforces the oppression of other groups of humans. On the contrary, occasions on which halal was presented as a more ethical form of slaughter can also be understood in relation to increasing Islamophobia in Sweden, potentially influencing Muslim students to try and promote a positive image of Islam in various situations.

After the comments regarding halal slaughter, another student in the social science class in Year 3 raised his hand and asked: “Can you not kill them in an easier way? I mean do you need to hang them and then cut them?” (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). The activist responded that the video clip shows

how slaughter is generally carried out in accordance with the law, whereby another student, seemingly shocked, asked: “Is this how it is supposed to happen?” (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). In the class in Year 2, another student focused on the details of the slaughter and its legality: “Before, I think you mentioned ... Since this clip shows him kind of kicking at the pig’s legs or whatever it was. Is that not kind of against the animal welfare law?” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Addressing an act of violence that seemed to be outside the law, possibly defining the action as bad, might avert attention from the legal violence of slaughter, which is concealed as “good practice.” Such strategies are used by the animal industry itself when it frames specific forms of intersubjective violence against “farmed animals” exposed by undercover investigations, such as the one in focus during this lesson, as isolated instances, obfuscating the violence of standard industry practices (Saari, 2021, p. 64). Consequently, the violence of standard practices is often not seen as violence, resulting in these practices not being scrutinized (Saari, 2021, pp. 64-5). In both cases during the lessons, the activist explained that there is a legal gray area when it comes to the slaughter of animals that often comes down to technicalities. Distinguishing between legal and illegal practices of animal slaughter, as well as endorsing certain “ethical” forms of slaughter over others, could be understood as an attempt to keep the suffering of nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses at a distance. Hence, negotiations of relations of distance and proximity could be at play here. In relation to such negotiations, Butler asks:

Is what is happening so far away from me that I can bear no responsibility for it? Is what is happening so close to me that I cannot bear having to take responsibility for it? If I myself did not make this suffering, am I still in some other sense responsible to it? (Butler, 2015, p. 110)

The comments in the classrooms established a distinction between the methods of slaughter taking place on the screen and the methods the students supported through their own consumption of animal-derived foods. Did they distance themselves from the acts of slaughter depicted in the video precisely because the proximity would be too much to bear?

After some discussions, the educators asked the students in Year 2 whether they had any further questions. When no one said anything, we moved on to the next exercise of the lesson. Here, a possibility for students to share their reflections and ask questions was created once again, but they were not pushed to share anything if they did not want to. In the lesson with the class in Year 3, the activist

concluded by saying that “in essence this is how all forms of slaughter are carried out in Sweden,” explaining that religious and conventional forms of slaughter are generally both carried out this way (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). One student continued to ask questions, focusing on whether the killing could be done quicker: “Well, it sounds brutal, but what about just by cutting their throat kind of. Or you know? To kind of take their life quickly?” (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). These reflections resonate with debates that often arise in Swedish media when footage from inside of animal industries is released to the public by animal rights activists, in which the focus tends to be on how the animals should be killed and how to prevent animal welfare crimes. In line with the animal welfare logic that prevails in Sweden, the killing of millions of nonhuman animals for food is framed as a non-issue. Thus, the material positionality of nonhuman animals within the context of animal production in Sweden, as well as how the inherent killing is discursively framed, captures them in “a zone of indistinction between life and death” to use the words of Wadiwel (2015, p. 59).

Affective responses are impacted by cultural histories and memories, and the experience of different emotions is impacted by past impressions (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 7, 25). Thus, those who watched the video in the classrooms did not experience it in a vacuum, rather it was experienced through cultural histories and memories. Given that we live in an anthropocentric and speciesist society, many of us seem to approach the killing of nonhuman animals through this lens. As follows, the discussions in the classroom reproduced certain taken-for-granted assumptions framing nonhuman animals as killable and consumable (cf. Göransson, 2017). Butler (2015, 2004) connects the livability of different lives to considerations of which lives are understood to be worthy of protection, which lives are recognized, and which deaths that can be mourned. In these conversations in the classrooms, the nonhuman animals seemed to exist only as individuals that should be killed, or as “meat to be.” Their lives were made “unlivable” and “ungrievable” (cf. Butler, 2004, 2015; Göransson, 2017). Taken-for-granted ideas about some animals being legitimate to kill and eat circulate in society, as cultural histories and memories repeated again and again, and were reproduced in the classrooms. When the students’ initial reactions, often consisting of shock, disgust, pain, and disturbance, were vocalized during the discussions, these taken-for-granted ideas were repeated, and nonhuman animals were turned into killable individuals (if they could even be seen as individuals in this context). In this sense, the encounter with animal slaughter here stabilized rather than problematized animal exploitation and killing,

risking furthering human dominance (e.g., Winks, 2022, pp. 181-2). Thus, working with CAP seems to entail the risk of reproducing speciesism. This indicates the uncontrollability of education (Biesta, 1998; Britzman, 2003) and the fact that what is intended to be taught is not necessarily what is picked up (cf. Pedersen, 2018).

Many students seemed shocked, and some also upset, when watching the video, and some responded seemingly by trying to distance themselves from the suffering of nonhuman animals, or perhaps what they felt upon watching the suffering. According to Ahmed (2010b, p. 32), distancing is part of establishing the edges of our horizon and rejecting some things that we do not wish to “have, touch, taste, hear, feel, [or] see.” Hence, this could be interpreted as an attempt to keep the animals’ suffering outside the edges of the students’ horizons. The questions and statements that came up reflected a process of trying to rationalize the killing of other animals for food, resulting in its legitimization, possibly enabling students to distance themselves from potentially disturbing feelings. Perhaps these reactions can be read in terms of what approaching animal slaughter from an animal standpoint risks putting into motion? Here I look to Britzman, who states:

Bion (1993) argued that every encounter with unknown ideas or what one has not expected carries threats of catastrophic change because new knowledge may destroy the valence of deeply held beliefs and shake one’s foundational myths to the core. (Britzman, 1995, p. 34)

It is, of course, not possible to know what all students feel and think, but several either distanced themselves from the particular forms of slaughter shown in the video by stating that they themselves supported alternative (better) forms of slaughter or rationalized it by focusing on legal technicalities. Hence, the method by which the nonhuman animals were killed, rather than the killing itself, was framed as the problem, leaving dominant societal narratives of anthropocentrism and nonhuman animals as accessible for human use intact.

Regarding my initial question on using video footage from slaughterhouses, the killing of nonhuman animals did not seem to “stick” but rather was left behind as a non-issue in the wake of discussions on the methods by which nonhuman animals used for food should be slaughtered. That they should not be killed at all did not seem to exist as an option in these moments. If the initial reaction for many students seemed to be feelings of disturbance, the premises of the conversations were in a way set from the start. In these moments, hegemonic societal narratives, literally trapping nonhuman animals used in food production in their current situation, appeared in the classroom. Thus, nonhuman animals could not escape

the fate of being killed for human consumption, and an animal standpoint was impossible in these moments.

## Reproducing human exceptionalism

An animal standpoint also seemed impossible on other occasions when animal slaughter was addressed. During a previous lesson in which the activist addressed Swedish animal production, using footage, video clips, and her own experiences of documenting the conditions in the factories, the slaughter of nonhuman animals for food carried out by humans was once again responded to with a sort of legitimization, this time through the reproduction of “human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2008). In the social science class in Year 2, one of the students raised his hand and asked: “Well, the methods they use for slaughtering the cow [...] It is not as brutal as what occurs in nature, right?” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). When the activist replied that there may be different understandings of what is “brutal,” the student continued: “Yes, but if you compare? [...] The cow is totally helpless, but it is not as if it is eaten when it is conscious.” The consideration of where cows would be killed more or less brutally suggests that cows exist to be eaten, either by humans or by predators in nature, framing the killing of cows as a natural order (cf. Twine, 2014). In this moment, cows are tied to an object position. When nature is framed as “brutal,” it seems implicit that humans are not brutal, but rather “civilized.” This also resonates with the framing of humans as “relatively empathic,” which appeared when discussing why humans seldom get to see what it looks like inside animal production facilities:

Well, you do not share this kind of information since you would destroy yourself in a way, since humans are relatively empathic. If you see how the animals are suffering, then you care ... Then most people will get a rather negative image of those subjecting the animals to this. (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022)

In these discussions in the classroom, the artificial divide between humans and nature that is inherent to an anthropocentric logic, and oftentimes repeated in education, remained intact.

The human subject mapped out followed the Western Enlightenment canon, in which “being human” involves a distancing from nature and groups of humans associated with nature (Cudworth & Hobden, 2014, p. 754). This understanding of the human subject can also be understood in terms of “human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2008), which is often related to a hierarchization in reproducing the idea

of (some) humans as superior to nonhuman animals. “Human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2008) came to the fore even more clearly when I asked why humans often draw a key distinction in terms of the value of a human or nonhuman life, to which one of the students replied: “well, it might be because humans are so advanced in regard to almost all aspects except for raw physical strength” (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). This contrasts with an example in the previous chapter in which the (presumed) exceptionality of humans compared to other species was framed as entailing a responsibility not to exploit. Here, humans were instead framed as exceptional in a manner that reproduced anthropocentrism and the idea of humans having the right to kill other animals for food. What happened in the classroom neatly conformed to the narrative of the rational, evolved, and civilized human subject (cf. Cudworth & Hobden, 2014; Deckha, 2024; Wallin, 2014) in terms of both the framing of humans put forward and the way the discussion unfolded. The reasoning taking place in the classroom fulfils the task of Western education to produce human subjects that can be recognized as “rational” and “civilized” (Wallin, 2014, pp. 148-9).

This manner of reasoning further coheres with deliberative approaches to education that favor “rational deliberation” and “democratic dialogue” (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 301, 314). Such approaches presume a certain type of classroom in which everybody has equal opportunity to speak, respects each other, tolerates all ideas, and assesses ideas presented against moral principles (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 301, 314). They also do not take account of dynamics of subordination present among and within those in the classroom (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 301, 314). During the lesson, some students had more time to speak than others, and many did not seem to listen to their classmates. It also seemed as though some perspectives, such as an animal standpoint, were seldom given space in this context, since the perspective of the nonhuman animals killed was not considered. Instead, a “rationalistic, calculative grid of humans’ own monological construction” (Donovan, 2006, p. 306) was imposed on nonhuman animals, cows in this case, reproducing a human-headed ranking of life-forms (Crary, 2018, pp. 122, 130). Considering how common “rational deliberation” seems to be in schools in general, and within ESE in particular, students reasoning in this manner is far from surprising since they are often trained to use abstract reasoning. This constitutes a challenge for addressing animal slaughter in upper secondary education, since it seemingly makes it hard to start from an animal standpoint and risks reproducing speciesism. The idea of humans having the right to exploit other animals, however, was also questioned in the classroom discussions and a position of power related

to having to take responsibility. As follows, different human-animal relations seemed possible (and impossible) in different moments during the discussions.

On several occasions different pieces of information circulating in society were put together in different ways that impacted what was enabled or disabled when engaging with human-animal relations in the classroom. The idea that nonhuman animals killed within animal production would otherwise die or be killed in nature resurfaced in the previous example from the classroom. It appeared again when another student joined the conversation and stated:

But I do think that if the animals can walk freely and sleep well and everything like that but are then slaughtered then... I don't know ... They would still have died in the end by other animals, or, well it's natural and such. So, if they have lived well and feel well and then are slaughtered. Well, they will first be anesthetized and then you slaughter them. Then it is not ... I don't know ... I would not view it as cruelty. (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022)

Once again, the killing of cows was naturalized in a manner that consolidated the meat norm (cf. Twine, 2014). That cows are domesticated animals that would not be killed and eaten alive by predators in “nature” was not addressed, either by students or the educators. Hence, the specific circumstances and political contexts were not considered when seeking ethical clarity in these moments (cf. Donovan, 2006; Ellsworth, 1989). Rather it seemed as though this classroom discussion got stuck in abstract and hypothetical examples (cf. Donovan, 2006; Ellsworth, 1989). Moreover, the idea that nonhuman animals exploited for food live well before they are slaughtered resonates with the concept of the “happy oppressed” (Twine, 2014). In this moment, happiness seems to justify social norms as social goods (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 2), in that the meat norm was justified by stating that killing is ok if the nonhuman animals live well, i.e. are happy, before they are slaughtered. The construction of the “happy oppressed” helps “assuage discomfoting affect from those holding power in a particular relationship” (Twine, 2014, p. 262), and the idea that animals can live a good life and be happy before they are killed seemed to provide this comfort.

## The (contested) idea of the “happy oppressed”

The idea of the “happy oppressed” (Twine, 2014) appeared again during the quadrilateral exercise carried out with the class in Year 2, which focused on the possible impact of camera surveillance in slaughterhouses. First, the students

began by discussing different stances in smaller groups. When asked to consider the possible effects of starting from the perspective of nonhuman animals, one group of students entered a discussion about whether it would increase these animals' safety or not. One student said:

Then the animal would be safer when we are in ... Or when they finally are in, well, the slaughter rooms or what to call them. But they would be much more unsafe eh in all the other eh rooms or halls where there is no surveillance. (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022)

Two other students in the group agreed. The central focus of the conversation seemed to be where in the slaughterhouse the nonhuman animals would be least at risk of violence in the form of animal welfare crimes. Later in the conversation, the student reflected from the animals' perspective, stating that they would possibly think that the humans were "nicer" to them in some rooms and "meaner" to them in others (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). The discussion continued, and one student stated: "First of all, it costs a lot of money. I think they would put the cameras in the worst places just like you say. It is exactly where they are being slaughtered." (video recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Consequently, the slaughter room is both framed as the "worst place," since the animals are being killed there, and at the same time a "safe space" in the slaughterhouse if everything is carried out in accordance with animal welfare law. Focusing strictly on where it would be likely and less likely that slaughterhouse workers would engage in illegal practices, here, the animal welfare law was part of framing the slaughter room as "safe" and a place where humans are "nice" to other animals. This aligns closely with dominant ideas of animal slaughter in Sweden. According to Behdadi (in Al Naher, 2017, p. 145), the branding "Swedish meat" is almost used as a branding for animal welfare.

Moreover, Britzman states that "the self is not an isolate of enclosed meaning but is always in the midst of things" (2021, p. 32), and, following from this, discourses produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, imposing limits on what can and cannot be said (Britzman, 1995, p. 235). In this regard Svärd (2015, p. 35) acknowledges a historical "anti-cruelty regime" that has shifted into an "animal welfare regime" in Swedish politics. Drawing upon current debates in Swedish politics and media and on my own empirical material from this project, an "animal welfare regime" seems prevalent. According to Svärd (2015, p. 35) this creates more or less "sedimented sets of discursive rules" regulating what can appropriately be thought, said, and done about the treatment of nonhuman

animals. From this follows that institutionalized practices impact people to align their behavior with the predominant social regimes (Svärd, 2015, p. 35). The fact that students in a Swedish upper secondary school defined slaughter in accordance with the Swedish animal welfare law as “safe” is therefore not surprising. The Swedish context includes the students in specific communities of consent and dissent, and a specific understanding becomes intelligible. Although there exist multiple communities and discourses, the hegemonic discourse regarding “production animals” in Sweden impacts all of those present in the classroom. Certain ideas about, as well as material relations between, humans and other animals circulate in society and resurfaced in the classroom discussions, reproducing a specific discourse in relation to nonhuman animals used for food in Sweden. In this instance in the classroom, the idea that the exploitation of nonhuman animals within animal production is justified if done in accordance with the animal welfare law was prevalent. In turn, this discourse reproduces asymmetric power relations between humans and nonhuman animals killed in the food industry. According to this discourse, nonhuman animals are framed as killable (Göransson, 2017), justifying ontological violence (cf. Adams, 1993). Since, “production animals” are physically killed at the slaughterhouse, the physical slaughter reproduces these exploitative relations. Hence, these discursive and ontological forms of violence are mutually constitutive. In some moments, the methods used to slaughter nonhuman animals were framed as horrible, or even “safe,” once again leaving the death itself unproblematized. In these moments nonhuman animals seemed to remain ungrievable (cf. Butler, 2004), impacting the range of responses to their ethical claims within reach for the students in the classroom. It should be noted, however, that the students also defined the slaughter room as “the worst place” in the slaughterhouse, which suggests an ambivalence, or perhaps contradiction, inherent in the dominant (animal welfare) discourse in Sweden. This indicates a possibility not to align with, but rather interrupt, institutionalized practices and the killing of nonhuman animals in animal production as a non-issue.

Later in the discussion, this group shared their perspective on camera surveillance in slaughterhouses with the whole class, stating that they thought cameras would create a false sense of security and that there was a risk of them being used as an excuse not to improve the situation for nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). They stated that people would falsely think there was no risk of abuse if cameras were present and that the violence could in fact increase in areas of the slaughterhouse where

there were no cameras. In response to these arguments, another student asked whether they wanted the animals to be killed in a “cute way” (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). One of the students in the group replied: “The problem is not that they are slaughtered, but that they are kicking the animals before,” whereby the other student said that the animals were being “warmed up” before being killed (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). At this point, several students in the class started laughing. There were various aspects of interest here, and, like in many other instances when students responded to the slaughter video and the practice of killing other animals for food, there was a doubleness to their responses. On the one hand, this instance could be interpreted as the precarious situation of nonhuman animals being ridiculed, risking making a spectacle of their suffering and death (Aaltola, 2014, p. 28). On the other hand, the (supposedly) joke about “warming up” the animals before killing them makes the violence of the act of slaughter almost more apparent and could perhaps be most correctly described as “dark humor.” Gilbert (2021, p. 74) focuses on dark humor, specifically among Gen Z, and states that humor enables “reconciliation without resignation” in a manner that creates space for alternative ways of sense making. Hence, humor can be used to deal with difficult matters and enable reflection (e.g., Gilbert, 2021; Stengel, 2014; Zembylas, 2018). Humor and laughter could furthermore create space for resisting “cheap and empty sentimentality” by “defusing detachment” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 302), since humor enables a tougher and more active response compared to one that is more tragic. According to Des Pres, this is the case since humor “accepts the terrible weight of what happens” (1988; quoted in Zembylas, 2018, p. 308). Therefore, “laughter is a sort of rebellion against the given” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 311), which can force students and educators to confront assumptions and sensibilities that are taken for granted (Zembylas, 2018).

Here, “jokes” could be understood as questioning whether slaughter can ever be done in a “cute way,” to use the words of the student. Hence, they also reject the idea of the “happy oppressed” (Twine, 2014). Twine (2014, p. 626) acknowledges that animal rights activists play killjoy to the idea of the “happy oppressed” in terms of “happy meat” by “undermining its very possibility and questioning the co-existence of ‘happiness’ with violence.” While the students could not be described as taking the position of an animal rights activists in this moment, a “vegan killjoy perspective” could perhaps be understood as being applied. The question also acknowledges the paradox of problematizing violence before the act of killing and not the killing itself. In a way, it questions the idea of

so-called “humane slaughter” (see Stănescu, 2017, for a critical analysis of “humane farming”). No matter the intent of the utterance, here, conceptualizing the killing of nonhuman animals for food as a problem in and of itself appeared to be possibility. Hence, although the joke could be seen as ridiculing the death of nonhuman animals exploited for food from one angle, it could also enable new ways of making sense of this killing. Therefore, I agree with Stengel (2014) that educators should pay attention to what happens after the laughter. In this example from the classroom the discussions quickly moved on and space was not provided for staying with this utterance. Whole class discussions, such as this one, often did not provide sufficient space for picking up all the potential openings provided by students, with discussions often moving very fast. Still, the moments after laughter seems critical from a pedagogical point of view and considering how common laughter was as a response to slaughterhouse video and topics brought up during the CAP modules it is worth exploring further.

### “Do you want us to stop eating meat?”

Some of the students considered the purpose of this form of pedagogy in terms of the educators’ motivations for showing videos from slaughterhouses. One of the students in Year 3 asked: “when you show us stuff like this, is your point that we should stop eating meat?” (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). This could be understood in terms of a “structural paranoia of the image” in terms of what those presenting these kinds of images want people to feel (Butler 2015, 101). However, Butler (2015, p. 101) states that even the “paranoid” is being solicited and addressed in some way by the images. The activist responded that her and other activists’ aim is change, given their belief that there is no ethical justification to use nonhuman animals for any purpose. Nevertheless, she acknowledged the existence of strong norms in society legitimizing animal exploitation and that she had previously participated in this exploitation herself (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). Although CAP stands in solidarity with nonhuman animals and therefore strives to realize a vegan society, an awareness that veganism is not within equal reach of everyone and that most people are born into omnivorous cultures and families is built into the pedagogy. Here, this was acknowledged by the activist.

The activist further stated that she “would want to know” about the realities of animal production (video recording, December 2, 2022). This made the student acknowledge that they could not slaughter animals themselves and draw the

conclusion: “so the only thing we can do then is to stop eating meat” (video recording, December 2, 2022). The activist responded that this is the change the animal rights organization works toward. According to Butler (2015, p. 109), claims imposed upon us by others against our will are part of our sensibility, receptivity, and answerability, and I relate this to how some claims regarding nonhuman animals seemed to be communicated through this video and responded to by students. In this situation, the video existed as a form of address to those watching it, and a student mapped out a possible response to the ethical claims posed by nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses when acknowledging that the only thing the students could do to impact the situation was to stop eating meat. Thus, “meat” is connected to a once living being for whose situation humans are seemingly responsible. In this sense, addressing animal slaughter in the classroom created space for (re)considering human practices that impact the lives (and deaths) of nonhuman animals, in this case meat consumption. This relates to the vegan education suggested by Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 417), as part of which they acknowledge the importance of both a different kind of eating and a different kind of reading (cf. Snaza, 2013). Through the critical perspectives introduced in line with CAP, the possibility of a different kind of reading of the practices of killing nonhuman animals for food enfolded, also suggesting the possibility of other forms of eating.

This opening, however, was shut down when another student said that: “The animals exist to be eaten. Not all animals, but some of them” (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). Taken-for-granted assumptions about nonhuman animals’ place in the world, such as the idea that some animals exist to be eaten, circulate in society and reappeared on several occasions in my data. There seemed to exist a limited repertoire of utterances regarding nonhuman’s place in the world that reproduced certain practices and meanings in relation to nonhuman animals. Drawing upon Britzman (1995), I am interested in which practices and meanings are accepted and which are discounted, and thus I explore which power relations seemed to circulate and materialize. The idea of animals as “meat-to-be” appeared here as specific asymmetric power relations between humans and some other species circulated and materialized. In response to this utterance by the student, the activist stated that it was interesting to talk about, and that she understood that one could take this perspective, although she thought about it differently (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). The student responded by saying: “even if I find it tragic and feel really sorry for the animals, it will not stop me from eating meatballs now after this,” and some of the other

students started laughing (video recording from lesson, December 2, 2022). This is in line with a study by Darst and Dawson (2019, p. 216) that concludes that many students are reluctant to reduce their meat consumption or stop eating meat all together and often respond in absolute terms, such as stating that it would be impossible. However, in my study there was a greater diversity of responses, and, in the example, the student only stated that she was unwilling to stop eating meat rather than suggesting it would be impossible. Moreover, several students in the project stated that they aimed to reduce their meat consumption. There was also a doubleness in the statements—if some nonhuman animals are framed as killable or “meat-to-be,” the opposite must also be true, since stating that one will not stop eating meat frames meat consumption as a choice. Hence, an area of possible change nevertheless became visible.

The discussions in the classroom were connected to practices of meat consumption in general and during school lunch in particular. This acknowledges the connection between the “animal-industrial complex” (Noske, 1997; cf. Twine, 2013) and education (Pedersen, 2019a; Repka, 2019). Some students connected the discussions in the classroom to what, or rather whom, they might eat during lunch. Hence, a space was created for addressing ordinary practices of animal exploitation in school, such as those implicit in the lunches served.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the impression that exists of other animals impacts how they are treated. Ahmed (2014b, p. 6), in particular, emphasizes the “press” in impression, acknowledging the impact of one surface upon another. These surfaces are established with the repetition of actions over time (cf. Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 3-4). If some nonhuman animals are repeatedly framed as existing to be eaten by humans, some surfaces are established and not others. In relation to “production animals,” one could read this quite literally in that framing these beings as consumable creates a situation in which the actual surfaces of these animals’ skins can be violated. Their surfaces are established as violatable and the animals themselves as killable (cf. Göransson, 2017). Their surface, their skin, is, as in the video clip shown in class, literally cut open to bleed them to death at the slaughterhouse. Hence, CAP clashes with common practices in schools in terms of school lunch containing animal products.

Focusing on practices of meat consumption can be understood in terms of centering individual actions. Ideland and Malmberg (2015) are critical of forms of ESD that they perceive as aiming to create “eco-certified children,” acknowledging

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<sup>32</sup> The school serves both meat and vegetarian meals. However, the serving of meat normalizes meat consumption and are therefore part of connecting students and nonhuman animals in oppressive ways.

how personal guilt is connected to global threats in a manner that focuses on individual activities (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015, p. 180). They connect this to the presence of a neoliberal ideology in ESD, through which the eco-certified child appears as “knowing, conscious, rational, sacrificing and active” (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015, p. 180). It could be understood that there was a risk of reproducing a neoliberal ideology in the classroom on some occasions during the discussions when focus appeared to be on consumer power. Some students participated in a discussion regarding the possible impact of videos from slaughterhouses being shared on social media, in which one student stated that: “there are people who will be touched and want to stop eating meat, so it also helps” (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). This led the students to discuss the possible impact of some people becoming vegans. In response to the statement that some people will be moved and become vegan as a result of seeing this kind of material, another student replied that no one will stop eating meat. Another student joined the discussion, saying that the problem is that these people who become vegan would not change how much meat is being produced. This resulted in a heated exchange between the students, whose thoughts on the matter varied. One student argued: “ten people could let two cows live” (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Acknowledging the positive impact of two individuals not being killed indicates that the life of a single cow matters. However, this was not explored in more detail, and the discussion continued. After a while, one of the students stated: “It would be one thing if one hundred thousand people stopped eating meat. That would make quite a difference, but one hundred [people] would not make a difference” (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022). Here, the focus seemed to be on consumer power in terms of the impact on production of various numbers of people becoming vegan. This resonates with the idea of the neoliberal market economy in which one can primarily contribute to change through consumption choices. Thus, this risks reproducing a neoliberal rationality in which responsibility is put solely on individuals (cf. Ideland & Malmberg, 2015), who can only have an impact in terms of what they consume. According to Ideland and Malmberg (2015, p. 181), a focus on the individual can make sustainable development apolitical if conflicts of interests and ideological standpoints become invisible. In this instance in the classroom, change was measured in terms of how individuals becoming vegan would affect how much meat is produced. Other possible impacts of a person becoming vegan were not considered, reflecting a neoliberal ideology.

At the same time as the topics of animal slaughter and meat consumption risked individualizing both responsibility and imagined strategies for change, the topic engaged students in discussions and reflections (cf. Russell, 2019). This contrasts with the conclusion drawn by Darst and Dawson (2019) that students are reluctant to talk about meat. “[P]rior to any action, there must be a conscious making up of one’s mind” (Jensen, 2002, p. 326). Throughout the project, many students started their reflections at the point of individual (eating) practices and then moved into more general discussions of other possible societies and human-animal relations. For instance, some students critically addressed school practices in terms of the lunches served (as in the example above), and in some of their podcasts, recorded as the final assignment of the CAP modules in the social science classes, they envisioned what societies based on interspecies sustainability could look like (see Chapter 8). However, there were also several occasions when the discussions seemed to remain “stuck” at the individual level. Nevertheless, discussions on (individual) meat consumption constituted an engaging starting point for CAP that resonated with many students’ everyday lives (cf. Russell, 2019). It also created space for student agency in their acknowledgements of the possibility of them taking action by giving up eating meat.

## The significance of an animal standpoint

When the slaughter of nonhuman animals was approached specifically from an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), it seemed possible for the killing to be perceived as a problem in and of itself. This happened, for instance, when a group of students considered the possible impacts of camera surveillance in slaughterhouses from the perspective of the beings killed there. One student shared, with those of us in the classroom, the reflections that she and the students in her group had discussed:

Like I said before, it [camera surveillance] will help, but since for the animals it is also a suffering to die [...]. It will not help since they will be slaughtered no matter what. (audio recording from lesson, December 7, 2022)

As follows, a different conclusion to the question of whether camera surveillance would decrease the suffering of nonhuman animals seemed to be reached when the students were asked to attend to it from the perspective of the nonhuman animals, making the students frame death itself as suffering. This response was rather different from many of the other discussions that occurred, in which only

the methods of slaughter were critically addressed, never the act of killing itself. Hence, whether death was understood as suffering seemed to change through taking of an animal standpoint. In this moment, so-called “production animals” could be thought of as entering the conversation in the classroom as subjects whose lives matter and whose perspectives should be considered. Drawing upon Butler’s (2004) thoughts on “ungrievable lives,” here, the lives of nonhuman animals seemed “grievable,” at least when considered from the perspectives of the animals themselves. Hence, their lives might also be liveable and so worthy of protection.

Likewise, an animal standpoint was taken during some of the conversations I had with the five students from the social science class in Year 2 taking part in a workshop group. During one workshop, the students shared some of their thoughts after watching the videos of nonhuman animals within Swedish factories and slaughterhouses. Among other things, one student stated that after watching these videos, she imagined herself in the animals’ position: “Imagine if I was kind of there instead. [...] What if I was there instead of them, you know?” she said with a serious tone in her voice (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2022). She concluded by reflecting that it would mean she would die. Here, death was addressed as the main problem, again suggesting that the killing of nonhuman animals could be conceptualized as a problem in and of itself. The other students and I seemed to enter a reflective state at this utterance, and another student reflected similar thoughts saying: “What if someone were to eat me? Kind of like that.” She paused for a second before continuing more quietly and with a thoughtful tone in her voice: “It is actually what we do. We do eat meat. But I try to reduce [my meat consumption] actually.” (audio recording from workshop, February 8, 2022). Upon this statement, another student said that she too had tried to decrease her meat consumption. Here, meat was connected to a (once) living being that had been killed due to meat consumption. This diverges from the narratives in many (Western) countries where eating practices are often constructed through an unquestioned contact with food and seldom framed in terms of an interaction with an animal (Leroy & Praet, 2017, p. 74, drawing upon Bratanova et al., 2011; Baur, 2008). During the workshop discussions, it seemed as though the practice of eating meat and the killing of animals at slaughterhouses were seen in another light after seeing the videos from the slaughterhouses, tightly connecting the two. Here, meat consumption was being understood in terms of eating *someone*, which could be understood as a “subjectifying” moment (Biesta, 2022), in that the exploitative nature of current human-animal relations appeared

before the students, calling upon them. Thus, an animal standpoint becomes possible when the political context becomes visible in terms of how meat consumption impacts those beings killed for food, seemingly impacting ethical decision-making (Donovan, 2006, p. 311). In the workshop discussion, there seemed to exist a possibility for answerability to nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses, creating space for addressing questions of ethical responsibility (cf. Martin, 2014).

Responsibility, however, is not chosen but encountered, in that responsibility “calls *me*” (Biesta, 2022, p. 54, emphasis in original). This indicates the potential of a “pedagogy of visual disturbance,” which Rowe (2011) finds crucial for understanding the process of “animals-becoming-meat.” According to Rowe (2011), it is necessary to watch the process of nonhuman animals being turned into pieces of meat through industrial animal farming to create awareness of this suffering. Moreover, one of the students included herself in the human “we” that eats animals. Hence, watching and reflecting upon the video from a slaughterhouse enabled a consideration of how her own and other humans’ actions impact on nonhuman animals exploited within the food industry. Tallberg et al. (2022, p. 64) consider it important to move from “affective responses from witnessing suffering to cognitive insights that link to theory,” framing it as a move from “courageously witnessing” toward “empathic inquiry” (cf. Gruen, 2013). Similar to the results of Tallberg et al. (2022, p. 62), this slaughterhouse video seemed, at least for some students, to draw attention to the everyday realities of food production, encouraging “intellectual links” to be made between the students’ own food decision-making and distant mass-scale suffering in acknowledging possibilities for making different decisions in terms of eating less meat. According to Biesta (2022, 54), an encounter with responsibility is an encounter with freedom, in that one can either respond or walk away. In this instance, the students could be understood to respond to the calls by nonhuman animals, but this could be even more explicitly connected to another student in this class, who stated that she decided to become vegan after the CAP module. Thus, a notion of responsibility seemed to extend beyond the nonhuman animals in the video to those in similar situations. Relatedly, Lingis (2019, p. 17) develops Levinas’s work beyond both the human realm and the face-to-face encounter, acknowledging that when one feels required to respond to someone’s suffering due to their needs being exposed, one also understands that there are others in need that one has not yet encountered but might in the future, as well as those in need at a distance or those in such distress that they cannot face us. Hence, the ethical obligation is extended beyond the face-to-face

encounter (Lingis, 2019). By connecting the suffering of the nonhuman animals in the video to meat consumption more broadly, the students seemed to consider the situation for nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses in general. In this sense, an ethical obligation also existed in relation to those nonhuman animals in animal production that the students have not faced through the video.

The conversation continued by me asking whether the students thought the videos enabled them to put themselves in the situation of these animals. The students answered that they really did think so. By placing themselves in the animals' situation, space was created to consider the situation of nonhuman animals within the food industry and, critically, address how human consumption practices contribute to this situation. According to Ahmed (2014b, pp. 4,8), pain circulates between bodies, "sticks" to some and slides over others. It seemed as though the pain of the nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses "stuck" to some of the students in the workshop, perhaps because they let it do so. Several of the students in the group considered the video material hard to watch, but they still concluded it was important to do so, due to the potential they saw in these videos to change peoples' behavior (audio recordings from workshops, 23 November 23, and December 7, 2022). In relation to nonhuman animals, this entails both risks and opportunities. For instance, Ahmed (2014b, p. 31) acknowledges the risk of transforming the pain of the other into one's own sadness by making them into objects of one's feelings. However, she also outlines an ethics of responding to pain. This ethics requires one to be *with* others in their pain in acting upon that which one cannot really know or feel, acting upon the pain of others that one cannot claim as one's own (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 30-1). In our conversation, the students acknowledged possibilities to act upon the pain of nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses. In considering the situation, they shifted between what they themselves would feel and be exposed to if they were in the situation of the nonhuman animals and the circumstances that resulted in the animals in the slaughterhouse in the first place. This could further be understood in terms of a "pedagogy of responsibility," demanding that one sees how one's own subjectivity is defined within systems of domination while retaining the ability to act against it (Martusewicz, 2014, p. 42). When one student connected what happened to nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses to the meat consumption of humans, including their own meat consumption, and several students acknowledged the possibility of changing their eating practices, their positions within a system of domination were made visible, pointing out possibilities for action.

Several students in the workshop group claimed to have changed their behavior after witnessing videos from inside animal industries, and videos from slaughterhouses, in particular, were brought up. This is contrary to the experience by Darst and Dawson (2019, p. 218) that “[t]he more that meat eaters are prompted to consider the negative consequences of meat production, the more likely they are to advance and endorse justifications for meat consumption.” Seeing the negative consequences for some students seemed to give rise to the opposite response. This resonates with the experiences of Winks (2022), who points out the potential of a “pedagogy of discomfort” (Boler, 1999) for creating space for critical reflections on human-animal relations and food choices when students witness animal slaughter. Likewise, Russell (2019, p. 46) acknowledges statements by her students that videos depicting the suffering of “food animals” were considered “pedagogically powerful.” Further, Burt (quoted in Weil, 2006, p. 91) writes that “it’s almost as though the closer and closer you get to animal killing the more everything begins to fall apart, perspective and everything.” Thus, coming close to the killing of nonhuman animals could perhaps cause one’s prior perspective to fall apart. A piece of meat is no longer food but a once living sentient being who has suffered by being exploited and killed in order to end up on one’s plate. Such moments of realization mean a break in perception, and Salih (2014, p. 64), drawing upon Lear, considers this to be about suspending what one thinks one knows, in order to “see and know otherwise.” It is about allowing oneself to “break-down,” and experience how the world does not fit together anymore (Salih, 2014, p. 64). According to Salih (2014, p. 64), breaking down and giving up is perhaps necessary to change one’s life. The vegan “break-down,” in particular, is addressed by Salih (2014, p. 64), connecting the practice of changing certain habits to giving up trying to know in an abstract way. This relates to Butler’s (2015, p. 102) thoughts on being overwhelmed, asking whether we might actually need to be overwhelmed in some sense in order to act, since:

We only act when we are moved to act, and we are moved by something that affects us from the outside, from elsewhere, from the lives of others, imposing a surfeit that we act from and upon. (Butler, 2015, p. 102)

In line with these students’ reflections, videos from animal production motivated them to act upon the situation of the nonhuman animals used in such production. As follows, the lives of nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses, or rather their deaths in the moment of slaughter, might impose a surfeit to act from and upon. This suggests a different kind of reading of animal exploitation, one anchored in

an animal standpoint drawing upon knowledges from the animal rights movement (cf. Kahn, 2011), once again indicating the possibility of different forms of eating (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 417, drawing upon Snaza, 2013). Here, the students mapped out this different kind of eating as one possible way to respond to the suffering of nonhuman animals in slaughterhouses.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored what happens when the topic of animal slaughter is introduced in upper secondary school from a position firmly rooted in solidarity with the animals themselves, i.e., from an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006, Kahn, 2011) and asked what “sticks” when witnessing a video clip displaying the killing of nonhuman animals for food. While the initial reactions of many students seemed to consist of shock, disgust, sadness, and a general feeling of disturbance when watching the video, some of their responses to killing at slaughterhouses served to rationalize and justify the killing of nonhuman animals for food. Hence, there did not seem to be a linear relationship between affective/emotional engagement and changes in behavior (Lloro-Bidart, 2018bc; Russell, 1999; Russell & Oakley, 2016). The killing of nonhuman animals was framed as a non-issue, especially in whole-class discussions when students engaged in argumentation starting primarily from their own perspectives rather than those of the beings killed at slaughterhouses. In these moments, the killing of nonhuman animals was approached from an anthropocentric (and often abstract) perspective, reproducing the idea of animals as *for* humans (Pedersen, 2019b; Wallin, 2014). Consequently, the death of nonhuman animals killed for food did not “stick” with the students on these occasions, and the nonhuman animals remained killable and consumable (cf. Göransson, 2017). Hence, it seems insufficient to address the topic of animal slaughter, or even to use videos from slaughterhouses, to enable critical considerations of (and potential resistance against) current exploitative human-animal relations (cf. Martin, 2014; Pachirat, 2011). Even when the topic is introduced from a position of open solidarity with nonhuman animals, there is a risk of reproducing instead of interrupting human dominance (cf. Bohm et al., 2015; Darst & Dawson, 2019; Lindgren, 2020; Winks, 2022) if it is not possible to take an animal standpoint.

However, the video resonated differently with different students. Although the encounter with the slaughterhouse video did not automatically create space for ethical consideration, it did seem to spark the engagement needed for some

students to critically address (and sometimes resist) animal production and its inherent killing (cf. Martin, 2014; Rowe, 2011; Russell, 2019; Salih, 2014; Tallberg et al., 2022; White, 2019; Winks, 2022). For students to question the use of nonhuman animals for food, it seemed to be essential that the animals could appear (and be responded to) as subjects and that an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) could be taken. The subject position, however, was available to nonhuman animals only on some occasions. Hence, the subject position is precarious and often temporary. Nevertheless, the video enabled nonhuman animals to appear as subjects for some of the students. It also seems as though encounters with animal slaughter (video) entail a doubleness. It captured the students’ attention and made several of them pull away temporarily to then be drawn back in again. It prompted laughter on many occasions, with both concealing and revealing effects (cf. Stengel, 2014). In relation to this, it was responded to with (possible) irony, dark humor, and statements and questions that simultaneously reproduced and rejected the idea that humans have the right to kill other animals for food by synchronously enabling and disabling space to question this idea.

Going back to the question of what “sticks” when witnessing slaughterhouse footage, it seems as if the “stickiness” lies in the animal standpoint itself, since it is from this perspective that the killing can be addressed as a problem in and of itself. This standpoint centers the perspectives of those killed at slaughterhouses and enables the development of an “oppositional consciousness” (Collins, 1989), interrupting exploitative human-animal relations and allowing for something new to be envisioned (cf. Kahn, 2011). In line with Tallberg et al. (2022; cf. Martin, 2014; Rowe, 2011; Russell, 2019; White, 2019), I therefore see the potential of video material depicting suffering within animal factories, including slaughterhouses, to spark initial engagement and enable an affective and embodied form of knowledge but emphasize the importance of enabling students to engage with such material by taking an animal standpoint.



## Chapter 8: Envisioning interspecies sustainability and justice

According to Ghosh, the inability to respond to the environmental crisis can be understood in terms of a “crisis of imagination,” in that the limitations underlying modernity make it difficult to overcome particular ways of thinking that are grounded in anthropocentrism (Gosh, 2016 in Tammi et al., 2024, p. 1414; e.g., Pliushchik, Tammi & Rautio, 2024; Yoneyama, 2021). However, despite being framed as being in crisis, imagination is considered central to ESE in terms of envisioning something new that can bring about change and halt further damage to the Earth (Pliushchik et al., 2024, p. 40; cf. Jensen, 2016; Saari, 2025; Yusoff & Gabrys, 2011). Imagination has further been called upon as “a tool to attend seriously to lived experiences and perspectives of other animals” (Pliushchik et al., 2024, p. 39; cf. Celermajer et al., 2020; Jensen, 2016) and, in the previous empirical chapter, I mapped out how taking an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) could be enabled, for instance, by imagining oneself in the position of nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses. Some, however, are skeptical of the possibilities for realizing radical reforms “capable of fundamentally changing our pattern of human exploitation and violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, quoted in Saari, 2025, pp. 2-3), and Pedersen (2010c) acknowledges that education cannot be located outside of ideology. Yet, Saari (2025, pp. 2-3) considers seemingly utopian theories to play an important role in offering a reminder of where we could be headed, since alternatives must be envisioned to reorient humans’ relationships with other species. Moreover, Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2019, p. 54) state that we must consider how to bridge the gap from where we are to where we want to be to act on possible ways to disturb the “animal-industrial complex” (Noske, 1997; cf. Twine, 2013).

In this chapter, I draw upon two podcasts recorded by students aged 16-18 years in a social science class in Year 2 as their final assignment of an eight-week CAP module in their civics course. Part of the assignment was to envision a sustainable society for both humans and nonhuman animals and consider strategies to realize such a society. I also consider data from lessons in Swedish as

a second language with a class in Year 1, during which participating students focused on different areas of animal use, carried out oral presentations, and engaged in discussions related to how to live in a sustainable and ethical manner with (some) other species. If previous empirical chapters have primarily been concerned with possibilities for taking an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), among other things by imagining the situation of nonhuman animals, to critically address animal exploitation and unsustainable human-animal relations, this chapter focuses, in particular, on moments when students start from an animal standpoint in exploring what societies based on “interspecies sustainability” (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021) and justice could look like and how they could be achieved. Hence, it explores how CAP can create space within the context of upper secondary schools, and more specifically ESE, to envision and explore such possibilities.

## Possibilities and challenges for envisioning interspecies sustainability

As a final assignment in the social science class in Year 2 with students aged 16-17 years, students recorded podcasts focused on a topic of their choice introduced in the CAP module in their civics course, such as a specific area of animal exploitation, a question regarding the role of animals in society, or humans’ relationship to other animals. The idea was for the students to draw upon work carried out during previous lessons of the CAP module in which they were introduced to CAS and CAP, animal ethics and animal rights, connections between human-animal relations, and sustainability issues, as well as the lives and death of nonhuman animals exploited within Swedish animal factories (including slaughterhouses) through footage and information provided by an animal rights organization. Among other things, the students were asked to consider how humans could live together with other animals in ways that are sustainable for both humans and nonhuman animals (in Sweden and other geographical places) and envision such a society and the possible methods of transforming society in such a direction. Hence, they were encouraged to embrace interspecies sustainability and go beyond an anthropocentric perspective by de-centering the human and taking an animal standpoint. Asking the students to envision a society of interspecies sustainability could further be understood as motivating them to explore the “unknown,” or the “not-yet-known” (cf. Biesta, 2022, p. 55), potentially creating space in education for engaging with an uncertain future and

exploring what this future could look like, imagining how it could be different from the present, and the possibilities for realizing it. These capabilities are central to engaging with wicked sustainability problems (cf. McCrory & Reiss, 2023).

In the analysis, I focus on two student podcasts in particular, chosen not for their representativeness of the podcasts recorded during the CAP module but because they constitute intriguing examples of students engaging in the process of envisioning (future) societies of interspecies sustainability, at least to a certain extent, and the possibilities and challenges for realizing them. According to Saari (2021), futures based on just multispecies coexistence require the disruption of violence against other animals. During the prior lessons, the issue of violence against nonhuman animals exploited for food, in particular, was brought up, and, in line with interspecies sustainability, “farmed animals” (or so-called “production animals”) were conceptualized as direct victims rather than causes of climate change (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 125).<sup>33</sup> Both students addressed the violence and suffering endured by other species as a result of animal production in their podcasts. One of the students, for example, focused on the meat industry and how eating meat is normalized. In her introductory statements, she addressed the current high levels of meat production and consumption, pointing to animal production as contributing to environmental problems. However, she also included an animal perspective, acknowledging that they are subjected to “oppression, exploitation, and murder” (student podcast, January 18, 2023). The student further explained that “in Sweden over 100 million land-living animals are killed every year in order to become food,” stating that the meat industry is an “unjust and inhumane industry” (student podcast, January 18, 2023). Hence, “farmed animals” were framed as victims, creating space for the notion of interspecies sustainability (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016).

According to Biesta (2022, p. 48) democracy is about the “limits that our living together poses to our own freedom,” and such considerations relate to subjectification as “qualified freedom” in that it is about an “existence in and with the world.” Exploring how humans can live sustainably together with other species when working with the podcasts seemed to provide a starting point for considering the limits to humans’ freedom. One of the students, for example, stated that excessive meat production “stretches the resources of the Earth so that they will not last,” and that this needs to be addressed for more people to question this

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<sup>33</sup> Indirect victims, both human and nonhuman, were also brought up in terms of being impacted by climate change and the “meat grab economics” related to animal industrial farming (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 125).

dynamic and for change to be achieved (student podcast, January 18, 2023). The other student raised similar concerns: “It is not good that we use resources and expect to find new planets with life. Right now, we only have one planet that we need to take care of” (student podcast, January 18, 2023). One student also stated that ending our meat consumption is an “obvious sacrifice” to be made, and that humans “do not have the right to slaughter animals” (student podcast, January 18, 2023). Hence, in this case, focusing on meat production and consumption from a perspective anchored in interspecies sustainability provided space in ESE for acknowledging that humans’ engagement with the world cannot be limitless (cf. Biesta, 2022).

CAP also enabled students to critically address the practices of schools and education in critiquing and addressing their role in reproducing the meat norm, calling upon schools to address the situation of nonhuman animals exploited for food:

Schools have long normalized eating meat, since vegetarian alternatives have always been few. Additionally, it is not a subject talked about enough, and therefore no one [has] really understood what animals go through for humans to have meat on their plate. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

Here, the role of educational institutions in teaching students to consume meat through repeated exposure (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019, p. 1191; cf. Rice 2013) is critically addressed, which breaks with the idea of meat consumption as a private affair that has nothing to do with education (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019). This could further be understood as a call for a pedagogical practice that makes visible the process of “animals-becoming-meat” (Rowe, 2011), indicating an ethical responsibility on the part of humans in relation to nonhuman animals exploited for food (cf. Donovan, 2006; Gruen, 2013). Moreover, the assignment provided space for addressing what the suffering of nonhuman animals and the environmental impact of the meat industry might mean for human meat consumption, possibly creating a starting point for a non-anthropocentric relational ethics that focuses on the limits that living together with other species entails.

One of the students considered factors that contribute to exploitative human-animal relations and identified the meat industry as a major obstacle in worsening humans’ social relations to nonhuman animals:

The meat industry gives moral consideration only to some animals but not others, which is not socially sustainable. This is the case since we do not see

animals as individuals but rather as resources. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

When asked to envision a society of interspecies sustainability and consider possibilities and challenges for achieving such societies, these students applied a CAS perspective, rejecting the ontological assumption that humans have total accessibility to nonhuman animals (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, pp. 263–4) based on their encounters with the meat (and sometimes dairy) industry. This perspective opposes a hierarchy making nonhuman animals as “*for us*” (Wallin, 2014, p. 145) and could be understood in terms of an “interruption” of this hierarchy. According to Biesta (2022, p. 50) “an encounter with what it is real often manifests itself as an *interruption*” (emphasis in original), and subjectifying education therefore has an interruptive quality. Due to the prevailing meat norm, exploiting nonhuman animals for food is often part of the “ordinary,” which according to Ahmed (2014b, p. 179) is not experienced or felt at all. In this sense, the CAP module seemed to have created space for experiencing the ordinary anew through addressing animal production, and in the podcasts the production of meat and dairy was framed in terms of exploitation, suffering, and taking another individual’s life. Through the introduction of a CAS perspective, the everyday consumption of animal-derived food was put in another light, possibly enabling it to be broken down into its constituent parts and revealing the exploitation behind it (cf. Salih, 2014). These moments could be read through the work of Salih (2014, p. 64) as moments in which one’s (previous) perception is potentially broken, creating space to leave behind what one knows so that one can see and know it differently. This suggests a possible reorientation in relation to animal production, since the (ordinary) exploitation inherent in the production of animal-derived food is understood differently from a CAS perspective, which the students explored here.

The assignment further created space for operating within the tension between “what is” and “what is not” (Biesta & Säfström, 2011). According to Biesta and Säfström (2011, p. 541), this tension arises from the confrontation between the two— “[i]t concerns the way in which ‘what is’ is interrupted by an element that is radically new rather than a repetition of what already exists,” and they find it crucial to stay in this tension to be responsible for the present (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 541; see also Linné & Pedersen, 2014, for an exploration of possibilities for CAS to enable this within education). Considering problems related to animal production, the students could be understood as operating within this tension:

The first and most obvious thing is to decrease meat production, and consumption, and choose food alternatives that are vegetarian and vegan. At least cut the current meat production in half and enable the meat industry to not slaughter or produce as much meat. The meat industry can be improved in so many ways, but we also need to stop using current methods and develop them so that they do not hurt the animals in the same way. But we also need to understand that we do not have the right to take someone else's life, which of course includes all sorts of animals. No matter if we view them as companion animals or not, they do not deserve to be deprived of their lives. However, it will never be accepted for everyone to never eat meat again, which is understandable and also comes with pros. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

I think we should be able to live together with animals in a sustainable way by changing the relationships between the human and animals in order to decrease exploitation, for example humans' meat and dairy consumption. It is unlikely all humans will adapt and, for instance, stop eating meat. But I think one can change the approach to other species. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

Here, the students operated at the tension between “what is,” in terms of current states of meat production and consumption, and “what is not,” in terms of a society in which humans do not deprive other animals of their lives and have transformed their relationships with nonhuman animals. Furthermore, they seemed to shift between the two, sometimes tipping over into one or the other. Both students referred to an imagined human collective that was unwilling to stop eating meat. Here, and in other instances in the podcasts, as well as on numerous occasions in the data, students seemed to respond to an imagined human collective with specific norms regarding the nature of society. This could be related to the “false consensus effect,” according to which the most vocally defended positions are understood to be more widely shared than they really are (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 233). This imagined collective eats meat and is reluctant to change. It further seemed to impose limits on what societies were considered achievable and possible to envision. Thus, the imagined human collective put boundaries in place for how ethical and sustainable human-animal relations the students could imagine. Although there exist openings for something “radically new,” partly enabled by CAP, the societies students can imagine also seem constrained by human entitlement. This can be related to the “crisis of imagination,” imposing limitations that make it difficult to overcome anthropocentric and speciesist ways of thinking (cf. Gosh, 2016 in Tammi et al., 2024, p. 1414). In these moments,

“what is” partly hinders imagination of what is “radically new” (cf. Biesta & Säfström, 2011).

Anthropocentrism and speciesism and the right of humans to eat meat were framed as given in some moments in the podcasts, which resonates with the experiences of Saari (2025) of engaging with multispecies justice education in Finnish secondary schools, suggesting that rethinking multispecies relations in the here and now might be especially difficult. Although the students in Saari’s (2025, p. 11) study stated that imagination provide more opportunities, these “imaginative opportunities” did not explicitly enable a rethinking of humans’ coexistence with other species. The experiences of Saari (2025), together with those in this project, suggest that even within a CAP module anthropocentrism and speciesism might be reproduced. Thus, it did not seem straight forward to imagine a society based on interspecies sustainability and Kahn (2011, p. 54) acknowledges that an animal standpoint is anticipatory. It envisions and works to achieve a future that is only realizable to a limited extent in the present (Kahn, 2011). As follows, those of us who embrace an animal standpoint are “left to piece together clues out of the catastrophic rubble of the past in order to map the prospects of hope” (Kahn, 2011, pp. 2-3, drawing upon Benjamin). Although there seemed to be constraints regarding what could be imagined, being asked to envision a sustainable society from a non-anthropocentric perspective, including nonhuman animals, also seemed to create space in education for the students to address (and in some moments also resist) a notion of nonhuman animals as resources for human use.

## Interspecies sustainability demanding new forms of eating

When engaging with the podcast, a broadened notion of sustainability that included nonhuman animals was embraced:

Through trying to understand animals’ experiences our views can change, and therefore also how we treat animals. Therefore, our understanding of sustainability can change by seeing things from the perspective of animals. Sustainability is about all species, not just humans. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

This student further addressed anthropocentrism and speciesism as major obstacles for achieving sustainability and acknowledged the importance of including the perspectives of nonhuman animals (student podcast, January 18,

2023). In this sense, the student could be understood to apply, or at least explore interspecies sustainability, according to which the “representation and participation of animals are of great importance” (Bergmann, 2019, p. 9). Envisioning a society of interspecies sustainability in their final assignment of the CAP module, the two students suggested transitioning to veganism several times during their podcasts as a way to embrace and enable this form of sustainability. For example, one of the students stated that humans need to understand that vegan and vegetarian alternatives are not “dangerous” or “gross” but actually better for us (humans), and, especially, for animals (student podcast, January 18, 2023). In this moment, by emphasizing the perspective of nonhuman animals, an animal standpoint became present and within reach. Vegetarianism and veganism further appeared as possibilities, and this part of the podcast could also be understood to address and resist “meat culture,” which constructs vegan food as inedible or repulsive (Potts, 2017) or, in the words of this student, “dangerous” or “gross.” The student continued:

We belong to different species, but that does not give us the right to see ourselves as having a higher value. [...] I mean, we must start living in symbiosis with animals, and as far as they respect us, we respect them and their lives by changing to a vegan lifestyle and changing our view on animals. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

Thus, working with this assignment enabled the students to explore a “different kind of reading” of human-animal relations that imply a “different kind of eating” in envisioned societies of interspecies sustainability (cf. “vegan education,” as outlined by Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, pp. 417, 425; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023). As follows from the student quoted above, a changed view of nonhuman animals, and indeed also humans, that resists human superiority also demands a shift toward vegan lifestyles.

A different kind of eating in terms of veganism (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016) is something the students encountered previously in the CAP module, including through stories shared by the animal rights activist and me of transitioning to veganism and getting involved in animal rights activism (this is explored in depth in Chapter 5). Thus, collaboration between schools and social movements and the inclusion of an animal rights activist created a starting point for addressing and resisting a narrative of nonhuman animals existing as resources for human use by pointing out more ethical and sustainable human-animal relations practiced in the here and now (cf. Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014, 2017). Hence, this form of collaboration seemed to create space in education for new

knowledge that could possibly challenge the status quo (cf. Rajala, Jornet & Accioly, 2023, p. 298). When current eating practices that include the consumption of animal-derived foods are interrupted by veganism, “what is” is interrupted by something “radically new” (cf. Biesta & Säfström, 2011). Moreover, of several possible strategies to achieve a society of interspecies sustainability, the students explored veganism. Suggesting veganism as a possibility is particularly interesting since promoting vegetarianism or veganism is often seen as unacceptable, with dietary choices typically framed as private (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 125; cf. Spanning & Grušovnik, 2019). Whether one consumes meat (as well as egg and milk) is often conceptualized as a question of individual choice. In the CAP module, a different understanding and approach to this question was achieved by acknowledging nonhuman animals as individuals with the right to their own lives and deserving of respect, seemingly enabling an exploration of veganism as part of interspecies sustainability. Thus, CAP here took the form of “vegan education” and in the podcasts the notion of veganism shifted between an individual choice and a response to societal problems (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023, p. 7).

One student considered strategies for achieving a vegan society and suggested documenting activities in slaughterhouses as a possibility, since, according to her:

Another reason many people do not stop eating meat is because they do not know the reality behind the slaughter. It is a social injustice, which many people are not aware of, especially due to green washing. (student podcast, January 18, 2023)

The activist strategy of documenting the realities of animal industries, including in slaughterhouses, among other places, became part of the students’ education when such images and videos were introduced by an animal rights activist during lessons, as addressed in the previous chapter. According to Thörn (2006, p. 15), collective experiences occur through participating in social movements, and these might be carried into other contexts by activists. During the CAP modules, the activist brought what she had learnt from participating in the animal rights movement into the context of upper secondary school, and, here, it was picked up by one of the students. Furthermore, the new forms of reading and eating that both students described in their podcasts went beyond this specific school task. One of the students stated that she decided to go vegan during the CAP module. In this regard, CAP could be understood as enabling “political subjectivity,” which can emerge in situations when conflicting norms and contradictory interpellations create a feeling of dissonance that is perceived as intolerable (Martinsson &

Reimers, 2020, p. 431, drawing upon Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, as well as Biesta, 2011). The student's stated decision could possibly be connected to experiencing the conditions in slaughterhouses through video material, as addressed in the podcast. Political subjectivity is about addressing that things are not as they should be by acknowledging conflicting norms and understandings (Martinsson & Reimers, 2020), which the student did in her podcast. "These experiences are always situated and particular. They arise from specific situations and circumstances that produce collective political subjects who share experiences of similar dissonance and conflicting interpellations." (Martinsson & Reimers, 2020, p. 431). In the CAP module, the students encountered "collective political subjects" in terms of the animal rights movement, embodied in the classroom by the activist and sometimes also by me. Sharing our experiences of dissonance in relation to the treatment of nonhuman animals by the majority society, and ways of acting upon this dissonance (as addressed in Chapter 5), we offered the students who experienced similar feelings and thoughts a possible space of collectivity and a direction for their feelings. Veganism was one of these possible directions and seemed to be picked up by this student. This can further be understood in terms of "vegan killjoy world-making" (Twine, 2014), as described in Chapter 5, and now seemingly applied by this student.

Political subjectivity includes the understanding that the societal situation cannot remain as it is and therefore action is needed to change the present for the better (Martinsson & Reimers, 2020), which can be connected to practicing veganism. Thus, this can be described as "entangled empathy" (Gruen, 2013) in that the student, in a very practical sense, stated to act upon the situation of nonhuman animals. In her response to the situation of nonhuman animals, as presented in the CAP module, she could be understood to appear as "someone" responding responsibly to what is other (cf. Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 542) in terms of attending to the ethical claims of nonhuman animals. In refusing to relate to nonhuman animals in animal production as food, she "assume[d] equality in a situation of inequality" and so transformed the commonsense understanding (cf. Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 542) of some animals as food. This could, moreover, be read as an example of "wonder," which is about "learning to see the world as something that does not have to be, and as something that came to be, over time, and with work" (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 180). This constitutes a feeling of surprise caused by the interruption of repetition by something out of the ordinary. I relate this to the student stating that she decided to become vegan since the CAP module could be understood in terms of interrupting the "ordinary" of schooling by

introducing something new (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 180) or, to use the words of Biesta and Säfström (2011), perhaps even “radically new.” Understanding the world as something that does not need to be is crucial to taking action to realize (future) societies of sustainable and ethical coexistence with other species, and this seemed possible at least at some moments throughout the podcasts.

## Challenging the idea of zoos as “happy places”

A class in Year 1 of students aged 15-17 years engaged with CAP in their course on Swedish as a second language and, among other assignments, focused on different areas of animal use and carried out oral presentations. The assignment was developed on the initiative of five students in this class who took part in one of the student workshop groups. Based on the students’ ideas, the workshop group, including the students’ teacher, one animal rights activist, one CAS scholar, and me continued to develop the assignment in line with the central content and course aims of Swedish as a second language, as well as aims specific to CAP. The students worked with the assignment for four weeks, during which they studied a chosen area of animal exploitation, including the dairy industry, zoos, the chicken industry, animal testing, and the fur industry. In preparation for the oral presentations, they studied information from animal rights organizations, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, and the animal industry. The aim of this assignment was for students to deepen their knowledge on areas of animal exploitation, critically reflect on why information may differ between different sources and the interests of these different actors, and consider the perspectives of the beings exploited in these industries. It was intended to provide a basis from which critical reflections on human-animal relations and the role of nonhuman animals in society would be possible, for example by encouraging students to take an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). As follows, I am interested in what is put in motion when areas of animal exploitation are in focus in ESE.

Two students focused on zoos in their oral presentations, a topic that also came up during workshop discussions with these two students and three peers. The discussions on zoos during workshops were initiated after several students stated that they were interested in making a study visit to a zoo or museum when discussing possible CAP activities, suggesting Universeum as a possibility. Universeum is a “science center” in Gothenburg that, among other things, keeps a large variety of nonhuman animals. For instance, Universeum has aquariums with sharks and other fishes, as well as a so-called “rainforest” where they keep animals

such as Goeldi's monkeys, sloths, tropical birds (toco toucans, among others), and armored caimans (Universeum, 2023). The students' interest in discussing zoos (and possible study visits to such places) and the nonhuman animals kept there suggests something captivating about the thought of coming close to wild animals, especially large (meant-to-be) wild animals. This is something of which zoos are aware, referring to these animals as "charismatic megafauna" and consciously leveraging their capacity to attract visitors (Pedersen, 2010a).

During the workshop discussions, one of the students recalled a time when he visited Universeum, and the students and I engaged in a discussion about an encounter this student had with a bird there. The memory of the encounter with this bird stayed with this student, indicating that there might have been something "sticky" about the bird's reaction, seemingly in a manner that was surprising to the student:

Student 1: I really want to walk through the jungle with the animals. It was so much fun.

Me: How do you think it feels for the animals at Universeum?

Student 1: It was a bird. I think it was trying to fly away. It was a bird. He, he... I said "hi." I touched, I happened to touch, or I didn't touch it but I said "hi" and then it ran, or it flew. And then it flew toward the window. Well, directly like that and then it fell. And I just thought "oh shit."

[All the other students have also visited zoos, and one starts talking about the "house of reptiles" at another zoo.]

Me: Because it was a bird at Universeum that you met. How do you think the bird felt?

Student 1: Perhaps the bird felt stupid at the same time?

Me: Stupid, well, yes...

Student 1: Yeah, but... Well, it showed a little bit, since you could see it wanted... Well...

[got interrupted]

Student 1: A bird cannot stay in the same place the whole time! I know that. It always wants to fly east or west or shit like that.

Student 2: Perhaps for some animals it is good maybe. If they lived in...

Student 1: And! This bird was totally alone. Many birds need to be in a flock.

[Student 2 responds affirmatively]

Me: So, the bird was perhaps lonely and...

- Student 1: It was totally... It was kind of the only bird who was there. Well, of its own kind.
- Me: Yeah, did you get the impression the bird wanted to fly away too?
- Student 1: Yes, it flew there, and it still tried when it got up [from falling the first time] and it fell into a tree, but then it flew up again, so it went the other way. It was like “I’m done with this, I will get away from here.”
- Me: Like if the bird was stressed due to people being there?
- Student 1: Yes, [...] But it felt like it was its first day there. It felt like... because it was another bird there who just stood there like nothing, like he was used to it. Or she, I don’t know what it was.
- Me: It is rather common that animals in zoos either try to escape or become a little bit apathetic. That they get kind of depressed and just sit or stand very still and do not have the energy to do anything, since they feel rather poorly from being held captive.

(audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022)

The student started telling the story with an energetic and eager tone in his voice, but toward the end of the initial story when he explained how the bird fell, the student sounded more concerned. Recalling this moment at Universeum, the relationship between the human and other animals (at zoos) became visible. By acting in a manner that was surprising to the student, the bird seemed to appear as a subject for the student when talking about the encounter within the context of the workshop. Hence, there was a moment in which this student could be understood to be called upon, potentially creating space for subjectification by enabling a sort of “reality check” (cf. Biesta, 2022, p. 53) in terms of nonhuman animals at zoos. My questions about the bird’s feelings and perspective could be understood in terms of an attempt to encourage the students to take an animal standpoint or at least consider how the animals feel being in a zoo. Having told his story about the bird, the student considered how the bird might have thought and felt in response to my questions. Hence, asking these questions within the context of the workshop seemed to create space for students to temporarily explore an animal standpoint, or a “bird standpoint” in this case. This indicates the importance not only of *what* issues are discussed within education but also *how* these issues are approached (cf. Pedersen, 2019b). It matters what questions are asked and within what context. Connecting the story about the bird to the situation for nonhuman animals in zoos more generally, which my statement could be understood to do, I furthermore offered a counternarrative (cf. counter

storytelling; Kahn, 2011; counter-hegemony; Martinsson & Reimers, 2020) to zoos as “happy places” and instead conceptualized them as places representing captivity and confinement of “unhappy, caged, meant-to-be-wild animals displayed for the human gaze” (Sjögren et al., 2015, p. 598). Asking questions about the feelings of other animals within the context of a workshop focused on CAP seemed to create space for considering the situations at zoos in more diverse ways.

Introducing an animal standpoint, however, is not easy; one must try to represent the interests of other animals and do them justice at the same time as acknowledging the limits to humans’ ability to understand the lives of nonhuman animals (Saari, 2021, p. 67). Furthermore, Ellsworth (1989, pp. 307-8) acknowledges that teachers (or other educators) cannot unproblematically bring subjugated knowledge to light, since we are all impacted by different learned oppressions. To take an animal standpoint, one needs to listen and pay emotional attention to nonhuman animals and give them ethical consideration by including their standpoints (Donovan, 2006, pp. 305-6), despite the constraints of human privileges. To take someone else’s standpoint, however, one needs to learn about the life worlds of the individual in question (Harding, 2009, p. 194). The student did not have specific knowledge about this bird breed but used knowledge about other birds, which often live in flocks, to consider the bird’s situation, enabling him to draw the conclusion that the bird felt lonely. Some parts of this conversation could be understood in terms of anthropomorphism, in that the bird was ascribed human-coded emotions. As previously acknowledged, it is not easy to think from another group’s standpoint, and it might be particularly difficult to understand the standpoints of other species, especially those with which one has limited contact and knowledge about. An obstacle for acting upon the situation of nonhuman animals, addressed by the students, is the difficulty of knowing whether humans can understand what another animal wants, feels, or thinks. This came to the fore during one of the workshops:

Student: Well, you cannot see that they feel bad. They just don’t do anything, perhaps.

Me: How could you know if they feel bad or not?

[...]

Student: Well, you cannot use a lie detector test on them but... You cannot talk to them. But it feels like how they fly, maybe? I don’t know, cause sometimes...

Me: How they move and such?

Student: Yeah, perhaps how they move. I think you can know. Let's say dogs and cats. You know... Well, maybe not cats...

(audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022)

The students then started talking about how dogs communicate, for instance by using their tail, and I stated that humans have learnt to read dogs in terms of how they communicate and move. The students then started making different sounds that dogs make, whimpering, barking, and howling, and related this to different dogs they knew (audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022). Here, the possibility for humans to understand the communication of other animals was addressed, and on several other occasions humans' ability to understand nonhuman animals was brought up and enabled engaged discussions. The conclusions drawn differed, however, especially in relation to animal testing, which was discussed during some lessons. Humans' inability to know for sure the desires of individuals used in testing was at times used to justify continued use, but in further discussions it was often acknowledged that humans can understand many forms of nonhuman animal communication and should not use nonhuman animals in experiments against their will (video recording from lessons, January 30 and 31, 2023). Drawing upon these experiences, including an ethologist in the project, or more ethological knowledge about other animals to better understand some of their life worlds, could have offered an opportunity for incorporating a deeper animal standpoint.

In the further discussions, the students and I considered what it would mean to visit Universeum as a place holding nonhuman animals captive. One of the students stated:

But, well, [...] It is tricky to say, since I have never been through that, but if I was them... Held captive... One couldn't do anything. I wouldn't have any freedom. I would be rather, well, "messed up." Why would I help you [the zoo] to get money. (audio recording from workshop, October 18, 2022)

Here, the student put himself in the position of the nonhuman animals kept at zoos, but acknowledged not having the same experiences. This could be read in terms of an "ethics of responding to pain" (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 30-31) of nonhuman animals at zoos by being *with* the animals in pain one cannot really know or feel. Responding ethically demands that one acts upon others' situations and could therefore be seen as a vital part of practicing "entangled empathy" (Gruen, 2013). In relation to nonhuman animals this is crucial, since a human

perception of nonhuman animals' suffering is inevitably flawed by our humanness. However, if one aims to create societies of interspecies sustainability, it is crucial to act upon the situations of other animals. By looking to a feminist ethics of care, the risk of misreading other animals can be minimized by practicing "openness, receptivity, empathy, sensitivity, and imagination" to improve one's attentiveness (Jaggard, 1995, p. 190, quoted in Donovan, 2006, p. 322). The somewhat messy conversations from the workshop could nevertheless be seen as instances in which attentiveness toward animals' situations was practiced.

## Zoos as places that do not have to be

During a lesson following on from the oral presentations, the students engaged in reflective discussions together with their teacher and me. Only five students attended,<sup>34</sup> which provided more time for everyone to share their thoughts and engage in discussions, and it created space for collectively engaging in deeper reflections compared to lessons with more students present. The attending students also took part in the student workshop group in School 1, which included a discussion on zoos, among other topics, as addressed above. The purpose of this lesson was to enable deeper reflections on human-animal relations by discussing how human interests and actions impact the situation of nonhuman animals within the industries the students addressed and consider the responsibility of humans for the animals' situations, as well as the possibilities to change these conditions for other animals. The discussion revolved around the following five questions: 1. Did you learn anything you did not know before, and if so what?; 2. Did your attitude toward zoos/the dairy industry/the fur industry/the chicken industry change since you started to work on this assignment, and how did it change or why did it not change?; 3. How do you feel regarding the situation of nonhuman animals?; 4. What responsibility do we, as humans, have for the situation of the animals within these industries; what should/can we do?; 5. Why do you think the different sources depict the situation differently? What do different sources want, who do you think shows a more accurate picture, and who gains by showing a false picture?

Asking whether the students' opinions had changed regarding the area of animal use they had studied for their oral presentation created space for the students to reflect on their learning processes. However, the question might also

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<sup>34</sup> The attendance was often low during this course.

have implied that learning more about the nonhuman animals' situation would lead to a change in perspective. When considering this question, one of the students, who focused on zoos, stated that there were things about zoos he did not know before, which he said changed his perspective and feelings toward them. He explained:

Eh, when I went to zoos a long time ago, I didn't care so much, but now it is a bit weird and odd to look at animals that will be killed. Yeah... It is my attitude that has changed. (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022).

Working with their presentations, the students were provided with links with information related to all the different suggested areas of animal use provided by the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the industries themselves, as well as an animal rights organization. Some of the information the student picked up on and decided to share during his oral presentation in the previous lesson came from an animal rights organization. During his presentation, he told those of us present in the classroom that 2 565 animals died or were killed at Swedish zoos between 2017 and 2019.<sup>35</sup> Of all the information he read about zoos and chose to present during his oral presentation, the killing of animals at zoos seems to have stuck with him, in particular, as he also brought it up during the class discussion. In mainstream society, zoos are often associated with entertainment and thus joy or happiness. However, in this moment other emotions connected to zoos were present in a manner that deviates from common conceptions. Following the work of Ahmed (2010b), there are strong societal norms governing our ideas of what is supposed to bring happiness. These feelings of “weirdness” and “oddness” that the student referred to could perhaps have been especially acute due to the feelings expected to be produced while looking at nonhuman animals at zoos. Moreover, emotions are relational in that they involve (re)actions or of “towardness” or “awayness” in relation to objects (Ahmed, 2014b, p. 8), and in this case the emotions the student experienced in relation to zoos seem to push him away. This could create space for trying out a reorientation in regard to zoos, since a relation of “awayness” seemed to exist as a possibility in this moment in the classroom. Drawing upon the work of Salih (2014), one could say that a reorientation to zoos could occur due to a break in perception.

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<sup>35</sup> In order to attract more visitors, many zoos buy individuals of new species and breed animals so that they will have kids in the spring, resulting in other animals being killed to make room for these new ones.

Another student also focused on zoos in his oral presentation, and he too said that his perspective had changed:

Well, I too want the animals to have freedom. They kind of should not be in zoos. They also want freedom like us humans. But the companies who, you know, own the zoo they don't want to do it since they earn money. You know from the animals and... (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022)

The student nodded as he spoke, giving emphasis to his words. In this moment, the student called for the freedom of nonhuman animals kept at zoos, while answering the question of whether his attitude had changed. Hence, the ethical demands of nonhuman animals held captive at zoos were put forward in this moment. Calling for the freedom of nonhuman animals at zoos could create space to envision new forms of human-animal relations and trying out an “ontology of care” (Donovan & Adams, 2007), according to which humans should not only prohibit suffering but also support the need of nonhuman animals in terms of “freedom of movement, companionship with loved ones and even joy” (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 266). When the student stated that animals at zoos “also want freedom like us humans,” nonhuman animals were acknowledged to have their own will; drawing parallels between the will for freedom of humans and nonhuman animals could create a starting point for addressing these wishes on less anthropocentric and speciesist terms.

Even so, the student addressed challenges for achieving this freedom, highlighting companies and economic interests as the main obstacles. Hence, different (incompatible) interests were made visible in the classroom—the animals’ wish for freedom versus the zoo’s economic interests in earning money by showcasing these individuals. Pointing to the economic interests of zoos as a major obstacle could function as a starting point for addressing unequal power relations and the role of the neoliberal economy in current (exploitative) human-animal relations. On numerous occasions, these students framed the power of companies and economic interests as severe challenges for changing the current reality and ending various forms of animal exploitation. According to Boström et al. (2018, in Tannock, 2021, p. 229; cf. Tannock, 2021, pp. 205, 210), addressing varying (sometimes incompatible) interests, power inequalities, vested economic interests, and resistance to changes are crucial for an effective climate change education. Thus, these reflections by the students created a prominent starting point. Addressing power inequalities and different interests acknowledges the “conflict dimension” of sustainable development, which is important for enabling

transformation of societies in sustainable directions (Boström et al. 2018, in Tannock, 2021, p. 229).

When discussing what responsibility we, as humans, have for the situation of nonhuman animals within these industries and what we should/can do, space was created to focus on human practices and possible actions in relation to the nonhuman animals at zoos. When considering this question, one student began by talking about what those working at zoos can do to improve the lives of the animals held captive there. The teacher then asked what we, those who do not work at zoos, can do, and the student replied: “Perhaps leave the animals be?” (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). The teacher asked whether he meant that we should not visit zoos, and the student affirmed, saying we should make the zoos go bankrupt. The teacher explained that such a strategy is called a boycott. Later during the conversation, another student suggested that “humans should not go to zoos, so that they will go bankrupt” (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). Boycotts are a common strategy used within many struggles for social justice (Thörn, 2006). Within the animal rights movement, for instance, there are often calls for boycotts of zoos or amusement parks that keep animals, as well as companies supporting animal exploitation in other ways. According to Thörn (2006, pp. 11, 139), boycotts can be part of establishing an issue as a social movement, as well as enabling people to think about the reasons for the boycott in their daily lives. Beyond their economic impact on companies or states, they can therefore function as a first step in increasing engagement in an issue. It is in this regard, in particular, that I am interested in the calls to boycott zoos that surfaced during the discussions. Addressing conflicting interests, and the calls for action that were raised in the classroom, created a possible starting point for “learning power and taking collective action” (Tannock, 2021, p. 229) within the context of upper secondary school. The calls to boycott zoos could be understood in terms of a call to act upon the animals’ situation and therefore as examples of applying practices of “entangled empathy” (Gruen, 2013). Entangled empathy builds upon a relational ethics, which can be detected in the students’ reasoning when they connected the existence of zoos to financial support provided by visitors and acknowledged the responsibility of people to not support zoos to bankrupt them. Hence, these discussions suggest that the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals in zoos puts a demand on humans to take action (cf. Gruen, 2013). Students’ motivations are ultimately unknowable, and whether they will, or even want, to boycott zoos in their everyday lives is not the focus of this analysis; what I am interested in is what was picked up by the students in different moments

and what human-animal relations were enabled or disabled (in these moments). The call for the freedom of nonhuman animals at zoos and the related call for humans to boycott zoos, in particular, seemed to be picked up by the students in these moments.

One student continued the discussion regarding humans' responsibilities in relation to nonhuman animals at zoos by saying:

And animals that are threatened should be protected in their own natural environment where they won't feel stressed due to humans being there. Only so that they are protected so that no one hunts them and stuff like that. And this I think humans should be responsible for. (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022)

The suggestion by the student to let nonhuman animals live in their natural environment without humans present, as well as the students' calls not to visit zoos, created space for approaching what MacCormack (2013) would call a non-anthropocentric pedagogical ethics. This is a gracious pedagogy urging humans to take a step back and leave other animals alone (MacCormack, 2013). In a world of hyperconnectivity between humans and other animals (cf. Franklin, 2007), a gracious pedagogy tries to break some of these connections. In the moments when the students called for leaving nonhuman animals at zoos alone and boycotting zoos, the possibility to break some connections seemed to exist. These students have worked with a CAS perspective both during workshops and in class, and on several occasions throughout our discussions they applied a CAS perspective with regard to zoos. Given that all the students had visited zoos, and that several had initially acknowledged feelings of excitement in regard to zoos and a desire to encounter the nonhuman animals kept there up close, notions of the zoo as a "happy place" can be understood in terms of "the ordinary of the zoo." However, throughout the course of the CAP module, zoos seemed to be seen from a new perspective; at the very least, more (alternative) perspectives on zoos were raised. These alternatives can be understood as playing "killjoy" (cf. Ahmed, 2010a; Twine, 2014) to the idea of the zoo as a "happy place." The introduction of the CAS perspective could thus be understood in terms of creating space for what Ahmed (2014b, p. 180) terms "wonder," enabling possibilities for addressing the ordinary. Wonder is about learning that the world does not have to be as it is, that what causes pain can be "unmade as well as made" (Ahmed, 2014b, pp. 180-1). In these instances in the data the students called the existence of zoos into questions, quite literally pointing to them as places that do not have to be. Thus, as places that can be unmade.

Given the far-reaching connectivity between humans and nonhumans that is at the core of anthropocentric societies, this “breaking with” potentially enables something that is, to use the words of Biesta and Säfström (2011), “radically new,” interrupting the present situation or “what is.” Such a space seemed to exist while working with this assignment. Thinking about what is radically new could moreover carve out space in upper secondary ESE for non-anthropocentric thought, which MacCormack describes as:

thought from outside, thinking the unthinkable but nonetheless necessary, the impossible, incommensurable but possible, the unanswerable question which answers in silent activism, encounter without condition and most importantly, if we are to encounter the nonhuman without being parasites, the grace which can only come from leaving alone. (MacCormack, 2013, p. 15)

Experimenting with the thought of leaving other animals alone and suggesting the concrete action of not visiting zoos could be interpreted as one way to apply this “silent activism.” This is particularly interesting since there are close ties between zoos and education, and zoo visits are used based on the belief that close, personal encounters with animals awaken an urge to care about the environment, endangered species, and ecosystems (Sjögren et al., 2015, p. 598). Hence, zoos often collaborate with schools, generating income by offering “educational” study visits. The connection between education and zoos, for instance, was made visible in the workshop group when one of the students read about a zoo that stated the “educational purposes” of its existence (audio recording from workshop, November 15, 2022). Hence, the workshops created space to critically address both the purposes of zoos, as it is defined in terms of being educational, and pedagogical practices encouraging zoo visits to promote a commitment to animal care (e.g., Sherman et al., 2024) or pro-environmental behavior (e.g., Warren, 2022). Space was also enabled to address the practices of zoos, addressing how breeding and killing of nonhuman animals are part of the zoo economy (e.g., Pedersen, 2018). Therefore, these discussions constituted a counternarrative to the repeated justification of oppressive practices at zoos as necessary for “saving a threatened world” (Pedersen (2019a, pp. 70, 67) and in regard to zoos as places enabling empathy for nonhuman animals.

The students’ suggestion to boycott zoos and leave nonhuman animals alone could also be considered through Pedersen’s (2019b, p. 8) more practical employment of MacCormack’s (2013) suggested pedagogy in focusing on how *human* behavior and institutions enable human appropriation of other animals in

that the students addressed how *human* economic interests and *human* economic support for zoos enable the current situation of nonhuman animals at zoos. Pedersen (2019b) also relates the practice of leaving other animals alone to humans' everyday practices. She suggests we embrace the word NOT:

Not buying them, not breeding them, not consuming them, not wearing them. Not forcing them, not causing them suffering, not imposing ourselves, and our humanity, upon them, but rather take a step aside to create a possibility for them to prosper on their own conditions. (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 8)

The call to boycott zoos, with the goal that they would cease to exist, relates to several of the NOTs called for by Pedersen—not buying, breeding, consuming, or subjugating them by keeping them at zoos. It is also a call on humans not to cause suffering to or impose our ourselves upon nonhuman animals. Hence, it creates space in this classroom for (temporarily) breaking with a notion of nonhuman animals as resources for human exploitation, in the case of zoos for the purposes of entertainment and education. As follows, it also speaks to the possibility of envisioning (and possibly enacting) other, less oppressive, forms of human-animal relations in the present.

### “Cows must have freedom”

Throughout the project, an animal species that particularly seemed to put something into motion was the cow, and several of the students focused on the dairy industry as a topic for their oral presentations. Working with the assignment offered room for critically addressing common practices of animal exploitation, and during one of the lessons when the students prepared their presentations I engaged in a conversation with a student focusing on the dairy industry. The student told me that he was looking for information about why calves were separated from the cow in the industry. He had previously read about this on the website of the Swedish animal rights organization Djurrättsalliansen (The Animal Rights Alliance), which describes common practices within the dairy industry, and was now trying to find the information again for his presentation. This information, along with some other common practices within the dairy industry, was something this student repeatedly brought up while working on the assignment. Hence, I was curious about the “stickiness” of such pieces of information. According to Ahmed (2014b, pp. 4, 8), emotions circulate between bodies, sticking to some and sliding over others. It seems that something about

these pieces of information, and potentially how they made this student feel, made them “sticky.” The information about the dairy industry that the student was referring to read:

Her kid is not allowed to nurse. The calf is taken from her directly after the birth or one day after, since humans will drink the milk. The newborn calves are often placed alone in a pen of one square meter.<sup>36</sup> (Djurrättsalliansen, n.d.)

The text was printed below a drawing of a calf being held alone in a pen with a sad look on their face. The student and I began discussing why the calves are separated from their mothers. When I asked what the student thought about it, he replied:

Because eh... When they will. When they give birth. When they have a child. When they have a child, they produce milk. Then I, we... We, humans, we just exploit them. If we don't, if they don't take the calves... The calves from their mothers, then we cannot have milk. (audio recording from lesson, December 6, 2022)

In line with the vocabulary used by the students' teacher and me throughout the CAP module, this student used the word “exploit” rather than “use”<sup>37</sup> and alternated between using the words “cow,” “calves,” “mother,” and “child,” which resonated with the wording on the website. The words “mother” and “child” indicate a bond between two subjects. The conceptualization of cows as mothers was used by the student again in class discussions during the lesson after the oral presentations:

The cows also have lives like us. Well, they want... They don't get to see their young calves, but they also want to see their calves. Like eh how do you say? Like a woman wants to see her child. They also want to see them, but they are not allowed to. (audio recording from lesson, December 20, 2022)

Here, an animal standpoint was enabled by paying attention to the experiences of the cow when she is separated from her baby (cf. Donovan, 2006). Similar to other instances in the data when an animal standpoint seemed possible, the student acknowledged continuities between humans and other animals, in this case cows, which enabled them to appear as subjects in the classroom. When addressing issues in classrooms, the concepts used by educators, as well as those that appeared in the educational material, were often repeated by the students. This is significant

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<sup>36</sup> My translation from Swedish. Link to website: [www.djurfabriken.se/mjolkfabriken](http://www.djurfabriken.se/mjolkfabriken) (last visited July 17, 2025).

<sup>37</sup> The word in Swedish used by the student is “utnyttja.”

in terms of enabling students to take an animal standpoint, since social constructs of nonhuman animals are intimately bound up with the language used to describe them and impact their treatment by human society (Stibbe, 2001, p. 4). Hence, the word “exploit” can provide another starting point for addressing human-animal relations compared to the (seemingly) neutral word “use.” There are, however, many words circulating in society in relation to other animals, and in this moment these words were picked up and repeated by the student. Previous work on CAS in the CAP module, as well as the language and conceptualizations used and the framing of the assignment, seemed to provide a starting point for applying a CAS perspective in this assignment. Here, CAS provided analytical tools for addressing the present situation of cows and calves in the dairy industry.

Introducing a CAS perspective on dairy farming, and sharing material produced by animal rights organizations, could further be understood in terms of counterstorytelling (Kahn, 2011), highlighting the stories of the cows, bulls, and calves exploited within these industries rather than the narratives communicated by the dairy industry itself (which was also provided as a source for this assignment). Counterstorytelling has the potential to strengthen marginalized traditions of resistance, by drawing attention to victims of systemic oppression, and provide an understanding of these oppressions from the perspective of those who are oppressed (Kahn, 2011, p. 55, drawing upon Yosso, 2006). Thus, the practice of counterstorytelling can help introduce an animal standpoint in education (Kahn, 2011), in this example from the classroom the standpoints of cows and calves. According to feminist standpoint theory, our actions and positions enable as well as limit what we can know, and oppressive norms are more easily noted by those oppressed by them (Harding, 2009, p. 194). As follows, the exploitation inherent in dairy production is more easily visible, and therefore more effectively addressed, from the standpoints and narratives of cows and calves, which were put forward in the example above. These narratives address and resist the idea of the “happy oppressed” by acknowledging violence within animal industries (Twine, 2014, p. 626). Hence, they constitute a counternarrative to the dairy industry’s legitimization of the exploitation of cows through advertising that presents them as healthy and happy. Canavan (2017, p. 36) acknowledges that this constitutes a successful strategy for profit generation, selling “the idea of caring and responsible farming methods to concerned consumers.” According to Canavan (2017, p. 36), it is dominant anthropocentric ideas about human-animal relations that make humans believe in notions of “happy cows” grazing in idyllic pastures.

The animal rights material on dairy industries in Sweden served as a counternarrative to the notion of “happy cows.” Counterstorytelling that emphasizes an animal standpoint, or a cow standpoint, is perhaps particularly interesting in this context since the dairy industry displays advertisements in schools, provides educational material, and is economically compensated through milk schemes in schools (e.g., Deckha, 2024; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Linné & Pedersen, 2016; Rowe, 2013; Saari, 2021). Additionally, events such as study visits to farms and pasture releases (in which schools often participate) are used to obfuscate current internationalization, rationalization, and streamlining within the Swedish milk industry to instead promote a romanticized notion of Swedish dairy farms (Linné & Pedersen, 2017, p. 113; cf. Saari, 2021). Throughout the CAP module, several of the students recalled visiting farms in their previous schooling. During the CAP module such experiences as well as educational material provided by the animal industry were met with “vegan counter-material” (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023, p. 4). Stibbe acknowledges an ideological struggle between animal rights activists and the animal industry in terms of a “battle for the hearts and minds of [...] consumers” (Kopperud, 1993, p. 20, quoted in Stibbe, 2001, p. 4), since the consent of the majority of the human population is what enables animal oppression. In this assignment this battle was brought into the classroom, or rather made visible, and the assignment required the students to critically address information provided by both the animal industry and animal rights organizations. During the lesson after the students’ presentations, the student reflected on the website of the animal rights organization:

[It is providing] information so that everyone will know how the animals live their lives [...] I think Djurfabriken [the website by the animal rights organization] shows the real image, I think, and they, Arla [large Swedish dairy company], shows a false image.” (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022).

Here, the student critically addressed the information provided by different actors. As addressed, there were many narratives of dairy production available to the students, and the narratives told from a cow standpoint were the ones that were picked up by this student in particular.

According to Aaltola (2014, pp. 23, 29), it is crucial to consider *how* images of animal suffering are approached if one aims to avoid an “othering” of nonhuman animals, and she stresses the importance of putting emphasis on critiquing and acting upon the *causes* of suffering. The website of the animal rights organization

included drawn images, photos, and short video clips and provided information in relation to all of them. Both the website and the student acknowledged human milk consumption as the cause of separation of cows and calves. Furthermore, the student included himself in this human “we” that exploits cows and drinks their milk; it seemed that reading about common practices in the dairy industry, on a website produced by an animal rights organization, and reflecting upon these practices, encouraged the student to critically consider how his own and other humans’ actions impact cows and calves within this industry. Hence, some consequences of the entanglements of human-cow relations were acknowledged. For instance, the student acknowledged that for humans to drink cow’s milk, calves need to be taken from their mothers, thus connecting milk consumption to the separation of cows and calves. Hence, space was provided for approaching the dairy industry in accordance with one of Pedersen’s suggestions for CAP, in focusing on how *human* behavior enables appropriation of nonhuman animals (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 8; cf. Aaltola, 2014).

## Implications of human-cow entanglements

During the lesson after the presentation, in which five students, the teacher, and I engaged in discussions, the student who presented on the dairy industry repeatedly came back to these pieces of information. As a response to whether he had changed his opinion regarding the dairy industry when working on the assignment the student stated that: “Well before I started to work with this, I did not know anything about it [the dairy industry]” (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). He continued by saying that his view has changed greatly since the cows have no freedom and are treated poorly. The teacher continued the discussion by asking the student to elaborate on what he now thinks about the dairy industry, and the student continued: “I don’t like it. [...] Because they also want freedom. I think they must have freedom. They should not be confined inside” (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). In this moment, cows appeared in the classroom as individuals that “want freedom” and so also “must have freedom.” Hence, the notion of cows existing as resources for human exploitation was (at least temporarily) interrupted; instead, the notion of nonhuman animals as persons to whom humans must show solidarity, respect, and support, as emphasized within CAS (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 263), appeared as a possibility. In this sense, the CAS perspective introduced to the students seemed to function as an interruption to mainstream narratives of (exploitative) human-animal relations.

The images and information on the website that this student looked at addressed conditions and practices in the dairy industry, such as confinement, enforced pregnancy, separation of cows and calves, and early death by slaughter. Like the previous chapter that addressed moments in which the ethical claims of nonhuman animals were communicated to students through a video clip from a slaughterhouse, a similar process seemed to take place in the encounter with the website, which made visible the inherent violence of dairy production. According to Butler (2015, p. 101), war photography can impose ethical claims upon those watching. Similarly to how the slaughterhouse video was conceptualized in the previous chapter, the website could be understood to resemble war photography in some aspects. Moreover, an imposition of ethical obligations means that one is vulnerable to claims that cannot be prepared for in advance, which becomes part of one's sensibility, receptivity, and answerability (Butler, 2015, p. 109). Encountering the dairy industry within a CAP module seems to make the ethical claims of cows part of some students' sensibility and receptivity, and thus also creating a sort of "answerability" (Butler, 2015, p. 109). In the moment of calling for the freedom of cows, the student could be understood to be attending to the ethical claims of cows within dairy industries and enabling these claims to be voiced in the classroom. In this sense, paying attention to the lived experiences and perspectives of other animals (cf. Celermajer et al., 2020), functioned as a tool for envisioning a different society to the one that exists today (e.g., Pliushchik et al., 2024, p. 40; cf. Hohti & Tammi, 2019; Saari, 2025). The question is what possibilities seem to exist to receive and answer these claims within the context of upper secondary education.

The statement that cows must have freedom brought me to ask the student what freedom for cows would mean in practice. In this sense, the assignment created space to connect theory and practice by enabling a discussion on how a critique of current methods of animal production could translate into practice. In response to this question, the student who gave the presentation about the dairy industry continued by saying that cows must be allowed to go outside and to see their calves (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). From here, a discussion about human-cow power relations, the self-determination of cows, and the need to change the current situation was initiated:

The teacher: Do you think that they should still be at a dairy farm? Or ... that they could live a totally free life without... without humans deciding over them?

Student 1: Well, now they [humans] decide about 90 percent, but they should decide 50/50 [...].

The teacher: So, you should not use eh their milk then? It should only be provided to the calves? Do you mean it like that?

Student 1: One should use [milk] but not as much.

Student 2: I also have a tiny answer to your question. I too think the milk should also be going to the calves. But we also... The human also needs milk.

Student 3: No.  
[...]

Student 2: I think also that it should be 70 percent to calves and 30 percent to, well, humans.  
[several of the other students seemed to agree]

Student 3: Actually, you should not focus on humans instead of the [...] calves.

Student 2: Exactly!

(video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022)

Through the teacher's questions, the relational character of the cows' situation, as connected to human dairy consumption, was acknowledged. Hence, the entangled relation between humans and cows was made visible, and so space was created in upper secondary education for considering how the lives of other animals are affected by these entanglements, a crucial dimension for enabling an analysis anchored in CAS (cf. Taylor & Twine, 2014, pp. 3, 7). The question by the teacher regarding the possibility for cows to live free from human control could be understood as an example of a non-anthropocentric gracious pedagogy (MacCormack, 2013), in that the teacher did not ask what nonhuman animals are capable of but instead focused on possibilities for the absolute cessation of interactions between humans and cows. The conversation taking place in the classroom had the character of a negotiation over how much control humans should have over cows and their milk, and it did not seem straight forward to imagine a society in which humans do not drink cow's milk at all. By stating that humans "need" milk, human consumption of cow's milk was framed as necessary. This can be tied to carnism, which frames the consumption of animal-derived foods as normal, necessary, and natural (Joy, 2010). Yet, one student simply said "no" to the statement that humans need cow's milk, interrupting this idea.

The teacher continued asking questions that created space for considering what it would mean in practice for cows to have "freedom," to use the students' term. This provided a starting point from which to consider how human practices would

need to change for the situation of cows to change. The teacher addressed the demand for milk and dairy products and asked the students how we should deal with this. Building on the students' suggestion of percentages, he continued by asking: "Should we have 70 percent more cows or should we, humans, drink 70 percent less milk?" (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). One student suggested oat milk as an alternative to cow's milk, and by doing so acknowledged the possibility of a "different kind of eating" as a way to respond to a "different kind of reading" of milk consumption and production (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 417, drawing upon Snaza, 2013) that began to take form in the classroom. However, the student then stated that it was a tricky question since so much food contains milk: "well, everything that we use is kind of 'milk' that we have daily" (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). Going back to a gracious pedagogy, urging humans to leave other animals alone and consider what humans are capable of in terms of ceasing to interact with other animals (MacCormack, 2013, p. 14), this moment could be interpreted as a moment in which students considered humans' capability to leave cows alone. Current eating practices were addressed as a major obstacle in this regard.

Nevertheless, the teacher followed up, enabling a consideration of these human practices, by asking whether this meant that humans would need to change their food cultures, whereby a student replied that we really need to do so (video recording from lesson, December 20, 2022). Here, the entangled nature of current human-cow relations appeared to come with ethical demands to change human practices and break with some of the present entanglements, at least in this moment. This suggests an ethics and politics of nonviolence, according to which one must consider how "selves are implicated in each other's lives, bound by a set of relations that can be as destructive as they can be sustaining" (Butler, 2020, p. 16). Hence, this could be conceptualized as a subjectifying moment, in that it called upon the students to respond as subjects and refused them the comfort not to be (Biesta, 2022, pp. 46-7, drawing upon Rancière). It was a moment in which responsibility was encountered (cf. Biesta 2022, p. 54), a responsibility the students were free to answer to or walk away from. If answered, this could be a first step to embracing "entangled empathy," since such a practice means addressing how one might be entangled with others, reflecting upon these relations, and considering how one can take responsibility (Gruen, 2013, p. 224), even breaking with some current entanglements.

## Conclusion

This analysis explored how students applied a CAS perspective on current exploitative human-animal relations related to the zoo, the dairy industry, and the meat industry, which at times created space for practicing a non-anthropocentric educational ethics in considering and even calling for leaving other animals alone (cf. MacCormack, 2013; Pedersen, 2019b). In their explorations, the students could be understood to respond to the ethical demands posed by nonhuman animals exploited by humans and explore “world-making” as vegan killjoys in disturbing the idea of the “happy oppressed” (Twine, 2014). However, it seemed easier to embrace this non-anthropocentric educational ethics in relation to some nonhuman animals than others, or perhaps in terms of some practices more than others. For instance, students seemed to embrace the word NOT (cf. Pedersen, 2019b) to a greater extent when discussing zoos in calling for a boycott, which can be seen as a reorientation in relation to zoos. When discussing the dairy industry, however, students did not embrace the word NOT to the same extent, but they could perhaps be understood to at least *try* the word NOT. Furthermore, the students working on podcasts did map out alternative societies based on interspecies sustainability and justice in which veganism was the norm, with one student even embracing interspecies sustainability in the present by stating she has chosen to become vegan herself. Hence, space was created for exploring veganism as part of interspecies sustainability both discursively and materially. In this sense, CAP create space in ESE for “vegan education,” or can be seen as being introduced as “vegan education” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023).

To conclude, upper secondary school seemed to constitute a space in which new perspectives could be explored. Still, the societies understood to be within reach were constrained by human entitlement when an imagined human collective unwilling to change appeared. In both classrooms and podcasts, this (imagined) unwillingness to change seemed to be especially connected to humans’ consumption practices. In this sense, there seem to exist limits for what is possible to envision, and current (human) practices created constraints for imagining sustainable and ethical human-animal relations. Hence, it does not seem straightforward to imagine a society based on interspecies sustainability and justice, which can be related to the fact that animal standpoints are anticipatory, in that they are part of working toward a world that is only partly realizable in the present (Kahn, 2011, p. 54). Nevertheless, a radically different world seemed possible in

some moments when the students envisioned a (future) society of interspecies sustainability and justice. In this sense, imagination seemed to be “in crisis” (cf. Ghosh in Tammi et al., 2024) in that there were sometimes limits put in place in terms of how ethical and sustainable human-animal relations that could be imagined and called for. Yet, practices of envisioning interspecies sustainability also enabled students to call for the freedom of nonhuman animals and engage with what such societies could look like. As follows, imagination, nevertheless, constitutes a possible tool for envisioning something entirely different than the society we have today (Pliushchik et al., 2024, p. 40; cf. Jensen, 2014, 2016; Hohti & Tammi, 2019; Saari, 2025; Yusoff & Gabrys, 2011). This was enabled, among other things, through paying attention to the lived experiences and perspectives of other animals (Celermajer et al., 2020; Pliushchik et al., 2024), even enabling action toward a society of interspecies sustainability and justice in the present. When envisioning freedom for nonhuman animals currently exploited by humans, current practices were interrupted by something new. Hence, “what is” clashed with “what is not” (Biesta & Säfström, 2011) and the students sometimes seemed to exist in the tension between the two.



Part III Insights from engaging  
with critical animal pedagogy as  
sustainability education



## Chapter 9: Concluding discussion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to explore how CAP can contribute to ESE by addressing, challenging, and transforming current exploitative human-animal relations and their social, ethical, and environmental ramifications. To do so I have sought to answer how nonhuman animals can emerge (and be responded to) as subjects in upper secondary schools, as well as how the introduction of CAP enables or prevents certain human-animal relations. Furthermore, it aimed to identify the implications for CAP when it is introduced in ESE in upper secondary schools and, conversely, the implications for ESE when CAP is introduced in upper secondary education. A key focus has been exploring what CAP can contribute to ESE through its emphasis on interspecies sustainability and justice. I have been especially interested in the cracks, openings, and possibilities that emerge, possibly enabling new ethical human-animal relations, as well as the limits of what is possible with regard to nonhuman animals within the context of upper secondary schools.

The thesis has explored different approaches and practices to communicating with students about the non-anthropocentric and non-speciesist perspectives of CAP and encouraging them to engage with these perspectives. Some of these perspectives were embraced and applied by the students, while others were rejected or transformed. In this concluding discussion, I provide answers to the research questions by pointing to some key findings and expounding in greater depth some of the discussions initiated in the thesis.

### The (im)possibility of nonhuman animals to appear as subjects

Insights from this project suggest that critical reflections on human-animal relations are predicated on the possibility of nonhuman animals to be understood as subjects. It is particularly when nonhuman animals appear as subjects that students seem to attend (and sometimes also respond) to the ethical demands that pertain to them. Hence, it is when nonhuman animals appear as subjects in ESE that students can engage with their situation and critically address human-animal

relations. It is in these moments that it seems possible to disturb and disrupt the position of nonhuman animals as *for* humans (Pedersen, 2019b; Wallin, 2014). However, in the contexts studied, nonhuman animals were variously perceived as objects and subjects. Sometimes they briefly emerged as subjects, only to be once again framed as objects in the next moment. Thus, the status of nonhuman animals as subjects is seemingly highly precarious and often temporary, being dependent also on context. The presence of nonhuman animals in the two participating upper secondary schools, and education more broadly, as mapped out at the start of the project, resonates with previous research pointing to how nonhuman animals are exploited as scientific objects in dissection and research, as tools for teaching and learning, in the form of school lunches, and as metaphors or representatives of entire species within the context of formal education (e.g., Cole & Stewart, 2016; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2010a, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019, 2024; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021; Sallaway-Costello et al., 2021; Sjögren, 2014, 2016; Solot & Arluke, 1997; Truman, 2016).

The current presence of nonhuman animals provides specific conditions for introducing CAP, since this pedagogy rejects and challenges assumed ideas about the role of nonhuman animals within educational practice and thought, such as their seemingly endless availability as objects and teaching tools. Hence, CAP questions prevailing conditions in education and upper secondary schools in terms of the presence of nonhuman animals. However, ESE being part of Swedish upper secondary education also provides opportunities to introduce CAP in practice. The current treatment of nonhuman animals in education nevertheless calls for disruption to create space for an “animal standpoint” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) within ESE. While the study found that the prevailing treatment of nonhuman animals in education is as objects, more ethical and sustainable human-animal relations (than are currently commonly practice) were at times envisioned, explored, advocated for, and even acted upon. This occurred particularly when nonhuman animals were approached as subjects. Nevertheless, CAP served to reproduce and reinforce exploitative human-animal relations on other occasions, typically in instances when it seemed incongruous for nonhuman animals to be treated as subjects. This raises questions over the possibility and implications of taking an animal standpoint within ESE in upper secondary schools, a discussion to which I will now turn.

## Nonhuman animals as subjects: the possibility of animal standpoints

This thesis provides insights into the significance of encouraging students to take an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). It shows that this mostly occurs when nonhuman animals are present as subjects. On several occasions when students considered how specific individual nonhuman animals or groups of nonhuman animals experience a given situation, or how they themselves would feel if they were in the animals' situation, space was created to critically address human-animal relations. For example, prompting students to imagine how nonhuman animals experience life in factories, slaughterhouses, or zoos, or how they would experience these situations themselves, often led them to engage in discussions regarding the root causes of these conditions and strategies for change. For instance, on several occasions when students reflected upon how cows experience their confinement and their calves being taken from them, cows were reframed within the classroom environment as subjects worthy of ethical consideration, at least temporarily, allowing students to critically address the dairy industry. One class even engaged in critical discussions on what needs to change to enable the "freedom of cows," which resulted in critical discussions on whether cows should be kept for dairy farming under any circumstances and the need for humans to change their eating practices if the situation for cows is to be transformed. Hence, considering animal production, in this case dairy production, from the perspective of those exploited by this industry, seemed to provide insights about the industry itself, as well as the notion of animal production being predicated upon cows not being "free." This is in line with Harding's (2009) account of feminist standpoint theory, in which she argues that it is easier to grasp how a hierarchically organized society functions from the perspective of those who are oppressed.

Another example was a student imagining herself in the same situation as an animal set to be killed in a slaughterhouse and reflecting that it would mean her dying. Once again, an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) enabled critical reflection on animal production. Connecting deaths at slaughterhouses to eating meat, created space to consider how human practices impact the lives of nonhuman animals exploited for food and the responsibility of humans for their situation. Hence, a break in perception, which occurred through an "oppositional consciousness" (Collins, 1989; cf. Kahn, 2011), created the space to "know otherwise" (Salih, 2014, p. 64). Approaching nonhuman animals as subjects and

taking an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) seemed, on many occasions, the decisive catalyst for students to engage in further reflection. These discussions in the classroom further indicate the possibility for more ethical relations between humans and nonhuman animals currently exploited for food.

## Embracing animal standpoints through witnessing animal suffering

According to teachers in the study, school textbooks largely fail to address human-animal relations and sustainability problems, especially beyond approaching “farmed animals” as causes of climate change and environmental problems, a perspective that sometimes arises from a narrow focus on climate change and its impact on humans and certain “wild” species (cf. Darst & Dawson, 2019; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016). Teaching material in Swedish is particularly lacking when it comes to engaging with this type of content (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). Therefore, the need to use alternative material in the CAP modules was emphasized during workshop discussions, with material from animal rights organizations explored as a possible alternative and tested in practice in several of the classes. On several occasions, using material, information, and footage from animal rights organizations provided a starting point for enabling critical discussions in ESE. In my empirical contexts, some students moved from reacting to the suffering of (specific) animal others in specific situations, such as nonhuman animals killed at slaughterhouses or animals exploited at zoos, to critically addressing the causes of this suffering. Watching the process of “animals-becoming-meat” (Rowe, 2011) through video material produced by animal rights organizations, for example, repositioned nonhuman animals as subjects for some students and made it possible for them to take an animal standpoint. Although some of the students stated that they found it hard to watch this process on video, they nevertheless considered it important that the material be shown in classes due to the potential the saw for it to change humans’ behavior toward nonhuman animals. Several of the students stated that it encouraged them to reduce their meat consumption and critically address their own and other people’s eating practices.

This resonates with the thoughts of Rowe (2011), who argues that even if such material may be difficult to watch it can help challenge “cultural forces that promote animal oppression” and constitutes a tool for educators to generate “the critical energy, space, and courage necessary for understanding and for change” (Rowe, 2011, p. 20; cf. Martin, 2014; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019;

White, 2019). Additionally, my observations echo those of Tallberg et al. (2022, p. 64), who argue that video material can enable students to move from witnessing toward “empathetic inquiry” (cf. Gruen, 2013), a mix of “affective responses from witnessing suffering to cognitive insights that link to theory.” In line with Tallberg et al. (2022; cf. Rowe, 2011; Martin, 2014; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; White, 2019), I found that video material depicting mass-scale animal suffering has the potential to enable an affective and embodied form of knowledge. In addition, insights from this project resonate with previous research (e.g., Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Martin, 2014; Martusewicz, 2014; Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014; Winks, 2022; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012) that suggests a certain level of discomfort is productive for enabling critical reflections on social norms and practices. It is, however, crucial to create spaces that can facilitate ways for students to recognize, address, and act on social injustices if a “pedagogy of discomfort” (Boler 1999) is to lead to active empathy (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, p. 56).

To create awareness about animal suffering in factory farming, Rowe (2011) considers it crucial that people witness the process of nonhuman animals being made into pieces of meat in the context of animal production. Indeed, it seemed to be helpful for several students in my study to watch this process, although awareness was sometimes achieved through less graphic imagery and information provided by animal rights organizations. This suggests that although video material from slaughterhouses has the capacity to encourage engagement, this can also be achieved through other types of material. What my results show, however, is that it is critical people engage with the material from an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) so as to not risk ultimately reproducing rather than interrupting speciesism (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Pedersen, 2019b). In line with Aaltola (2014), my results show that *how* the material is approached is critical to avoiding the othering of nonhuman animals. Furthermore, Aaltola (2014) emphasizes ethical concerns related to depictions of nonhuman animals in extremely vulnerable moments and even death, reflecting that it is also important to consider what is given back to the individual animals involved in teaching practices (Rosiek et al., 2020). In terms of the individual animals depicted in the material used during the lessons, most are now dead as a result of exploitation, as previously noted. Considerations of what is given back must, however, be extended to include nonhuman animals currently being exploited under similar circumstances. Hence, one must reflect upon whether such depictions are ethically justified with regard to the individual animals, considering that they will receive no benefit individually, while simultaneously focusing on group-based experiences, in

line with feminist standpoint theory (Collins, 1997). Drawing upon experiences from this project, there are several arguments in favor of showing such material, but the possibilities available to students to respond to the suffering they witness need to be acknowledged.

This is ethically significant with respect to both students and the nonhuman animals in question. In addition to what is given back to nonhuman animals, one must consider the emotional responses and consent of students, for example some may find it a painful experience to witness the suffering of nonhuman animals exploited by humans (cf. Winks, 2022). Providing a space for putting the exploitation of nonhuman animals in its proper context and tools to critically reflect upon and engage with this type of content is therefore crucial (cf. Andrzejewski, 2003; Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014). This is important to avoid the “othering” of nonhuman animals (cf. Aaltola, 2014, pp. 23, 29) and instead ensure they are presented as subjects in ESE. Insights from this project indicate the importance of providing guidance for students to engage with material depicting animal suffering from the animals’ perspectives and explore possibilities for acting upon the causes of their suffering. This seems possible almost exclusively when students are able to take an animal standpoint (Donivan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). It is therefore crucial to consider what spaces and tools are available to help students take an animal standpoint when engaging with animal suffering in ESE. In this regard, conditions in upper secondary schools, such as time constraints, class sizes, dynamics between educators and students as well as the students themselves, and tendencies to favor abstract reasoning, must be considered. Some of these conditions and their related risks are reflected upon in more depth later in this discussion. Before reflecting upon the factors that prevented an animal standpoint in ESE, as revealed on several occasions, I will discuss some further possibilities for enabling an animal standpoint.

## Anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism: enabling animal standpoints?

In some instances, pointing to “human-animal continuities” (Noske, 1997) enabled students to consider the perspectives of other animals or imagine themselves in the animals’ position, making visible emotions, capacities, or behaviors shared between humans and other species. This happened, for instance, when students pointed out the similarity between cows’ strong urge to be with their calves and humans’ desire to be with their children, or when they stated that

the meat industry was “extremely horrible” for pigs due to them possessing an intelligence level equivalent to a three-year-old human child. In these moments, nonhuman animals emerged (and were sometimes also responded to) as subjects. The argument for the ethical consideration of nonhuman animals based on their likeness to humans has been made by Singer, among others, while Gruen (2013, p. 223) states that identifying cognitive, behavioral, and social similarities between humans and nonhuman animals can help humans understand other species better. According to Gruen (2013), this can function as a starting point for discussions about responsibility, something which occurred on several occasions throughout the CAP modules. However, this approach is also criticized, including by Gruen herself (2013), for upholding a human-led ranking of life-forms that risks reinforcing anthropocentrism and speciesism (e.g., Bailey, 2007; Crary, 2018; MacKinnon, 2012). According to Gruen (2013, p. 224), the “sameness approach” has not changed humans’ treatment of other animals significantly.

When nonhuman animals are ascribed human-coded emotions, it is sometimes labeled (and criticized) “anthropomorphism.” Which characteristics of nonhuman animals or their societies should be labeled “anthropomorphic,” however, is hard to decide (Noske, 1997, p. 89). According to Noske (1997, p. 88), characteristics of nonhuman animals understood as “anthropomorphic” are often those beyond the scope of an “objective” positivist biological or ethological framework. There is also an anthropocentric bias with regard to what is labeled anthropomorphism; de Waal (1999, p. 258) uses the term “anthropodenial” to refer to a priori rejection of shared characteristics between humans and nonhuman animals that may in fact exist. Hence, one should be careful about labeling all comparisons between non-physical human and nonhuman animal features as “misplaced anthropomorphism” (Noske, 1997, p. 89; cf. de Waal, 1999), and de Waal (1999, p. 274) states that anthropomorphic explanations deserve serious attention. During the project, ascribing human-coded emotions to nonhuman animals did, as highlight throughout the thesis, enable nonhuman animals to emerge as subjects in ESE and at times allowed students to envision (and sometimes even call for) more ethical human-animal relations. This resonates with previous research stating that anthropomorphism can encourage “pro-animal attitudes,” such as animal rights/welfare and vegan/vegetarian behaviors (Butterfield et al., 2012, p. 959), and that highlighting similarities between humans and nonhuman animals can promote empathy, moral concern, conservation, and animal welfare (Butterfield et al., 2012; Chan, 2012; de Waal, 1999; Hills, 1995; Sherman et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2023; Young et al., 2018). The experiences from the CAP modules are in line with

the thoughts of Chan (2012, p. 1891), who suggests that it might be fruitful to encourage anthropomorphism in appropriate situations instead of completely avoiding anything that could be labeled anthropomorphism.

There are, however, some risks associated with perceived anthropomorphism. In addition to possibly furthering a human-led ranking of lifeforms (e.g., Bailey, 2007; Crary, 2018; Gruen, 2013; MacKinnon, 2012), focusing on similarities between humans and other animals may also lead to incorrect interpretations of nonhuman animals' circumstances and their needs (cf. de Waal, 1999; Sherman et al., 2024; Young et al., 2018). Given this complexity, previous research distinguishes between different forms of anthropomorphism, such as "enlightened anthropomorphism" or "animalcentric anthropomorphism" and "inaccurate anthropomorphism" or "anthropocentric anthropomorphism" (de Waal, 1999; cf. Sherman et al., 2024). Anthropocentric or inaccurate anthropomorphism can be described in terms of human introspection or the projection of human experiences onto other species, i.e. imagining how a human would feel in a nonhuman animal's position (de Waal, 1999, p. 237; cf. Sherman et al. 2024). This may lead to the conflation of the experiences or needs of humans and nonhuman animals and an inaccurate understanding of the needs and experiences of other animals (Sherman et al., 2024, pp. 153, 143). In contrast, animalcentric or enlightened anthropomorphism starts from and tries to understand the perspective of nonhuman animals through an intimate familiarity with their behavior and lifeworld<sup>38</sup> (de Waal, 1999, p. 273; cf. Sherman et al., 2024; Young et al., 2018). Thus, the latter can be compared to key aspects of taking an animal standpoint (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011).

Although the risks associated with comparing nonhuman animals to humans are ever-present when focusing on human-animal continuities as grounds for ethical consideration, my experiences nevertheless point to the potential of this approach (cf. Bastian, Loughnan, Haslam & Radke (2012); Butterfield et al., 2012; Chan, 2012; de Waal, 1999; Hills, 1995; Sherman et al. 2024; Wilkinson, 2023; Young et al., 2018). It enabled many students to critically assess animals' experiences and created an engaging starting point for critiquing human exploitation of other species. Hence, this study shows that "anthropomorphism" can be used to establish initial interest, enabling engagement with more critical perspectives (cf. Young et al., 2018), although the engagement and consideration sometimes started in the perceived likeness of some nonhuman animals to

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<sup>38</sup> De Waal (1999, p. 265) uses the term "Umwelt" which is a German term introduced by von Uexküll for "the environment as perceived by the animal."

humans, which is often anthropocentric. Given the argument that anthropomorphism can be exploited for commercial purposes (de Waal, 1999, p. 262), it is interesting to further explore the role anthropomorphism could play in the countermovement that Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2019, p. 46) advocate for CAP to be. While my material shows that acknowledging continuities between humans and other animals can encourage students to engage with the experiences of nonhuman animals in certain contexts, the opposite is also true in some instances. For instance, conceptualizing the human as “an animal among other animals” at times seemed to legitimize humans’ right to eat meat, while, conversely, framing humans as possessors of “superior intelligence” encouraged the argument that it is the responsibility of humans not to exploit other animals. Hence, determining the outcomes of (possibly) anthropomorphic and anthropocentric narratives, emphasizing “human exceptionalism” (cf. Haraway, 2008), is not straightforward, which acknowledges the uncontrollability of education (Biesta, 1998; Britzman, 2003), since these ideas resonate very differently with different students, and the conclusions they draw may vary greatly.

Learning about species-specific capacities and behaviors, in some instances, provided space for nonhuman animals to be present in the classroom as subjects and encouraged students to take an animal standpoint. Learning about pigs’ good sense of smell, for example, enabled students to consider pig factories from a pig’s perspective. These instances contradict MacCormack’s (2013, p. 13) statement that all attempts to create knowledge about nonhumans trap nonhumans in anthropocentric discourse. Instead, my data speaks to the potential of learning about other species to enable critique of their exploitation (cf. Gruen, 2013, among others). Several students in the project expressed doubt about the extent to which it is possible for humans to know what other animals feel and want, with this understanding sometimes working to the animals’ disadvantage in legitimizing exploitation. At the same time, students expressed interest in learning more about the different ways nonhuman animals communicate. Engaging ethologists or ethological material<sup>39</sup> could, therefore, be fruitful for teaching CAP and encouraging students to take an animal standpoint. Although some means of knowledge production employed in the natural sciences are anthropocentric and have been used to (literally) trap nonhuman animals in animal production (cf. Franklin, 2007), insights from this project suggest that such knowledge can,

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<sup>39</sup> According to de Waal (1999, p. 264) ethologists most often interpret behavior within the wider context of species’ habitats and natural history, rather than being “anthropomorphic from a narrowly human perspective.”

nevertheless, disturb and disrupt anthropocentric discourse, potentially serving to help *release* rather than *trap* nonhumans.

Both anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism are criticized for undermining respect and consideration for nonhuman animals for “the kinds of beings they are” (Crary, 2018, p. 129). This could lead to some animals being excluded from moral consideration if they are not considered similar enough to humans (cf. Crary, 2018; Gruen, 2013, among others). It could also result in a failure to acknowledge and respect nonhuman animals’ otherness due to anthropocentric bias (Noske, 1997, p. 157) or differences between animal species being ignored, with the risk being that humans do not respond adequately to their specific circumstances and enact ontological violence (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, p. 266). There is certainly merit to the critique that all human knowledge production about the nonhuman can be considered anthropocentric (MacCormack, 2013) and that granting (some) nonhuman animals ethical consideration due to their similarities to humans risks reinforcing human supremacy (MacCormack, 2013; Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014; Wadiwel & Chen, 2019; Saari, 2021). These risks should be taken seriously, and there were instances in the study when these risks materialized. However, this study shows that possible anthropomorphism and even anthropocentrism can potentially serve a different purpose within the context of pedagogical practice. This points to the complexities of theory meeting practice. Engaging with CAP also enables some didactic possibilities through methods often deemed problematic from an animal standpoint. This study therefore points to a need for openness on the part of CAP educators to “go with the flow” and take where students are, rather than where one wishes them to be, as a starting point (cf. Russell, 2019; White, 2019).

When approaches that could be deemed anthropocentric or anthropomorphic enable engagement with nonhuman animals and the exploitation they are subjected to, the CAP educator must carry out a balancing act: on the one hand they must challenge certain conceptualizations within these approaches to potentially enable deeper and more critical reflections (cf. Young et al., 2018) and, on the other, they must go with “what works” and further build on what sparks engagement in students to create space for reflection. This resonates with the thoughts of White (2019, p. 134), who urges educators to embrace the unknown to engage with the spectrum of experiences, perceptions, and values that students bring. The students in my project seemed to need a starting point that sparked interest or a feeling that could then provide a bridge for critical reflection. Even if the source of this spark could be considered anthropomorphic, or even anthropocentric, it does not mean

there is no place for it in ESE. In this sense, the CAP educator must make an effort to take students' existing perspectives as a starting point (cf. Russell, 2019), even when this might go against certain core beliefs in terms of how to approach other animals and human-animal relations.

## The impossibility of an animal standpoint: CAP as a preserver of human supremacy

As mentioned earlier, CAP did not always serve to disrupt the idea of nonhuman animals as existing *for* humans (Pedersen, 2019b; Wallin, 2014), and at times it seemed almost impossible to establish an animal standpoint in the upper secondary classroom. I would even go so far as to say that CAP sometimes reproduced and reinforced perspectives that promoted animal exploitation and human exceptionalism rather than undermining them (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). This seems to be the case particularly in moments when students cannot relate to nonhuman animals as subjects within the context of formal education and an animal standpoint is prevented. This happened, for instance, when students discussed animal slaughter and camera surveillance in slaughterhouses, with no clear guidance on how to relate to the killing that they had witnessed. In these moments, instances of killing could not be conceptualized as problems in and of themselves. In one instance, students called for different methods of killing nonhuman animals, rather than not killing them at all; drawing upon Butler's (2015) work on "ungrievable" and "unlivable" lives, it can be observed that so-called "production animals" are made ungrievable, and thereby killable (cf. Göransson, 2017). In this moment, the students were engaging with animal exploitation from an anthropocentric perspective rather than taking an animal standpoint. Thus, only exploitative human-animal relations could be conceptualized. This resonates with the experiences of Bohm et al. (2015, p. 108), who argue that even conscious questioning can end up strengthening the norm of meat consumption, since the centrality of meat is so dominant. Likewise, Saari (2025, p. 11) addresses how "anthropocentrism and the human right to decide on the fate of other beings was taken as a given" in a speculative fiction workshop conducted in a Finnish secondary school, despite the aim being to advocate for multispecies justice.

The risk of speciesism being reenforced seemed particularly apparent in whole-class discussions, with students engaging in argumentation primarily based on their own opinions rather than being asked to consider the perspectives of nonhuman

animals. These experiences from the project therefore seem to contradict the views of Rudsberg and Öhman (2019), who consider argumentative discussions starting from students' own perspectives to be important for facilitating learning about complex sustainability issues in enabling deliberation and competence in democratic action (cf. Rudsberg & Öhman, 2015; Rudsberg et al. 2017). The insights instead reflect the risk identified by Rudsberg and Öhman (2019) of students relying on "incorrect data," preconceptions, or pure guesses, or reducing diversity by striving for consensus (cf. Öhman & Öhman, 2013). The ability of the teacher to challenge common perspectives, introduce alternatives, deepen and nuance discussions are therefore crucial (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2019, p. 183; cf. Rudsberg & Öhman, 2010; Öhman & Öhman 2013), but experiences from the CAP modules suggest that this is not always achievable in classroom discussions. Thus, the clear risk of such discussions reinforcing exploitative human-animal relations must be acknowledged.

When students engaged with the issues in smaller groups, there was often greater opportunity for reflection and complexity, which resonates with the thoughts of Nussbaum (2010). According to Nussbaum (2010, p. 55), a small class size, or providing space for regular small-group discussions, is crucial to a pedagogy that treats students as individuals with unfolding powers of mind that are expected to engage actively and make contributions to classroom discussions. Moreover, approaching topics of discussion in an abstract manner, which was often the case in classroom discussions that took students' perspectives as a point of departure, is correlated with educational approaches favoring "rational deliberation" and "democratic dialogue" (Ellsworth, 1989, pp. 301, 314). Such approaches are common to certain pluralistic perspectives that are open to conflicting views and skeptical of education "that serves a specified end" (e.g., Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1200). Pluralistic approaches are common in education, and it is not surprising that some students engaged with the questions introduced in the CAP modules in this manner when not explicitly asked to start from a nonhuman animals' perspective. According to Pedersen (2019b, p. 3), such approaches make sense from "a conventional anthropocentric perspective on education as a democratic and humanistic project" but not if nonhuman animals are understood as subjects. Drawing upon insights from this project, it appears that the potential to disturb and disrupt anthropocentrism and speciesism lies within an animal standpoint and, given the prevailing anthropocentrism in upper secondary schools, my results make clear that this standpoint needs to be explicitly advocated in ESE.

Furthermore, several instances in which it seemed impossible to establish an animal standpoint coincided with moments of resistance. This resistance often seemed to be related to students feeling that their individual habits, especially eating practices, were being questioned. This could be related to the notion of self-conception (cf. Twine, 2014), but it could also be perceived in terms of resistance to authority (cf. Almiron, 2019). Experiences from the project of questioning animal consumption being met with resistance resonate with Darst and Dawson (2019), who point to the risk of denial, resistance, and unwillingness to engage in discussion (cf. Spanning & Grušovnik, 2019). It also echoes the experiences of Lindgren (2020), who maps out fierce resistance to a school's initiative to introduce a vegan month. Moreover, resistance sometimes occurred when human supremacy was called into question, and it could be argued that such a reaction is a response to the threat of a non-speciesist perspective uprooting an established, anthropocentric worldview. Although resistance does not have to be viewed as solely negative, it can be a first step in the process of changing one's perspective, it does highlight the importance of taking into account the students' views, situatedness, and thoughts with regard to how a pedagogy is received. These reactions provide valuable insights into possibilities and challenges related to different approaches to CAP, as well as the possibilities for starting "where the students *are*, not where we might wish them to be" (Russell, 2019, p. 38, emphasis in original).

## The imagined human collective that is unwilling to change

Within the context of upper secondary schools, there seem to be constraints on the ethical and sustainable human-animal relations that can be imagined, as well as the changes that seem to be conceivably within reach on both a personal and a societal level. On several occasions throughout the CAP lessons, students' responses were seemingly mediated by an imagined human collective with specific norms regarding how society must function, limiting the changes that were considered achievable. In the study, this came to the fore, especially with regard to meat consumption, with the imagined human collective believed to be reluctant to stop eating meat or transition to veganism. With reference to this imagined human collective that is unwilling to change, some students argued that there was no point in becoming vegan since other members of society will not change their habits, with the impact of their choice therefore being very limited in its impact.

Interestingly, many students in the project considered themselves capable of changing their habits, but not other people, at least not in significant numbers. Throughout the project, students discussed the possibilities and challenges of going vegan, and some claimed to have reduced their meat consumption. Even students who expressed reluctance to stop eating animal-derived food seldom framed it as impossible, but rather something they did not currently want to do. Thus, most students seemed to conceive of themselves as less “stuck” than the imagined human collective.

Nevertheless, this imagined human collective constrained the sustainable societies that it was possible for students to envision. Some students envisioned societies predicated on interspecies sustainability and justice in their final podcast assignment, emphasizing how veganism, not killing other animals, and respecting other species were crucial values for such societies. However, these students believed it was unlikely that other people would agree to stop eating meat and that it would be impossible to achieve the societies they envisioned. Hence, this imagined human collective constrained the types of societies that were believed to be within reach, putting boundaries in place to the types of changes students considered to be within the realms of the possible. This imagined human collective was repeatedly referred to by students. For instance, one student argued that humans do not have the right to kill other animals; however, upon considering other people’s reluctance to stop eating meat, she adjusted her envisioned society in accordance with the imagined resistance. In this sense, possibilities for interspecies sustainability and justice are constrained by human entitlement. To use the words of Biesta and Säfström (2011, p. 541), on these occasions students seemed to partly get stuck in “what is,” instead of embracing the tension arising from the confrontation between “what is” and “what is not.”

The constraining effects of the imagined human collective could be an example of what Darst and Dawson (2019, p. 233) refer to as the “false consensus effect,” according to which the most vocally defended positions are believed to be more widely shared than they are in reality. One effect of this could be that people who do not share these vocally defended positions might believe themselves to be in a minority and remain silent, although their own position might be more widely shared than they realize (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 233, drawing upon Marshall, 2014). Sharing counter-stories about veganism, animal rights, and more ethical human-animal relations currently practiced in society (cf. Kahn, 2011; Twine, 2014) made these alternatives seem within reach, at least among some students. Such approaches may serve to make this imagined human collective less fixed, and

therefore less impactful, since there are concrete alternatives available. This could be seen in the study when students, despite being conscious of this imagined reluctant human collective, applied a CAS perspective that rejected the ontological assumption that humans have total access to nonhuman animals (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014, pp. 263-4). Moreover, introducing counter stories could create space for more ways of feeling, being, and acting by pointing to alternative ways of acting in the here and now that prove certain norms can be broken (cf. Twine, 2014). Such opportunities were picked up by students, for instance when they envisioned what societies characterized by interspecies sustainability and justice could look like, or when they stated that they had changed, or intended to change, their own behavior in relation to nonhuman animals, for instance by adopting veganism. Given the constraints presented by an imagined human collective that is reluctant to change, more research on how to address, overcome, and resist this idea would be valuable for CAP and ESE more broadly.

## Engaging with wicked sustainability problems in CAP

As indicated in the discussion above, there are several impossibilities, or “stuck places,” that emerge when introducing CAP within ESE in upper secondary schools. However, possibilities for getting “unstuck” also appeared as events unfolded in the classrooms. In exploring possibilities for societies based on interspecies sustainability, students sometimes reached a “stuck place” when the prospect of widespread veganism was raised, due to the imagined human collective being reluctant to change (as mentioned above). Another “stuck place” appeared with the demand for a “100 percent solution.” On several occasions, when veganism was discussed in terms of the possible impact of a transition to plant-based diets on the environment and climate, a “stuck place” was reached when it was acknowledged that a transition to vegan diets is not a “100 percent solution” to current environmental problems and climate change. In such moments, veganism was framed as a topic with which it is unnecessary to engage. When something was seen as being not a complete solution to a problem, it sometimes provided the basis for an argument to not engage with the practice discussed, or not deal with the issue in question at all, resulting in discussions getting “stuck.” This resonates with Darst’s and Dawson’s (2019, p. 220) experiences of discussing meat consumption in the classroom, in that it was approached in terms of an “all or nothing.” They argue that it is psychologically more comfortable to dismiss the

possibility of vegetarianism and frame meat consumption as an “all or nothing” issue instead of confronting the underlying ethical dilemma inherent in the question (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 220).

Sometimes CAP seemed to enter one “stuck place” after another. However, opportunities did arise even here. In some instances, for example, veganism was framed as a relevant practice to explore (and sometimes engage in) and seen as a possible “solution.” This was particularly the case when possibilities for ending animal suffering within animal production were discussed, which could be associated with a more graspable connection between veganism and the decreased suffering of “production animals.” The circumstances of animals, and especially their suffering, seemed to be particularly engaging for many students. Hence, my experiences diverge from those of Darst and Dawson (2019), who suggest addressing meat consumption in relation to environmental problems rather than animal suffering, arguing that the latter presents a risk of silencing discussion and eliciting defensive responses. Although some of these discussions were characterized by resistance to veganism or denial, in line with Darst and Dawson (2019), addressing meat consumption in relation to animal suffering resulted in engaged discussion rather than silence (cf. Russell, 2019). These experiences are in line with previous research suggesting that the environment is less of a motivator for change than animal suffering (Almiron, 2019, p. 1110; cf. Braunsberger & Flamm, 2019). Hence, engaging with animal production from a perspective anchored in interspecies sustainability and creating space for approaching nonhuman animals used in animal production as victims rather than causes of sustainability problems (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016) seems an important approach for ESE.

Considering that animal production is a major contributing factor to the most serious environmental problems and ongoing climate crises (cf. Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Steinfeld, 2006; Twine, 2024), it is crucial to find ways to critically address this in education in a manner that is engaging for students, and CAP offers possibilities in this regard. Creating space to address animal production could be understood to be especially important in rich Nordic countries that generate significant emissions from food consumption, especially from the consumption of animal-derived foods, such as meat and dairy (Larsson, [Ed.], 2015). This is in line with the thoughts of Svarstad (2021, pp. 215, 217), who emphasizes the need for climate education to focus on effective strategies for the specific context in which the education is carried out, especially at the national level. Insights from this project speak to doing so in a manner that takes the students’ diverse situatedness

into account. As previously addressed, it is important to be aware of unequal access to healthy plant-based food (Harper, 2012; Stapleton, 2015) to ensure that avoiding meat consumption is not seen as a lifestyle phenomenon of the white middle class (cf. Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019, pp. 1195-6). An additional suggestion is to engage with “race-conscious veganism” (Harper, 2012). Although it is important to apply ESE in ways that are context and population specific, it does present risks of further educational differentiation that constructs different student populations as suitable or unsuitable for certain forms of education and responses to sustainability problems (Bylund, 2023; Bylund et al., 2025; Knutsson et al., 2024). This calls for awareness regarding how students’ (and other individuals’) situatedness is addressed in CAP, ensuring that attention is paid to the risks of furthering inequalities through this process.

Due to the wickedness of sustainability problems, which raise conflicting values and require solutions that are not easily defined (Block et al., 2019), it is unlikely that a single action will provide a “100 percent solution.” In this sense, it is very important for sustainability education to create space to address complexity and explore a multitude of possible actions without the demand for a single absolute solution. Sometimes, the reflections and questions of other students, activists, or educators presented a route out of “stuck places” during the CAP lessons. This was the case, for instance, when a student stated that veganism is not a “100 percent solution” and another replied that it would be a solution for the nonhuman animals currently harmed by humans in the food industry. This resonates with the thoughts of Rudsberg and Öhman (2019), who acknowledge the role of peers and teachers in enabling critical discussion of various arguments, encouraging divergent ideas, and introducing alternative perspectives in classroom discussions. In the study, emphasizing an animal standpoint was critical for allowing students to engage with veganism and critically discuss exploitative human-animal relations. On another occasion during the same lesson, veganism was framed as part of the solution to environmental problems with no expectation that it would be comprehensive. This points to the uncontrollability of education (Biesta, 1998; Britzman, 2003), in that CAP takes shapes through encounters between those engaging with this pedagogy.

Drawing upon these insights, this thesis suggests that CAP, with its anchoring in an animal standpoint, has the potential to contribute to ESE by increasing student engagement in relation to sustainability. However, this is not to say that animal exploitation should be used to create engagement that can be channeled toward other “more important” sustainability issues; the circumstances of

nonhuman animals is an important question in and of itself. Nevertheless, it could be used as an engaging starting point for mapping out, exploring, and addressing the intimate relationship between the circumstances of nonhuman animals, especially in animal production, and sustainability issues such as climate change and environmental degradation, as well as social injustices affecting humans and nonhumans alike. In this sense, focusing on the suffering of nonhuman animals exploited for food could create a starting point for critically addressing animal production on a structural level, mapping out connections between various forms of oppression and sustainability issues, as well as considering possibilities for change, including veganism. However, one challenge lies in the didactic conditions of upper secondary schools, in that time constraints and extensive course content do not always allow opportunities for dealing with complexity, making it tricky to facilitate close engagement with different dimensions of sustainability problems, let alone how these are co-constituted (cf. Saari, 2025).

## CAP—challenging or reinforcing individualism?

Individualism was somewhat common among the student groups in the project, reflecting attitudes in wider society, and several students arrived at individualistic stances when engaging with CAP. For instance, some students in the project stated that they “just care about themselves” and that issues connected to animal rights do not concern them since they are not in the animals’ position or do not have time to engage with the issues. Even if these stances vary in character, the individualistic starting point creates specific challenges for CAP. By starting from a position of solidarity anchored in interspecies sustainability and justice, students were encouraged to see beyond their own perspectives and situated positions to consider those of other animals. A relational form of ethics, in which humans’ entangled relationships with other animals have ethical consequences (Gruen, 2013; cf. Donovan, 206), was emphasized in the CAP modules. Although individualism sometimes prevailed in the classroom, relational ethics were applied when students reflected upon their and other humans’ responsibility for the situations of nonhuman animals in food production, zoos, and animal testing, with some arguing for actions in solidarity with the animals. In this sense, CAP challenged individualism, creating space to envision (and act toward) more ethical human-animal relations. Nevertheless, individualism was at times also reinforced. This occurred, for example, when students resisted taking a position of solidarity

with nonhuman animals based on the anthropocentric notions, which remained prevalent, or when participants in the classrooms and workshops seemed to “get stuck” at the level of the individual at the expense of addressing and reflecting on systemic critiques or collective approaches to change.

Whether CAP challenges or reinforces individualism is a question that is best addressed by looking at how eating practices, particularly practices of eating meat, were introduced and addressed throughout the project.<sup>40</sup> Similarly to the experiences of Russell (2019), humans’ relationship to “food animals” generated much discussion. On many occasions, individual eating practices seemed to be the most accessible point of discussion for both students and CAP educators, perhaps because it is easy to relate eating practices to peoples’ everyday lives, with eating meat often being one of the most intimate ways people regularly interact with other animals (Russell, 2019, p. 44). Moreover, discussions on eating practices directly link to the topic of animal production. The pedagogical practices applied in study also included personal accounts of people choosing not to consume animal-derived foods and transitioning to veganism. A central critique against focusing on individual practices in sustainability education pertains to the risks associated with shifting responsibility onto individuals (e.g., Ideland & Malmberg, 2015; Ress et al., 2022; Öhman & Östman, 2019; cf. Guthman, 2007; Stapleton, 2015; Weismann, 2015). For instance, Ideland and Malmberg (2015, p. 180) map out how an “eco-certified child” is constructed through the connection of personal guilt with global threats by focusing on individual actions and framing these as having the capacity to rescue “the flock and the planet.” They consider this hypothetical “desirable child” to be constructed and governed within the discursive order of ESD in line with a neoliberal ideology. According to them, this individualistic focus tends to render ideological standpoints and conflicting interests invisible, which risks making the political project of sustainable development apolitical (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015, p. 181).

Furthermore, the normative tradition within ESE is specifically highlighted by Öhman and Östman (2019) as shifting responsibility onto individuals through its focus on the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle. Similarly, the heavy focus on individual eating practices, especially meat consumption, which appeared throughout the CAP modules, can be understood in terms of reproducing the neoliberal discourse of ESD and shifting responsibility onto individuals. An

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<sup>40</sup> Some parts of this text have previously been published in the article “Addressing animal slaughter in school: the significance of an animal standpoint” in *Ethics and Education* (Kallaste Håkansson, J., 29 April, 2025). See: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2025.2489913>

example of this, seen in the study, was the impact of people adopting veganism being linked primarily to consumer power. One major problem with focusing solely on individual practices (and consumer power) is that it risks resulting in the structural dimensions that constrain people's access to healthy plant-based food (cf. Harper, 2012; Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019; Stapleton, 2015) and enable the "animal-industrial complex" (Noske, 1997; developed in Twine, 2013) to be overlooked. Critically addressing the political economy, as well as social systems and holistic complexes of oppression and domination, is a core part of CAS (Best, 2009; cf. ICAS principles<sup>41</sup>). Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 422) argue that studying the system, rather than its constituent parts, can enable an exploration of human-animal relations beyond individual consumers and farms. This could help students grasp "the wider phenomenon of speciesism" and address the role of the animal industry in a globalized world (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 422). Discussions limited to the individual level may not provide a sufficient starting point for engaging with structural barriers and possibilities for working toward wider structural changes.

The problem of focusing exclusively on the level of the individual can further be connected to what could be termed "lifestyle veganism," which was addressed and critiqued by several students in the project. The critique of "lifestyle veganism" relates to mainstream representations of vegans and veganism that reflect white middle-class norms, as well as the lack of representation of vegans of color, working-class vegans, and/or Indigenous vegans (cf. Harper, 2012; Robinson, 2020). This points to the relevance of questions around representation and intersectional perspectives to CAP. White middle-class norms were at times unwillingly or unintentionally embodied by both the animal rights activist involved in the study and by me, due to our situated positions, but the analysis should focus primarily on *how* CAP was introduced, rather than *who* carried out the practices (although this is also important, especially when applying pedagogical approaches centered around personal narratives of veganism). Such critiques came to the fore when students associated vegetarians and vegans with "rich influencers" or "YouTubers," for example, or when some students stated that they struggled to afford certain vegan products. This speaks to the importance of addressing the availability of plant-based foods in relation to socioeconomic and class dimensions when engaging with CAP (cf. Boscardin, 2017; Harper, 2012; Lloro-Bidart, 2018a; Russell, 2019; Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019; Stapleton, 2015). Although the topic

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<sup>41</sup> Developed by Best, Nocella II, Kahn, Gigliotti, and Kemmerer; see [www.criticalanimalstudies.org](http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org)

of animal production was approached in a manner that aimed to make visible the systematic aspects of the exploitation and killing at slaughterhouses, partly also including the exploitation of slaughterhouse workers, and address various aspects impacting the availability of healthy plant-based food, individual eating practices were often central to the discussions. There are risks associated with focusing solely on individual actions, since this may not provide an appropriate starting point for addressing the root causes, or structural dimensions behind the development of industrialized agricultural production, for example in terms of the influence of social factors on behavior (Jensen, 2002, p. 330; cf. Russell, 2019).

Addressing individual eating practices, however, did enable several students to address human-animal power relations more broadly and the economic interests of companies, as well as engage in envisioning possible future societies and strategies to realize them. In relation to this, Jensen (2002, p. 330) understands individual actions and knowledge about possibilities for changing one's own life to be part of enabling action competence, highlighting, for example, the importance of knowledge regarding how "to control one's own life and how to contribute to changing living conditions in society at large," which includes analyzing power relations and knowing how to encourage cooperation. Moreover, Pedersen (2010a, p. 56) acknowledges the importance of situating the problems addressed in a social, political, and historical context to provide students explanatory dimensions through a critical analysis of vested interests. In the project, discussions on individual eating practices created space for critical reflections and enabled action competence. On several occasions, individual eating practices functioned as a point of departure for considering how humans' actions impact nonhuman animals more broadly, helping students to address animal production and food systems, the role of companies, governments, and the European Union, and anthropocentric worldviews. In this sense, the focus on individual eating practices made ideological standpoints and conflicting interests visible. Therefore, contrary to claims by Ideland and Malmberg (2015), the (sometimes) individualistic standpoints taken made the "project of sustainable development" (p. 181) far from apolitical. In many instances, a focus on individual eating practices enabled students' engagement by taking their initial perspectives as a starting point (cf. Russell, 2019). This points to how CAP can contribute to ESE by providing a starting point for addressing sustainability problems in a manner that allows for movement between the individual and structural levels.

## How can CAP contribute to ESE?

The overall aim of this thesis has been to explore how CAP can contribute to ESE. With this in mind, I will share some overall insights gained during the project before offering some concluding remarks and suggestions for future research and practice.

By taking an animal standpoint as a point of departure (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011), this thesis contributes to a central debate within the field around ESE as normative pedagogy. It does so in two ways: firstly by disturbing, and thereby making visible, assumptions about neutrality in education and, secondly, by enabling an “oppositional consciousness” (Collins, 1989), providing tools to critically address these assumptions and envision and work toward alternatives anchored in an animal standpoint (cf. Kahn, 2011). The introduction of CAP in upper secondary schools reveals that norm-critical perspectives that are in open solidarity with nonhuman animals are often seen as biased and therefore problematic (cf. Bohm et al., 2015; Lindgren, 2020; Pedersen, 2010a; Sjögren, 2016; Weber et al., 2022), which can be seen as a symptom of the prevalence of anthropocentrism in education. At times, this unquestioned anthropocentrism provided challenging didactic conditions for CAP, with the ideal of the neutral, objective teacher who must present “both sides” limiting the scope of action for the CAP educators, particularly teachers. This presents a constraint for how CAP could be introduced in ESE in upper secondary schools. Nevertheless, there was space at times during the study for educators to be “carefully unneutral,” to use the words of one of the teachers, as well as to question, disturb, and even reject the ideals and unquestioned assumptions around idealized neutrality and objectivity identified by the participants. Most of the CAP practices that were applied broke with these ideals and assumptions. This suggests potential for carving out space within the context of upper secondary schools for engaging critically with human-animal relations in ESE by starting from an animal standpoint.

One especially important contribution of this thesis to ESE is the insights it provides for nuancing the idea that different views, perspectives, and values must be highlighted and engaged with through “rational discussion” with regard to sustainability problems (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 75). Experiences from this project also raise questions about the idea that openness can be encouraged by not aiming for an ideological standpoint in ESE (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 75), which relates to some scholars’ rejection of animal rights as a starting point within

ESE practice and theory (e.g., Bruckner & Kowasch, 2019; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019). Both students and teachers in the project pointed to the repetition of limited and one-sided notions of sustainability in ESE, which risks the topic losing its meaning and becoming more of a “buzzword” rather than something containing critical content; repetitive content also seemed to make students lose interest (cf. Du Pisani, 2006; Cutter-Mackenzie & Rousell, 2019). It became evident that students were already too well familiarized with anthropocentric perspectives that frame nonhuman animals (as well as the nonhuman world more broadly) as resources for human use. This calls into question the need to present these anthropocentric perspectives in ESE and points instead to the importance of introducing counternarratives (Kahn, 2011) and countermovements (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019) that address and resist anthropocentrism and speciesism. The introduction of “interspecies sustainability” (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Saari, 2021) constitutes one such countermovement, on many occasions disturbing and disrupting the monotone reoccurrence of sustainability in ESE through its rejection of quotidian cycle of exploitative human-animal relations.

Furthermore, insights from this project complicate the division of ESE into three different traditions as commonly referred to in the Nordic context (see, for instance, Öhman & Östman, 2019). These traditions consist of the fact-based, normative, and pluralistic traditions, as outlined by Öhman and Östman (2019). Reflections by one of the natural science teachers highlight the idea that natural science provides “facts” and creates space for working with normative pedagogy in ESE. Similarly, approaches adhering to the pluralistic tradition are said to enable an “education of participation” that highlights diverse and conflicting views, perspectives, and values, enabling deliberation and democratic discussion (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1200; cf. Jickling & Wals, 2008; Lundegård & Wickman, 2012; Öhman, 2008; Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 75). However, insights from this project suggest that some perspectives need to be highlighted over others. If an animal standpoint is not continuously introduced and emphasized, the perspectives of nonhuman animals exploited by humans tend to get lost (cf. Kopnina, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Pedersen, 2019b). As a result, the alternatives perceived as being within reach are limited, with both nonhuman animals and students trapped by anthropocentric discourse (MacCormack, 2013; cf. Kopnina, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Pedersen, 2019b), which constrains what is possible to envision, let alone act upon. Insights from this project further call into question the idea of Öhman and Östman (2019) that the democratic

process occurs at different stages within the different traditions of ESE. For example, the normative tradition conceptualizes the democratic process as occurring *before* education, since this tradition is thought of as coordinating public will with political consensus (Öhman & Östman, 2019, p. 81). My results instead suggest that by introducing the normative perspective of CAP in education, space is provided for democratic processes *within* upper secondary schools (at least to the extent that democratic processes are possible in education). In my thesis, I have pointed out that the democratic task of education is often seen as a given. However, I have also addressed how the introduction of CAP makes visible and disturbs the anthropocentric biases of this task by questioning the object status of nonhuman animals and lack of critical perspectives on human-animal relations, as well as why issues related to humans and nonhuman animals are often discussed differently.

By insisting upon starting from the perspective of interspecies sustainability and including nonhuman animals as stakeholders (Saari, 2021), space was created on several occasions to explore what societies based on interspecies sustainability and justice might look like in practice (although this was still often constrained by human entitlement as previously addressed). Conflict and tension were often present in the ESE classroom when CAP was introduced, both in terms of the resistance it provoked in students and its openness and transparency about the conflicting interests inherent in prevailing forms of animal exploitation. By insisting on starting from an animal standpoint, such conflicting interests were made visible and could be addressed. The turbulence sometimes provoked by CAP, resulting in rejections, irony, dark humor, and laughter, was ambiguous. In several instances, this ambiguity provided a starting point for engaging with complex concepts, such as the possibility of killing without inflicting suffering, the potential for societies free from animal exploitation, and the impacts of veganism. That the space for critically approaching such questions from an animal standpoint was only realized on a limited number of occasions throughout the CAP modules indicates the limits of the democratic task of ESE, at least if democracy is understood beyond an anthropocentric perspective that takes only human subjects into consideration (cf. Pedersen, 2019b). This project not only questions the steady emphasis on pluralistic approaches in ESE, and how they allegedly enable democratic processes in education (e.g., Öhman & Östman, 2019), but calls into question the very division of ESE into three distinct traditions. This project has shown that the fact-based tradition can promote engagement through normative approaches, and that normative approaches can enable democratic processes *in*

education, to the extent that this is possible. Experiences from this project also point to the fact that the normative tradition may enable a greater diversity of perspectives than the traditional pluralistic tradition (cf. Kopnina, 2012; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Pedersen, 2019b). In terms of CAP, animal standpoint theory, like feminist standpoint theory, emphasizes subjugated knowledge that is pluralist and partial in nature, functioning as a resource that increases the possibility of an “objective understanding” of society (Kahn, 2011, p. 55, drawing upon Harding, 2004). Hence, an animal standpoint can provide a more “robustly democratic public sphere beyond majoritarian accounts” (Kahn, 2011, p. 55), and within the CAP modules this was initiated by engaging with a multitude of contradictory and heterogenous animal standpoints (cf. Kahn, 2011). Therefore, experiences from this project suggest that the division of ESE into three distinct traditions fails to accommodate the complexity of the current field.

Another significant contribution of this thesis with regard to ESE is the insights it provides into debates around normative pedagogy and concerns with perceived moralization and foreclosing of possibilities when working with normative pedagogy. Previous research criticizes some forms of ESE for constructing and governing a “desirable child” (or rather young person or student in my case) within the “discursive order of education for sustainable development” (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015, p. 174). Some scholars are skeptical of education that “serves a specific end” (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019, p. 1200; cf. Jickling, 1992; Jickling in Jickling & Wals, 2012); within the field of educational philosophy, Biesta and Säfström (2011) reject education using “strong socialization” by telling students *how* to respond to a “predetermined future that may never arrive” (p. 541; cf. Biesta, 2022, p. 47). In terms of nonhuman animals and ESE, similar concerns lead Lindgren and Öhman (2019) to refrain from taking animal rights or moral arguments as a point of departure (cf. Aslanian & Moxnes, 2021; Bruckner & Kowach, 2019). There is, indeed, a risk of CAP creating a “cultural protocol of what it means to be environmentally friendly” (Ideland & Malmberg, 2015, p. 174), “animal friendly,” and a moral and ethical person. From an animal standpoint, it is clear that some individual actions, as well as ways of structuring society and using nonhuman animals on a broader scale, are problematic due to the harm they cause.

During the project, such harmful practices were both addressed by educators and brought up by students. This led to educators, pedagogy, and some students being framed as “vegan killjoys” (Twine, 2014; cf. Stanescu, 2013), resulting in associated perspectives sometimes being rejected. However, it also created space for “vegan killjoy world-making,” enabling an exploration of what interspecies

sustainability could mean in practice by exploring the “vegan killjoy position” (cf. Twine, 2014). This “vegan killjoy pedagogy” could be understood in terms of “strong socialization” (Biesta & Säfström, 2011), influencing students’ choices and behavior by framing animal exploitation as morally wrong and something to be avoided based on perspectives anchored in interspecies sustainability introduced within the CAP modules. One question that lies beneath the surface, which has been addressed in the thesis, is whether CAP encourages students to become like CAP educators, perhaps especially when personal narratives of transitioning to veganism and becoming engaged in animal rights are used as pedagogical tools. An awareness of the need to address the accessibility of vegan food and the impact of norms that reproduce speciesism and anthropocentrism, as well as the idea that it might take time to change habits, was, however, communicated by the educators. Nevertheless, certain ways of thinking, acting, and being *are* desirable from an animal standpoint, and during the CAP modules, the educators tried to address this in an open and transparent manner by being clear about the pedagogy being grounded in an animal standpoint and communicating the baseline assumptions of CAP educators. This created space for a sort of meta-pedagogy in the classroom. Several students questioned the purpose of different practices used in the CAP modules, such as showing videoclips from slaughterhouses, suggesting that it might be wise to create space for students and educators to openly discuss the purpose of openly normative pedagogies when engaging with them.

When openly normative pedagogy is problematized for its presumed risk of strong socialization, moralization, or telling students how to act, it seems to be related to three aspects. Firstly, moralization seems to be thought of as inherently wrong. Secondly, whether something is understood as moralization appears to depend on what moral issues are emphasized, with some basic moral starting points taken as given. Thirdly, such problematization seems to be built upon the assumption that what is taught in the classroom is what is picked up by students. However, as became abundantly clear in the examples I have highlighted in my data, when CAP instead reproduced and reinforced exploitative human-animal relations, the outcomes of education are not easily controlled (cf. Biesta, 1998; Britzman, 2003). Even when ESE is introduced through perspectives that seek to ultimately achieve animal liberation, the result may very well be the exact opposite. The uncontrollability of education, however, also operates in the opposite direction, and this project suggests that speciesist practices in education sometimes lead to non-speciesist insights (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019; Pedersen, 2019a), at least in combination with critical perspectives on animal

exploitation. With the introduction of CAP, both students and teachers pointed out contradictions between the critical content of CAP, framing nonhuman animals as subjects, and mundane practices in schools, such as serving animal-derived food for lunch. Although these common practices reproduce anthropocentrism and speciesism, the tension between what was taught in the CAP modules and the common practices of upper secondary schools also gave rise to “aha moments” for some students. In this regard, CAP provided a starting point for some students to critically address their previous experiences of schooling along with enabling critical reflections on human-animal relations.

Discussions around normative pedagogy relate to what the task of education (more specifically ESE) should be. Experiences from this project suggest that students are already being introduced to anthropocentric and speciesist ideas in society in general, in upper-secondary schools, and within ESE. Drawing upon these insights, the task of ESE should be one of introducing counternarratives that could disturb and disrupt “norms, practices, cultures, and structures that render animals endlessly accessible for human use” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 46). Although I am critical of some of the ways in which pluralistic approaches to ESE are understood and used, there is of course value in enabling students to discuss and try out a multitude of different perspectives. However, insights from this project make visible the importance of introducing and emphasizing *marginalized perspectives*, breaking with hegemonic narratives that reinforce speciesism and other forms of oppressions, if it is to be in any way possible to try out these perspectives and see them as viable options. Hence, educators aiming to achieve a truly open outcome with a multitude of possibilities for students to explore, imagine, and act on must push these marginalized perspectives. Otherwise, one will not end up with openness but rather taken-for-granted ideas, foreclosing possible ways of being, knowing, feeling, and acting. Therefore, if the aim is a world with more ethical and sustainable ways of living together with other species, an animal standpoint must be continuously encouraged in order for nonhuman animals’ perspectives not to become lost. Since the animal standpoint is diverse, or, to use the words of Kahn (2011), consists of a “multitude of heterogenous and contradictory animal standpoint situations” (p. 55), it can enable a more comprehensive understanding of society (Kahn, 2011, drawing upon Harding’s 2004 account of feminist standpoint theory) by including these marginalized standpoints.

## Concluding remarks

The (im)possibility of creating space to take an animal standpoint in ESE indicates how immensely tricky it is to represent nonhuman animals in education in a manner that does them justice (cf. Saari, 2021). The CAP educator needs to represent the interests of other animals in ways that are attentive to their subjectivity and do them justice, while simultaneously acknowledging that humans' ability to understand the lives of nonhuman animals is limited (Saari, 2021, p. 67). Additionally, the CAP educator might at times be wise to temporarily abandon the commitment to represent the interests of other animals in ways that are attentive to their subjectivity, if such an abandonment appears to enable engagement in the situation of nonhuman animals in human society, which might be the case with strategies that could be labeled anthropomorphic or even anthropocentric. In this regard, the CAP educator must be open to messiness, complexity, and the potential that lies in the "in-between." This would mean embracing a position of being "in-between," as well as using pedagogical approaches that might be "in-between" in terms of being in-between problematic and transformative. Such an approach relates to the position taken by White (2019, p. 134), who urges educators to embrace the unknown by being open to both teaching and being taught in the moment, i.e., working with what is at hand. Given that the animal standpoint is anticipatory, in that it envisions and works toward enabling a future that in the present is only realizable to a limited extent (Kahn, 2011, p. 54), these might be especially important insights for CAP educators.

The question that then follows is what CAP as ESE reasonably can achieve. I agree with Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2019) that it would be naïve to think that education alone can transform society (cf. Moran & Kendall, 2009), since progressive pedagogical approaches and strategies, such as CAP, are not enough on their own. However, I also agree that education, and CAP, can and must be part of working for a "nonviolent, anti-speciesist, postanthropocentric world order" (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 58). Ultimately one cannot know what students will do with their experiences from upper secondary school in the future. One cannot know whether the experiences from the CAP modules will play a part in generating a spark enabling students to act toward a society that is more just for both humans and nonhuman animals, or whether they will disappear in the buzz of mundane school practices, or even reinforce oppressive ideas. I therefore agree with some of my participants that all one can do as a CAP educator is to plant seeds and hope to have provided students with more perspectives and

tools that they can use for critically addressing (and resisting) exploitative human-animal relations, as well as envisioning and acting for interspecies sustainability and justice. Within the context of the school, one can only encourage students to try things out and call on them to respond as subjects, and “whether the [...] student will respond to the call, is entirely up to them and can neither be produced nor controlled by the educator” (Biesta, 2022, p. 47). Hence, the aim must be to introduce alternative ways of being, feeling, and acting in the world, in a manner that takes the students’ experiences, situatedness, interests, and feelings into account, hoping to make these alternatives appear to be within easier reach of students.

Although, the outcome of education is ultimately uncontrollable (Britzman, 2003; cf. Biesta, 1998) experiences from this project point out how ESE can make alternatives to current hegemonic ways of understanding and being appear more or less within reach. This thesis shows that there are obstacles and boundaries in place within education limiting how ethical and sustainable human-animal relations can be envisioned and acted upon, but it has also suggested possibilities for carving out space for an ESE that enables students to critically, boldly, and sometimes hesitantly and uncomfortably, explore what societies without animal exploitation could look like, and possibilities for acting toward such societies in the present. What has proven crucial for such a space to be enabled in upper secondary schools is the insistence on taking an animal standpoint in ESE. The potential of CAP lies in insisting upon starting from this standpoint with its stubborn demand for change, and its ability to disturb and disrupt the mundane repetition of the ontological assumption of nonhuman animals as for humans, and by so doing create space to envision something entirely different in the present. Hence, I want to end this discussion by stating that an animal standpoint is not only significant but necessary within ESE if current speciesism and anthropocentrism are to be addressed, challenged, and ultimately transformed.

## Suggestions for future research and practice

Here, I summarize suggestions for future research and practice by drawing upon insights from this project. Considering the possibilities enabled by learning more about other species’ ways of life, feelings, and behavior, in combination with how they are currently exploited, I welcome future research on the potential of providing more space in ESE for staying with this species-specific knowledge and exploring what it might say about human-animal relations if critically addressed.

One possible opportunity that has been identified in the project, and that could be explored in future research, is the inclusion of ethologists and ethological knowledge in CAP. How other animals' ways of communicating should be understood, for example, was something that several students reflected upon and were interested in knowing more about. Students already had some knowledge about the communication of certain animals, such as dogs, and the use of these experiences and knowledge as a starting point for CAP could be further explored.

Another possibility that has not been explored in this project is what would happen if CAP was introduced not only theoretically but also practically in terms of, for instance, providing vegan school lunches and ceasing to use nonhuman animals as dissection objects. Serving animal products in school can make critical inquiry into humans' exploitative relation to nonhuman animals difficult (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Rice, 2013; Rowe, 2011, 2013), and Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 425) suggest veganism as a productive entrance point to follow MacCormack's (2013) call to unthink the human in education (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021). Previous research in the Swedish context acknowledges fierce resistance, predominantly among male middle-class students, when a school initiated a "vegan month" to emphasize the environmental consequences caused by human consumption of animal products, although other students were in favor of the initiative (Lindgren, 2020). What the outcomes would be if vegan food was introduced in combination with a school-wide approach of engaging with CAP, creating space for students to develop tools to deal with the emotions and affects put into motion by such an initiative, however, has not been studied and would be particularly interesting to explore in future research (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023). Learning about and practicing vegan cooking is another possible entry point (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019). Both approaches can be introduced through the "vegan education" suggested by Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; cf. Kahn, 2011).

A specific constraint identified during the project was the idea of the imagined human collective that is unwilling to change, and more research on how to address, avoid, and resist this idea would be particularly valuable. One possibility explored during the project was the introduction of counternarratives (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Kahn, 2011). Another possibility explored in less depth during this project, and a possible area for future research, is addressing and exploring where this idea comes from and providing more space for exploring how other changes have come about when a majority of people were perceived as

reluctant, as well as discussing statistics that map people's opinions instead of starting from presumptions. This would also provide valuable insights for working with other issues in ESE.

More possibilities for providing guidance to students in relation to engaging with different issues from an "animal standpoint" (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) could be explored. Information and perspectives introduced during lectures, for example, are not easy to grasp for all students. Hence, different ways of introducing such perspectives, such as through short texts and films, as well as study visits, could be explored in more depth. In relation to problems identified when starting from the students' own perspectives, providing different perspectives anchored in an "animal standpoint" (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011) that students can use as entry points for engaging with the questions introduced, seems to be a fruitful avenue for exploration in future research. In terms of ESE more generally, asking students to start from different marginalized perspectives when engaging with a variety of topics seems to be necessary to enable more ways of being, knowing, envisioning, and acting to appear within reach for students and to create space for critical reflections.

The situatedness of the students in this project provided insights into preconceived ideas on veganism and animal rights and the groups of people for whom these practices were understood to be within reach. Future research exploring possibilities for greater representation of vegans of color and working-class vegans is therefore needed. Exploring possibilities for working with intersectional approaches in CAP (and ESE more broadly) in more depth in upper secondary school, picking up on students' previous experiences and situated positions in relation to religion, class, race, ability, and place, and addressing the conditions these dimensions provide on both an individual and structural level (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Russell, 2019) seems particularly important in the context of urban Swedish upper secondary schools, but will most likely also be fruitful to explore in other contexts. Other aspects that did not emerge as clearly in my data, but that would still be interesting to explore further in terms of how they could be engaged with within CAP in ESE at the upper secondary-school level, are the interconnectedness between sexuality, gender identity, and questions of veganism; human-animal relations; and processes of dehumanization.

In terms of methodological approaches, collaborative projects seem a fruitful approach for introducing and exploring CAP in schools (cf. Saari, 2021, 2025), and a project that follows a critical participatory action research approach more

thoroughly would be interesting for future research. In such a project, the participants could be included at an earlier stage of the research process and participants' reflections on their own practices used as data. This would enable an exploration of what such space for reflection could give rise to. Such an action research project could also include participating students continuously writing logbooks, which would provide both an additional pedagogical approach to engage with CAP and more data that include a student perspective. Another way that future research could explore student perspectives in more depth would be to carry out interviews with large numbers of students engaging with CAP. A more longitudinal study including follow-up interviews with students, teachers, and other participants could, furthermore, provide important insights into the possible long-term effects of CAP.

## Swedish summary

Intresset för ickemänskliga djur samt människa-djurrelationer inom miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning har ökat, särskilt under de senaste tio åren (Spannring, 2017; cf. Pedersen, 2019b; Russell & Spannring, 2019). Detta kan härledas till de omfattande miljöproblem och klimatförändringar världen nu står inför (Pedersen, 2023). Behovet av att adressera (och motverka) antropocentrism inom utbildning har framhållits av många forskare, liksom människa-djurrelationers centrala roll i akuta hållbarhetsutmaningar så som klimatförändringar, sociala orättvisor, miljö- och hälsoproblem (e.g., Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; Ortiz, 2011; Pedersen, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Saari, 2021). Exakt hur ickemänskliga djur och människa-djurrelationer ska adresseras inom miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning är dock omstritt, och den här avhandlingen tar avstamp i dessa debatter.

Avhandlingen bygger på ett kollaborativt projekt där jag i samverkan med lärare, elever, djurrättsaktivister och akademiker diskuterat, utvecklat och introducerat *kritisk djurpedagogik* (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al. [Red.], 2019) i undervisningen på två gymnasieskolor. Kritisk djurpedagogik är en öppet normativ pedagogik som bedrivs i solidaritet med ickemänskliga djur. Inom kritisk djurpedagogik adresseras ickemänskliga djurs roll inom utbildning och hur utbildning formar människors relationer till andra djur, samt möjligheten att utveckla alternativa undervisningspraktiker som kan bidra till mer hållbara och etiska människa-djurrelationer (Pedersen et al., 2019).

Hur ickemänskliga djur i dagsläget är närvarande inom utbildning är centralt för projektet. Kritiska studier synliggör hur ickemänskliga djur inom utbildning<sup>42</sup> exploateras som verktyg för undervisning och lärande, exempelvis i form av vetenskapliga objekt i dissektioner och forskning, som metaforer och artrepresentanter och som mat under skollunchen (e.g., Cole & Stewart, 2016; Fonseca, 2023; Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Pedersen, 2010a, 2015, 2019ab; Repka, 2019; Saari, 2021; Sallaway-Costello et al., 2021; Sjögren, 2016; Solot & Arluke, 1997; Truman, 2016). Vidare synliggör

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<sup>42</sup> Forskningen rör främst västerländsk utbildning.

Pedersen (2019a; cf. Repka, 2019) hur förhållandena för ickemänskliga djur inom samtida utbildningsmiljöer kan härledas till utbildningsinstitutioners öppenhet gentemot det ”djurindustriella komplexet” (Noske, 1997; utvecklas i Twine, 2013). Ickemänskliga djur verkar alltså vara närvarande inom utbildning på en rad olika sätt, dock sällan som subjekt. Tvärtom ter det sig som om någon annan förståelse av ickemänskliga djur än som till *för* människor är nästintill otänkbar inom den västerländska utbildningens föreställningsvärld (cf. Wallin, 2014, p. 149; Pedersen, 2019b). Utbildning är en väsentlig del i att socialisera in barn och unga i asymmetriska människa-djurrelationer karaktäriserade av makt och dominans. Dessa inslag är så centrala i utbildningen att de till och med anses vara en ”komponent inbyggd i utbildningen självt”<sup>43</sup> (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 46, med hänvisning till MacCormack, 2013). Därför anser Gunnarsson (2019, p. 46) Dinker och Pedersen att kritisk djurpedagogik bör utgöra en störande och förändrande process och reflektiv praktik som kan fungera som en motståndsrörelse mot exploatering av ickemänskliga djur, människor samt natur (cf. Rowe, 2011).

Tidigare forskning synliggör alltså hur ickemänskliga djurs status som objekt befästs inom utbildning. Vidare finns viktiga teoretiska bidrag som talar för hur kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer kan introduceras i undervisning (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Kahn, 2011; Kopnina & Cherniak, 2015; MacCormack, 2013; Rowe, 2011). Empirisk forskning på egna initiativ till att arbeta med sådan undervisning inom högre utbildning finns framförallt inom högre utbildning (e.g., Andrzejewski, 2003; Lloro-Bidart, 2018ab, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; Oakley, 2019; Pedersen et al., 2019; Linné & Pedersen, 2014; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; Schatz, 2019; Tallberg et al., 2022; White, 2019; cf. Flynn, 2003) men även i grundskolan (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2021; Saari, 2025; Tammi et al., 2024). Det finns också forskning på möjligheter att ta skollunchen som utgångspunkt för undervisning om människa-djurrelationer (Dolby, 2020; Gunnarsson Dinker, 2023) och Saari (2021) bidrar med en intervjustudie med externa aktörer som arbetar med ”human utbildning”<sup>44</sup> i skolor. Dessa tidigare bidrag skapar förutsättningar för att utveckla och introducera kritisk djurpedagogik i praktiken och detta projekt bidrar med en etnografisk studie som utforskar just detta.

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<sup>43</sup> Min egen översättning från engelska “an inbuilt component of education itself.”

<sup>44</sup> Humane education

## Syfte och frågeställningar

Avhandlingens övergripande syfte är att utforska hur kritisk djurpedagogik kan bidra till miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning genom att adressera, utmana och förändra nuvarande exploaterande människa-djurrelationer och deras sociala, etiska och miljömässiga dimensioner. Detta tjänar ett dubbelt syfte. För det första ämnar projektet bidra med kunskap kring vad som händer när en öppet normativ och kritisk pedagogik som tydligt står i solidaritet med ickemänskliga djur introduceras i gymnasieskolan. För det andra utforskas gymnasieskolans didaktiska förutsättningar för att arbeta med kritisk djurpedagogik, och hur dessa kan påverka och förändra vad kritisk djurpedagogik är och kan uppnå.

### Frågeställningar

1. När och hur kan ickemänskliga djur framträda (och bemötas) som subjekt i gymnasieskolan?
2. Vilka människa-djurrelationer möjliggörs eller omöjliggörs i gymnasieskolans klassrum när en normkritisk pedagogik som adresserar exploatering av ickemänskliga djur introduceras?
3. Vad blir det av kritisk djurpedagogik när den introduceras inom gymnasieskolans miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning och vad händer med miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning när den introduceras som kritisk djurpedagogik?

## Teoretiskt ramverk

Teoretiskt utgår avhandlingen från kritiska djurstudier och dess underfält kritisk djurpedagogik (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019), huvudsakligen utifrån ”djurståndpunktsteori” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). En ”djurståndpunkt” innebär att inkludera ickemänskliga djur i etiska överväganden som berör dem, genom att centrera deras perspektiv (Donovan, 2006). I likhet med feministisk ståndpunktsteori syftar teorin till att möjliggöra en medvetenhet om hur hierarkiska strukturer ser ut och hur en kan göra motstånd mot dem genom att utgå från marginaliserade perspektiv (Collins, 1997; Harding, 1997, 2009). Att utgå från en djurståndpunkt, eller snarare *djurståndpunkter*, syftar till att med stöd av kunskap från miljö- och djurrättsrörelsen bryta med och förändra nuvarande antropocentrisk diskurs (Kahn, 2011, s. 2). Denna avhandling fokuserar på

möjligheten att ta en djurståndpunkt i gymnasieskolan idag, samt vad en sådan ståndpunkt kan möjliggöra.

Genom att kombinera djurståndpunktsteori med feministisk affektteori (Ahmed, 2010ab, 2014ab, 2023; cf. Twine, 2014) synliggörs vad som sätts i rörelse i klassrummet när kritisk djurpedagogik introduceras, med fokus på vilka människa-djurrelationer som möjliggörs eller omöjliggörs. Genom att även läsa djurståndpunktsteori med och genom feministisk filosofi (Butler, 2004, 2015, 2020) samt utbildningsvetenskaplig filosofi (Biesta & Säfström, 2011; Biesta, 2022) utforskas möjligheter för elever att reagera på och reflektera kring de etiska frågor som uppstår i mötet med andra djur. Detta möte sker här genom undervisningsmaterialet och analysen fokuserar särskilt på frågor som rör ansvar och möjligheter till etiska människa-djurrelationer. Insikter från poststrukturalistisk teori och pedagogik (Britzman, 1995; Ellsworth, 1989; Kumashiro, 2000) bidrar därtill till att kritiskt reflektera kring vad som händer i klassrummen på ett sätt som gör det möjligt för komplexitet och nyanser att framträda. Genom att sätta olika teoretiska ingångar i dialog med varandra och det empiriska materialet möjliggörs ett djupgående utforskande av (o)möjligheter för ickemänskliga djur att framträda som subjekt i gymnasieskolan, och vad som händer när kritisk djurpedagogik introduceras.

## Genomförande

Metodologiskt genomfördes projektet som en feministisk aktivistetnografi (Davis & Craven, 2016) delvis inspirerat av kritisk deltagande aktionsforskning (Cahill, 2007; Fine & Torre, 2019; Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017). I linje med min metodologiska ingång deltog jag i projektet i rollen av en aktivistforskare som står i tydlig solidaritet med ickemänskliga djur, vilket är utgångspunkten inom kritiska djurstudier (Pedersen & Stanescu, 2014; Taylor & Twine, 2014). Forskningen har också målsättningen att bidra till förändring, direkt eller indirekt (Garry, 2008).

Projektet pågick mellan maj 2022 och mars 2023 och data producerade och dokumenterade jag i rollen av en observerande deltagare. Data<sup>45</sup> består av video- och ljudinspelningar, fältanteckningar, lektionsupplägg och -material samt

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<sup>45</sup> Totalt består materialet av 42 h ljudinspelningar från workshoppar, nästan 30 h videospelningar från 27 olika lektioner, 3,5 h ljudinspelningar från 9 lektioner, fältanteckningar från 20 workshoppar och 36 lektioner samt tillhörande lektionsupplägg och undervisningsmaterial. Vad gäller elevuppgifter består dessa av 8 poddar, 12 presentationer, 11 novellanalyser och 3 skriftliga uppgifter samt ett antal nedskrivna frågor och reflektioner av elever.

uppgifter, reflektioner och frågor producerade av elever. Projektet började med workshoppar där fyra lärare,<sup>46</sup> två djurrättsaktivister och två akademiker deltog, uppdelade i två grupper. Därtill deltog tio elever<sup>47</sup> uppdelade i två separata elevworkshopgrupper med fem elever i varje. Under workshopparna utforskades och utvecklades kritisk djurpedagogik och lektionsupplägg togs fram. Kritisk djurpedagogik introducerades i sex klasser från årskurs ett till tre i två olika gymnasieskolor, en med teoretisk och en med praktisk inriktning, vilka båda var friskolor centralt belägna i två olika större svenska städer. Pedagogiken introducerades i elevernas miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning som i svensk skola utgör ett ämnesöverskridande kunskapsområde som relaterar till övergripande mål såväl som kursernas specifika syften och centrala innehåll. I projektet introducerades kritisk djurpedagogik i svenska som andraspråk, religionskunskap, samhällskunskap, humanistisk och samhällsvetenskaplig specialisering samt naturvetenskaplig specialisering, i form av tre lektioner, fyra till åtta veckor långa moduler samt lite över en termin i en av kurserna. Nedan följer de viktigaste insikterna från att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik i praktiken.

## Att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik i hållbarhetsundervisning

Under projektets initiala kartläggningsprocesser framkom det att ickemänskliga djur, i linje med tidigare forskning, främst är närvarande som objekt. Denna närvaro skapar specifika utmaningar för kritisk djurpedagogik som motsätter sig förgivettagna sanningar om den roll ickemänskliga djur har i utbildningsteori och -praktik. I samtal med lärare och elever framkom också att eleverna arbetar med ”hållbarhet” kontinuerligt under sin skolgång men att samma perspektiv ständigt återkommer (cf. Du Pisani, 2006; Cutter-Mackenzie & Rousell, 2019). Deltagande lärare menade att hållbarhet därmed riskerar att förlora sitt syfte, bli otydligt eller kan uppfattas som repetitivt och ”tråkigt” och det efterfrågades mer radikala perspektiv än vad som är praxis idag. Ett problem som identifierades för att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik var bristfälliga läromedel när det kommer till kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer och hållbarhetsfrågor, särskilt på

<sup>46</sup> En av lärarna hoppade av efter två workshoppar, varav det endast var en lärare i en av workshopparna. Det bidrog också till att det totalt var två gymnasieskolor som deltog i projektet.

<sup>47</sup> Totalt deltog 19 elever i en workshop men endast 10 elever deltog fortlopande i workshoppar under hela projektet.

svenska (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). Därför utforskade projektet möjligheten att använda alternativt material i undervisningen.

### Att arbeta med “vegan killjoy-pedagogik”

Liksom kritisk djurpedagogik problematiserar hur ickemänskliga djur närvarar i hållbarhetsundervisning så krockar pedagogiken också med vissa förgivettagna idéer inom utbildning. Utifrån samtal med både lärare och elever framträdde ett lärarideal som innebar ”neutralitet,” ”opartiskhet,” och krav på att representera ”båda sidor.” Detta överensstämmer till stor del med hur vissa pluralistiska ingångar fokuserar på att synliggöra olika synvinklar, perspektiv och värderingar kopplade till hållbarhetsproblem vilka behandlas genom ”demokratisk dialog,” ”deliberation” och ”rationell diskussion” (Öhman & Östman, 2019, s. 75). Ett sådant tillvägagångssätt förstås av dess förespråkare som ”öppet” då det inte strävar efter en förutbestämd värld eller en viss ideologisk ståndpunkt (Öhman & Östman, 2019, s. 75). När kritisk djurpedagogik mötte dessa idéer komplicerades dock idealet om den ”neutrala läraren.” Samtidigt som detta lärarideal ibland reproducerades av deltagarna i projektet, ifrågasattes också behovet av att representera vissa hegemoniska perspektiv då eleverna redan ansågs känna till och vara inskolade i ett antropocentriskt tankesätt, medan ett mer djurrättsligt perspektiv lyftes som marginaliserat. Detta komplicerar idén om att representera alla perspektiv och det ansågs viktigt att fokusera på ett ”motnarrativ” i form av kritisk djurpedagogik och en ”djurståndpunkt” (Donovan, 2006; Kahn, 2011). Vidare ifrågasattes huruvida utbildning någonsin kan vara neutral med hänvisning till skolans demokratiuppdrag vilket oftast tas förgivet och det synliggjordes att frågor som rör mänskliga rättigheter och djurs rättigheter ofta behandlas olika. Detta gav upphov till kritiska reflektioner i workshopgrupperna om vad som är konsensus i samhället och var gränsen går för vad som får sägas och hur olika frågor ska hanteras. Detta fångar i stort projektets fokus och tillsammans utforskade jag och de andra deltagarna möjligheter att rucka på, bryta mot och i slutändan förändra dessa gränsdragningar.

I projektet utvecklades en slags “vegan killjoy-pedagogik” (cf. Twine, 2014) som ifrågasätter narrativ om andra djur som till för människor och därmed kan riskera att skapa obekväma situationer. Detta kan dock också bidra till kritiska reflektioner vad gäller utnyttjande av andra djur och nuvarande människa-djurrelationer samt rum för att föreställa sig ett annat samhälle (cf. Twine, 2014). Att jobba med en sådan pedagogik i skolan kommer dock med vissa risker för utbildarna, särskilt om dessa är lärare. Utbildare såväl som pedagogiken i sig

riskerar att tillskrivas den eventuellt dåliga stämning som veganism ibland orsakar hos allätare och därmed utmålas som ”vegan killjoys” (Twine, 2014; cf. Stanescu, 2013). Erfarenheter från projektet visar att (lärar)idealet om ”neutralitet” skapar begränsningar för hur det är möjligt att arbeta med kritisk djurpedagogik i gymnasieskolan. Samtidigt synliggörs också möjligheter att vara ”försiktigt onneutral,” ”lite provocerande” och att öppna upp för elever att möta veganers och djurrättsaktivisters perspektiv och berättelser i hållbarhetsundervisning. När eleverna reflekterade kring veganers perspektiv på djurutnyttjande, såsom i matproduktion, skapades förutsättningar för att prova en ”veganståndpunkt” som i sin tur möjliggjorde en ”djurståndpunkt” (cf. Twine, 2014; Russell, 2019). Att föreställa sig ett samhälle där människor inte äter andra djur var dock inte helt enkelt för alla elever. Det verkar finnas en begränsad repertoar av idéer kring hur ett veganskt samhälle skulle se ut som cirkulerar i samhället och kommer upp i klassrummen. Vissa av dessa idéer sätter samman information på ett sätt som legitimerar människans fortsatta utnyttjande av ickemänskliga djur för mat. Detta hände exempelvis när flera elever målade upp en slags dystopi där tidigare domesticerade djur överbefolkar planeten med okända men allvarliga effekter för ekosystemen om människor skulle sluta äta dem. Här skapades köttätande som något naturligt vilket kan ses som en slags reproduktion av idéer om animaliekonsumtion som en föreställt oföränderlig ordning (Twine, 2014, s. 632), eller som normalt, naturligt och nödvändigt (Joy, 2010).

### Den (o)möjliga djurståndpunkten

Den föreställt oföränderliga ordningen som legitimerar animaliekonsumtion (Twine, 2014) uppkom upprepade gånger i projektet i form av ett slags föreställt mänskligt kollektiv ovilligt att förändras<sup>48</sup> som skapade gränser för hur hållbara och etiska människa-djurrelationer som ansågs realiserbara. Vid vissa tillfällen målades ett samhälle av ”artöverskridande hållbarhet” upp som sedan justerades utifrån en förväntad ovilja hos andra människor att förändras, vilket försvårade att ta en djurståndpunkt. För att använda Säfströms och Biestas (2011) uttryck fastnade eleverna delvis i ”det som är” istället för att omfamna den spänning som uppstår mellan ”det som är” och ”det som inte är.”

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<sup>48</sup> Intressant nog verkade eleverna inte se sig själva som lika oföränderliga. Även de elever som sa att de inte ville ändra sitt nuvarande beteende framställde sig sällan som oförmögna till detta utan endast som något de för närvarande inte ville. Därmed verkade eleverna se sig själva som mindre fastlåsta i vanor än detta föreställda mänskliga kollektiv.

Vidare verkade det särskilt svårt att skapa utrymme för en djurståndpunkt i helklassdiskussioner när eleverna främst utgick från sina egna åsikter. Ett exempel var när två samhällsklasser tittade på ett treminuter långt videoklipp från ett KRAV-slakteri och diskuterade slakt och kameraövervakning på slakterier utan att initialt få specifika instruktioner och stöd i hur de skulle ta sig an det dödande de bevittnade. Även om de första reaktionerna ofta verkade bestå av chock, äckel och en generell känsla av obehag uppstod i dessa diskussioner ibland ett rationaliserande kring dödandet, liksom en distinktion mellan dödandet som skedde i videon och det eleverna själva stödjer genom animaliekonsumtion. Att sätta sig in i andra djurs situation och kritiskt granska djurindustrin skedde därmed inte automatiskt bara för att eleverna tog del av slaktvideon, vilket talar för att det inte finns ett linjärt samband mellan affektivt/emotionellt/förkroppsligt engagemang och förändringar i beteende (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2018bc; Russell, 1999; Russell & Oakley, 2016).

Några elever efterfrågade andra sätt att döda de ickemänskliga djuren snarare än att inte döda dem alls. Exempelvis fokuserade en del elever på vilka handlingar i videon som eventuellt bröt mot djurskyddslagen. Detta riskerar att avleda uppmärksamheten från det legala våld som då definieras som ett ”bra” sätt att döda djur på<sup>49</sup> vilket resonerar med den rådande djurskyddslogiken i Sverige (cf. Svärd, 2015). Med hjälp av Butlers (2004, 2015) teorier kring ”osörjbara” och ”olevbara” liv synliggörs hur så kallade ”produktionsdjur” gjordes såväl osörjbara som ”dödbara” (cf. Göransson, 2017). När slakt i enlighet med djurskyddslagen antogs skydda djuren från lidande reproducerades föreställningar om den ”lyckligt förtryckta” i form av ”happy meat” (Twine, 2014; cf. Stanescu, 2013). I projektet blev dock denna idé ifrågasatt av såväl utbildare som elever med utgångspunkt i en djurståndpunkt. De bemöttes också med en slags ”mörk humor” som både riskerade att förlöjliga dödandet (cf. Aaltola, 2014) men också synliggjorde det paradoxala i idén om slakt utan lidande. Samtidigt reproducerades speciesistiska idéer som förekommer i samhället upprepade gånger.

Dessa erfarenheter från klassrummet överensstämmer till stor del med Bohms et al. (2015, s. 108) erfarenheter av att medvetna försök att ifrågasätta köttnormen kan stärka den samt Saaris (2025, s. 11) erfarenheter av att antropocentrism och människans rätt att avgöra andra djurs öden ofta tas förgiven. Detta skiljer sig från Rudsbergs och Öhmans (2019) tankar om att argumenterande diskussioner med utgångspunkt i elevers egna åsikter skapar förutsättningar för deliberation och

<sup>49</sup> Sådana strategier används ofta av djurindustrin själv och kan medföra att standardpraktiker inom djurindustrin och det våld dessa innebär inte granskas (Saari, 2021, s. 64-5).

demokratisk handlingskompetens (cf. Rudsberg et al., 2013; Rudsberg et al., 2017). Istället realiserades ofta risker som Rudsberg och Öhman (2019; cf. Öhman & Öhman, 2013) identifierar i form av förekomst av ”felaktig information,” rena gissningar eller ett begränsat antal perspektiv i en strävan efter konsensus. Lärarens roll lyfts i tidigare forskning fram som central för att utmana allmänna sanningar, introducera alternativ och nyansera och fördjupa diskussionerna (Rudsberg & Öhman, 2019, p. 183; Öhman & Öhman 2013) men erfarenheter från projektet synliggör att detta inte alltid är möjligt i sammanhanget. Istället var samtal i mindre grupper eller diskussioner där eleverna uppmanades att inta andra djurs perspektiv möjliggörande för kritiska reflektioner kring människa-djurrelationer.

Utifrån dessa erfarenheter problematiserar avhandlingen ingångar till miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning som fokuserar på ”rationell deliberation” och ”demokratisk dialog” på ett abstrakt sätt (cf. Ellsworth, 1989, s. 301, 314). Vad gäller att adressera människa-djurrelationer, köttätande och hållbarhet avstår dessa ingångar från att utgå från djurrättsliga perspektiv (e.g., Bruckner & Kowasch, 2019; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019). I likhet med tidigare forskning som kritiserar en sådan utgångspunkt för att tillhöra en trend av ”upplyst distansering från antropocentrism” som marginaliserar ickemänskliga djur (Pedersen, 2019b) synliggör projektet att antropocentrism och speciesism riskerar att reproduceras när en djurståndpunkt inte möjliggörs.

## Möjligheter för ickemänskliga djur att framträda som subjekt

Projektet visar att det framförallt är i stunder när ickemänskliga djur framträder som subjekt som det skapas ett engagemang för deras situation och rum för kritisk reflektion. Subjektspositionen var dock inte självklar för ickemänskliga djur i gymnasieskolans kontext. Det var framförallt när en djurståndpunkt var möjlig att inta som ickemänskliga djur framträdde som subjekt. När elever föreställde sig vad ickemänskliga djur eller de själva, om de befann sig i dessa individers situation, skulle känna tedde sig kritiska reflektioner kring människa-djurrelationer inom räckhåll. Exempelvis skapades det utrymme att kritiskt diskutera grundorsaker till att ickemänskliga djur utnyttjas och strategier för förändring när eleverna föreställde sig hur ickemänskliga djur i djurparker och djurfabriker upplevde sina liv, vilket föranledde några elever att uppmana till en bojkott av djurparker. På samma sätt möjliggjorde reflektioner kring att kor hålls instängda större delen av sina liv samt att deras kalvar tas ifrån dem kritiska reflektioner kring mjölkindustrin och en uppmaning om ”frihet för kor.” Detta stämmer överens med feministisk

ståndpunkts teori (Harding, 2009) på så sätt att det blir lättare att förstå ett hierarkiskt ordnat samhälle ur de förtrycktas perspektiv.

Flera av de tillfällen när elever satte sig in i andra djurs perspektiv möjliggjordes genom att synliggöra ”människa-djur kontinuiteter” (Noske, 1997) och peka på känslor, kapaciteter och beteende som människor och andra djur delar. Även om tidigare forskning synliggör möjligheter med jämförelser mellan människor och ickemänskliga djur (e.g., Butterfield et al., 2012; Chan, 2012; de Waal, 1999; Gruen, 2013; Sherman et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2023; Young et al., 2018) lyfts också kritik i och med risken att upprätthålla en rangordning av olika livsformer med människan som måttstock (Bailey, 2007; Crary, 2018; Gruen, 2013, MacKinnon, 2012). Att lära sig artspecifik kunskap möjliggjorde också för vissa elever att ta en djurståndpunkt. Exempelvis möjliggjorde kunskap om grisars goda luktsinne att en elev kritiskt reflekterade kring hur grisindustrins förhållanden upplevs för grisar och information om grisars domesticering och egenskaper skapade rum för ögonblick där avdomesticering och ett liv i frihet utanför grisfabriken hamnade inom räckhåll. Dessa ögonblick i min data motsäger MacCormacks (2013) tes att alla försök att skapa kunskap om det omänskliga är dömda att fånga det omänskliga i en antropocentrisk diskurs. Även om viss artspecifik kunskap är antropocentrisk och har möjliggjort så att ickemänskliga djur bokstavigt talat hålls fångna i djurproduktion (cf. Franklin, 2007), visar insikter från projektet att sådan kunskap också kan störa och motverka en antropocentrisk diskurs och på så sätt *frigöra* snarare än *fånga* ickemänskliga djur.

Förmågan att sätta sig in i andra djurs situation möjliggjordes också genom bilder och videoklipp inifrån djurindustrier, däribland slakterier, som producerats av en djurrättsorganisation. En elev berättade under en workshop hur hen föreställde sig själv på ett slakteri efter att ha sett ett videoklipp från ett slakteri. Eleven lyfte hur köttätande innebär att någon dör vilket skiljer sig från narrativ i många länder (Leroy & Praet, 2017). Detta kan förstås som ett ”subjektifierande” (Biesta, 2022) ögonblick eftersom det exploaterande förhållandet synliggörs för eleven. Vidare kan ögonblicket förstås som ett slags ”breakdown” vilket möjliggör att ”se och förstå annorlunda” (Salih, 2014, s. 64) än tidigare vilket kan förstås i relation till Butler (2015, s. 102) som frågar om vi inte måste bli överväldigade i någon aspekt för att agera. Även om vissa elever berättade att de tyckte videomaterialet var jobbigt att titta på lyfte elever också att det var viktigt eftersom de föreställde sig att sådana videoklipp kan förändra människors beteende. Samtidigt sa några elever att de inte tyckte sådant material bör visas i skolan men flera elever berättade också att de försökte äta mindre kött sedan de tagit del av

bildmaterialet och en elev sa att hen valt att bli vegan. I likhet med Tallbergs et al. (2022; cf. Rowe, 2011; Martin, 2014; Russell & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019; White, 2019) erfarenheter möjliggjorde videomaterialet en slags affektiv kunskap som ledde till reflektioner kring hur människors agerande skapar det dödande som äger rum på slakterier. Detta resonerar också med tidigare forskning som menar att en viss nivå av obehag är produktivt för att kritiskt kunna reflektera över sociala normer och praktiker (e.g., Boler, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Martin, 2014; Martusewicz, 2014; Russell, 2019; Twine, 2014; Winks, 2022; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). Dock sker inte detta automatiskt och det är centralt att materialet behandlas i en kontext som erbjuder eleverna stöd i att ta sig an materialet. För kritisk reflektion är möjligheten att ta en djurståndpunkt avgörande.

### Köttätande eller veganism?—att börja i individuella matvanor

Något som skapade mycket diskussion var individuella matvanor, särskilt köttätande. Fokus på individuella praktiker i ESE kritiseras dock av många för att lägga över ansvaret på individen (e.g., Ideland & Malmberg, 2015; Öhman & Östman, 2019; cf. Stapleton, 2015). Ideland och Malmberg (2015, s. 181) menar exempelvis att ett individualistiskt fokus gör att ideologiska ståndpunkter och motstridiga intressen osynliggörs, vilket riskerar att göra hållbar utveckling apolitiskt. Dessa risker bekräftades i projektet när fokus hamnade på konsumtionsmakt men individuella matvanor utgjorde också en engagerande utgångspunkt för diskussion som vid flera tillfällen möjliggjorde en mer strukturell analys. Exempelvis ledde det till diskussioner om en antropocentrisk världsbild och hur människors agerande påverkar andra djur. Detta skapade förutsättningar för att kritiskt granska djurproduktion liksom den globala matproduktionen överlag. Därmed skapades rum för elever att utveckla handlingskompetens (Jensen, 2002; cf. Pedersen, 2010a) och till skillnad från vad Ideland och Malmberg (2015) hävdar, möjliggjorde fokus på individuella praktiker en hållbarhetsundervisning som var långt från apolitisk.

Veganism togs upp av såväl utbildare som elever och adresserades som ett möjligt svar på både ickemänskliga djurs lidande som miljöproblem. I projektet verkade djurs lidande resonera mer med eleverna än miljöproblem (cf. Almiron, 2019; Braunsberger & Flamm, 2019) och kan därmed bidra med ökat elevengagemang till hållbarhetsundervisning. I vissa stunder förekom motstånd mot veganism men oftast när elever verkade uppleva att de blev tillsagda vad de skulle göra och tänka istället för att få utforska själva (cf. Almiron, 2019). I

projektet kritiserades också ”livsstilsveganism” (cf. Spannring & Grušovnik, 2019) av flera elever och klassperspektiv adresserades. Därmed synliggörs vikten av intersektionella perspektiv inom kritisk djurpedagogik (cf. Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Russel & Semenko, 2016; Russell, 2019), liksom möjligheter att inkludera elevernas situerade positioner och erfarenheter i undervisningen. Även om veganism är önskvärt i samhällen av artöverskridande hållbarhet finns en medvetenhet inom kritisk djurpedagogik om att många växer upp i köttnormativa samhällen och familjer och att detta måste tas i beaktande.

## Slutsats

Sammanfattningsvis ifrågasätter de insikter projektet bidrar med en skarp distinktion mellan pluralistiska och normativa ingångar. Erfarenheter från projektet talar för att den öppet normativa ingång som kritisk djurpedagogik innebär öppnar upp för fler perspektiv inom hållbarhetsundervisning än vad som verkar vara närvarande om ickemänskliga djurs marginaliserade perspektiv inte lyfts. En djurståndpunkt möjliggörs dock inte automatiskt när kritisk djurpedagogik introduceras och det är därför avgörande att uppmana till och tillgängliggöra för elever att ta en sådan ståndpunkt. En djurståndpunkt är nämligen inte bara viktig utan nödvändig om miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning ska kunna adressera, utmana och förändra speciesism och antropocentrism.

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# Appendix 1



## Projektbeskrivning - Kritisk djurpedagogik i miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning: ett utforskande av möjliga människa-djurrelationer tillsammans med lärare, elever, forskare och sociala rörelser

Skolan har i uppdrag att utbilda för hållbar utveckling och människa-djurrelationer spelar en central roll i hållbarhetsfrågor så som klimatförändringar, social orättvisa samt miljö- och hälsoproblem. Trots detta har relationer mellan människor och djur ofta inte fått adekvat uppmärksamhet inom hållbarhetsundervisning. Därför behövs kunskap om hur kritiska perspektiv på människans relation till andra arter och miljön kan introduceras i skolan. Kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer är kärnan i *kritisk djurpedagogik*, som därför föreslås som en väg framåt.

Genom att sammanföra yrkesverksamma lärare, forskare, personer aktiva i sociala rörelser och gymnasieelever syftar projektet till att utveckla och testa kritisk djurpedagogik i praktiken genom att skapa en plattform för kunskapsutbyte, reflektion och utvecklande av nya undervisningsverktyg. Under workshoppar utbildas deltagarna i kritisk djurpedagogik, diskuterar möjligheter och utmaningar med pedagogiken och utvecklar undervisningspraktiker och -material som sedan testas i de medverkande lärarnas skolor.

Inom kritisk djurpedagogik synliggörs den roll som människans relation till djur spelar i klimatförändringar och sociala orättvisor och maktrelationer mellan djur och människor problematiseras. Vidare adresseras förgivettagna sanningar om djur och människa-djurrelationer, som idén om djur som till för människan, för att adressera vårt nuvarande människocentrerade samhällssystem. Genom att tänka om det mänskliga och istället utgå från andra djurs perspektiv kan kritisk djurpedagogik bidra till att skapa mer hållbara och etiska sätt att leva (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; MacCormack, 2013). Etiska, miljömässiga, sociala och ekonomiska dimensioner av hållbarhet strålar samman och eleverna får möjlighet att utveckla sin förmåga att tänka kritiskt, sätta sig in i andras situation och göra egna ställningstaganden.

Projektet utgörs av ett doktorandprojekt vid Institutionen för Didaktik och Pedagogisk Profession vid Göteborgs universitet och har genomgått godkänd etikprövning. Målsättningen är att genom samverkan utveckla och introducera transformativ hållbarhetsundervisning med potential att bidra till ett mer hållbart och rättvist samhälle. Projektet drivs av Jonna Håkansson som doktorerar i ämnesdidaktik med inriktning mot utbildning för hållbar utveckling. Utgångspunkten är att undersöka hur kritisk djurpedagogik kan introduceras i praktiken i skolan genom att arbeta tillsammans med de som är experter på skolpraktiker, nämligen yrkesverksamma lärare, samt med personer som har kunskap om djurs situation i samhället och/eller kritisk djurpedagogik.

## Genomförande

Projektet är utformat som ett aktionsforskningsprojekt (samverkansprojekt) där gymnasielärare och elever, forskare samt personer från sociala rörelser arbetar tillsammans. Projektet består av två delar: a) gruppworkshoppar och; b) introduktion av kritisk djurpedagogik i de medverkande lärarnas skolor.

### Gruppworkshoppar

I gruppworkshoppar deltar 2–3 gymnasielärare, 2–3 forskare och 2–3 personer från sociala rörelser. Målsättningen är att även elever från de deltagande lärarnas klasser ska medverka (ca 1 elev per lärare). Om många elever vill delta kan separata workshoppar skapas för elever. Om du medverkar skulle du vara en av deltagarna i gruppen.

I ett första skede rekryteras gymnasielärare till studien och upplägget diskuteras med dem eftersom det är på deras arbetsplatser kritisk djurpedagogik kommer introduceras. Projektet förankras också i skolledningen. Därefter startar workshopparna med alla deltagare. Medverkande forskare har intresse för och erfarenhet av att arbeta med kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer i undervisning. Personerna från sociala rörelser är engagerade i hållbarhetsfrågor och/eller djurrätt och är intresserade av hur dessa perspektiv kan introduceras i undervisning.

Under workshopparna lär sig deltagarna om kritisk djurpedagogik, utforskar möjligheter och utmaningar med att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik i gymnasieskolans hållbarhetsundervisning och delar med sig av sina kunskaper och erfarenheter. Vi utvecklar och planerar även undervisningsmaterial, bestående av exempelvis lektionsupplägg, övningar, workshoppar och föreläsningar. Materialet kan sedan delas för att komma fler till nytta.

Workshopparnas upplägg planeras i samverkan med er deltagare och frågor och teman att diskutera bestäms gemensamt. Jag kommer ha en guidande roll och föreslå teman och texter samt hålla presentationer som utgångspunkt för diskussion. Centralt är ett kunskapsutbyte där vi kan dela erfarenheter och tankar och tillsammans producera kunskap.

Planen är att arrangera 8–12 fokusgruppworkshoppar under perioden av 1,5 år med start VT22. I samråd med deltagarna planeras huruvida workshopparna arrangeras fysiskt eller digitalt. Workshopparna dokumenteras med fältanteckningar och ljudinspelningar.

### Introduktion av kritisk djurpedagogik i skolan

Efter en period av workshoppar, introduceras kritisk djurpedagogik i de deltagande lärarnas skolor. Kritisk djurpedagogik kan introduceras genom hela lektioner eller som ett perspektiv i relation till olika områden. Hur kritisk djurpedagogik introduceras påverkas av lärarnas lektionsplanering och tillgänglighet samt skolornas/rektorernas medgivande. Även den här

delen av projektet är kollaborativ och om möjligt kan deltagare från workshopparna delta i undervisningen genom att exempelvis hålla i en workshop eller liknande.

Målsättningen är 4–5 observationer per deltagande lärare. Jag planerar att dokumentera tillfällena med videokamera och anteckningar. Erfarenheter och reflektioner från klassrummen diskuteras i workshopparna. När klassrumsstudierna ska ske bestäms i samråd med medverkande lärare.

## Vad kan kritisk djurpedagogik bidra med?

Vi lever i den så kallade antropocena epoken vilken karaktäriseras av människans dominans över planeten, en dominans som orsakat bestående störningar i ekosystemen. Grundläggande för antropocentrism är att människan står i centrum medan djur och miljö ses som resurser, ofta med kortsiktiga ekonomiska vinstintressen i fokus. Om vi ska kunna möta de hållbarhetsutmaningar som vi som samhälle står inför är det avgörande att vi tänker om mycket av det som råder idag. För att göra detta krävs förmågan att kritiskt reflektera kring vårt nuvarande samhällssystem och nuvarande praktiker och föreställa oss en framtid bortom dessa. Eftersom barn och unga inom västerländsk fostran ofta fostras in i antropocentrism krävs att de utvecklar verktyg att kritiskt reflektera kring antropocentrisk praktiker och presenteras med alternativ till dessa. Kritisk djurpedagogik adresserar antropocentrism som ett pedagogiskt problem och öppnar upp för att tänka om människans relation till djur och den omgivande naturen. På så sätt öppnar pedagogiken även upp för eleverna att utveckla sin förmåga till kritisk reflektion och personliga ställningstaganden och därmed även förmågan att föreställa sig en annan framtid. Detta är i linje med forskning som talar för vikten av att elever ska medvetandegöras om sin rätt att fritt välja etiska strategier och handlingar som sociala och moraliska subjekt (Franck 2017, s. 1).

Inom utbildning för hållbar utveckling är deliberativa approacher vanliga men Ojala (2013, s. 170) synliggör att dessa ibland tenderar att förespråka rationella diskussioner framför känslor, som ses som irrationella distraktioner. I projektet förstås inte rationalitet och känslor som motsatser. Vidare spelar känslor en betydande roll när det kommer till att försvara såväl som omvärdera kunskap, attityder och beteenden och måste tas på allvar i undervisning (Ojala, 2013). I workshopparna diskuterar gruppen strategier för att skapa ett tillåtande klimat i klassrummet där olika åsikter, känslor och erfarenheter kan komma till uttryck och diskuteras respektfullt. Genom kritisk djurpedagogik kan eleverna utveckla verktyg att hantera olika känslor, oavsett om känslorna är jobbiga eller ej, samt diskutera ämnen som kan upplevas som kontroversiella och/eller känsliga. Frågor kopplade till människa-djurrelationer samt klimatförändringar engagerar många unga och genom att arbeta med kritisk djurpedagogik kan elevernas tankar, funderingar och engagemang tas tillvara under organiserade former.

Tidigare forskning synliggör vidare att hållbarhetsundervisning innehåller normativa dimensioner då det handlar om att utbilda för framtiden (Sjögren, 2016) men lyfter också att många lärare och lärarutbildare tycker normativ pedagogik är svårt att hantera (Pedersen, 2010; Sjögren, 2016). Vidare synliggörs ett outtalat (ofta även uttalat) ideal i form av den objektiva och neutrala läraren (Sjögren, 2016). Det finns en tendens att se objektivitet och neutralitet som detsamma som att följa majoritetssamhällets normer fastän det likväl är ett ställningstagande. I kombination med idealet om den objektiva läraren uppstår här problem i relation till hållbarhetsundervisning. Liksom andra kritiska pedagogiker är kritisk djurpedagogik öppen med målet att bidra till förändring i samhället och är emot att djur används för mänskliga syften. I projektet diskuteras utmaningar och möjligheter med normativ pedagogik samt etiska dilemman som kan uppstå. Kritisk djurpedagogik bidrar till att såväl lärare som elever får möjlighet att utveckla verktyg att hantera normativa frågor.

### Exempel på kritisk djurpedagogik

Hur kritisk djurpedagogik ska introduceras i de medverkande lärarnas klassrum beror på lärarnas behov och möjligheter. Projektet är genomförbart i samtliga ämnen och i projektet diskuteras hur kritisk djurpedagogik kan kopplas till de kursplaner som är aktuella för medverkande lärare. Kritisk djurpedagogik handlar både om att kritiskt granska nuvarande utbildningspraktiker som reproducerar asymmetriska maktrelationer mellan människor och djur (exempelvis animaliska produkter i skolluncher eller när djur används vid dissektioner, som artrepresentanter och metaforer men sällan finns närvarande som subjekt) och om att utveckla nya. Det här projektet fokuserar på båda delarna men framförallt utvecklandet av nya utbildningspraktiker genom samverkan.

I flertalet ämnen kan en adressera djurindustrins koppling till klimatförändringar, miljöproblem och social orättvisa. Exempelvis djurindustrins roll i relation till havsdöd, artutrotning, ekosystemkollaps och global uppvärmning. En kan också adressera specifika delar av djurindustrin så som slakterier där djur dödas och marginaliserade människogrupper ofta arbetar under exploaterande förhållanden (se Twine, 2013). Detta knyter även an till djurs roll i det ekonomiska systemet vilket kan adresseras i exempelvis ekonomiundervisning. En kan även diskutera hur människors och djurs liv är sammanflätade och knyta an till frågor om etik och ansvar. Vidare kan en träna på empati och rollövertagande genom att försöka sätta sig in i andra djurs perspektiv (ta ett djurperspektiv).

I religion kan en utforska olika religioners syn på djur eller hur religiösa grupper utsatts för förtryck genom att liknas vid djur. Kritisk djurpedagogik ger verktyg att analysera detta genom att synliggöra att det bygger på en redan förgivettagen nedvärdering av djur. Fokus ligger därmed på förtryckstrategier snarare än på jämförelser. Ett annat exempel är att adressera hur vissa religiösa grupper anklagas för att behandla djur illa medan majoritetssamhällets behandling av djur osynliggörs eller framställs som etisk i jämförelse (se Al Naher, 2017). Även

i historia kan kritisk djurpedagogik bidra till att adressera hur både människogrupper och djur utsatts för förtryck och hur detta bygger på en sammankoppling såväl som nedvärdering av natur, det kroppsliga och det emotionella eller diskutera hur människa-djurrelationer sett ut vid olika tidpunkter i historien. Kritisk djurpedagogik utvecklar således kritiskt tänkande.

Några konkreta exempel på hur en kan arbeta med kritisk djurpedagogik kommer från Gunnarsson Dinker och Pedersen (2016) som föreslår att en kan:

- Reflektera kring djurs känslor – hur upplever ett djur att bli jagad, separeras från sin mamma, hållas instängd, tvingas uppträda eller delta i tävlingar, osv.? Vad behöver ett djur för att njuta av livet? Förbättras eller försämras djurets livskvalitet av människors inblandning?;
- Diskutera varför vi sörjer när vissa djur dör (och inte andra), och hur våra synsätt på olika djur påverkar djurens livssituation;
- Kritiskt analysera hur djur framställs i böcker, läromedel och i djurindustrins marknadsföringsmaterial;
- Undersök hur vårt språkbruk upprätthåller djurutnyttjande (t.ex. att kon "ger" oss mjölk);
- Undersök var vår mat kommer ifrån och vad som händer med djuren i produktionskedjan;
- Utforska och diskutera växtbaserad konsumtion. Prova vegansk matlagning och odling.

## Projektets analytiska fokus

Genom projektet vill jag undersöka hur människa-djurrelationer och deras sociala, miljömässiga och etiska dimensioner kan adresseras i gymnasieskolans miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning. Syftet är att undersöka möjligheter och utmaningar med att utveckla och introducera kritisk djurpedagogik, vad en sådan pedagogik gör med utbildningspraktiker samt vilka människa-djurrelationer som möjliggörs. Jag är inte intresserad av att analysera vad specifika personer gör och tänker utan vad som händer i de här kontexterna, vilka problem och möjligheter deltagarna ser och vad som händer när kritisk djurpedagogik introduceras i praktiken.

## Kontakt

Om du är intresserad av att delta eller har några frågor om forskningsprojektet är du välkommen att kontakta Jonna Håkansson via [REDACTED] eller [REDACTED]

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## Appendix 2



## Information till forskningspersoner

Vi vill fråga dig om du vill delta i ett forskningsprojekt. I det här dokumentet får du information om projektet och om vad det innebär att delta.

### 1. Projekttitel

Kritisk djurpedagogik i miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning: ett utforskande av möjliga människa-djurrelationer tillsammans med lärare, elever, forskare och sociala rörelser

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Telefon: [REDACTED]

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### 2. Inbjudan

Du har blivit tillfrågad att delta i det här forskningsprojektet eftersom du har ett intresse för att utveckla kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer i undervisning och/eller har erfarenhet av sådan undervisning och/eller kunskap om kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer.

Du bjuds in att delta i det här forskningsprojektet men innan du bestämmer dig är det viktigt att du förstår varför forskningen utförs och vad den innebär. Läs igenom informationen ordentligt och diskutera med andra om du vill. Fråga om något är oklart eller om du vill ha mer information. Ta den tid du behöver för att bestämma om du vill delta.

### 3. Vad är det för ett projekt?

Projektet är ett samverkansprojekt där gymnasielärare, sociala rörelser, forskare och gymnasieelever arbetar tillsammans för att utveckla och introducera kritisk djurpedagogik (kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer) i gymnasieskolans miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning. Projektet syftar till att undersöka vilka möjligheter och utmaningar som uppstår när kritisk djurpedagogik introduceras i gymnasieskolans hållbarhetsundervisning och vilka människa-djurrelationer som möjliggörs.

Projektet fokuserar särskilt på hur kritiska perspektiv på människans relation till djur och miljö kan introduceras i hållbarhetsundervisning eftersom människa-djurrelationer är centrala för klimatförändringar, hälso- och miljöproblem samt social

orättvisa. Målsättningen är att projektet ska bidra till att utveckla nya former av utbildning för hållbar utveckling som kan bidra till mer hållbara sätt att leva.

För att undersöka detta utgår projektet från gruppworkshoppar, med gymnasielärare, forskare, sociala rörelser och gymnasieelever, där möjligheter och utmaningar med att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik i hållbarhetsundervisning diskuteras samt undervisningspraktiker och material utvecklas. Genom klassrumsstudier i de deltagande lärarnas skolor undersöks vad som händer när sådan pedagogik introduceras i gymnasieskolan.

Forskningshuvudman för projektet är Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession vid Göteborgs universitet. Med forskningshuvudman menas den organisation som är ansvarig för projektet. Ansökan är godkänd av Etikprövningsmyndigheten, diarienummer för prövningen hos Etikprövningsmyndigheten är Dnr 2021-04643.

#### **4. Måste jag delta?**

Att delta i projektet är frivilligt och du bestämmer själv om du vill delta eller inte. Om du bestämmer dig för att delta får du behålla den här skriftliga informationen. Du kommer bli ombedd att signera en blankett för informerat samtycke som tecken på att du vill delta i studien och har fått ordentlig information om projektet. Du kan fortfarande avsluta din medverkan fram tills dess att studien publiceras och du behöver inte förklara varför du inte längre vill medverka.

#### **5. Hur går projektet till?**

Projektet utförs genom gruppworkshoppar med 2–5 gymnasielärare, 2–3 forskare, 2–3 personer från sociala rörelser och 2–5 gymnasieelever. Om du medverkar skulle du vara en av deltagarna i gruppen. Under workshopparna diskuteras möjligheter och utmaningar med att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik i gymnasieskolans hållbarhetsundervisning. Under workshopparna utvecklas och planeras även undervisningsmaterial, bestående av exempelvis lektionsupplägg, övningar, workshoppar och föreläsningar.

Workshopparnas upplägg planeras i samverkan med er deltagare och frågor och teman att diskutera bestäms gemensamt. Doktorandforskaren kommer ha en guidande roll där denne föreslår teman och texter och håller presentationer som utgångspunkt för diskussion. För att skapa förutsättningar för kunskapsutbyte planeras också hur ni deltagare kan dela era erfarenheter via exempelvis kortare presentationer. Planen är att arrangera 8–12 fokusgruppworkshoppar under perioden av 1,5 år med start VT22.

Workshopparna dokumenteras med fältanteckningar och ljudinspelningar.

Kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer introduceras i de deltagande lärarnas skolor med start hösten 2022 och preliminär plan är att genomföra 4–5

observationstillfällen per deltagande lärare. Detta sker i samverkan med övriga deltagare i fokusgrupperna och utöver lärarna och doktorandforskaren kan övriga deltagare komma att medverka i klassrumssituationer. Graden av deltagande bestäms i samverkan med aktuell lärare. Klassrumsstudierna spelas in med videokamera.

## **6. Anonymitet och konfidentialitet**

All information som samlas in om dig under studien kommer behandlas så att inga obehöriga kan ta del av den. Du kommer inte kunna identifieras eller bli identifierbar i några av forskningsprojektets vetenskapliga publikationer. Eventuell information som samlas in om dig kommer förvaras i ett låst kassaskåp och/eller i en molnlagring med lösenordsskydd. Delar av data (undervisningsmaterial, delar av videomaterial samt anonymiserade elevuppgifter) delas med er som deltar i workshopparna.

Utvalda delar av videomaterialet som produceras under klassrumsobservationer kan komma att användas som utbildningsunderlag för lärare, elever, universitetet och organisationer. Att dela videodata utanför forskarsamhället är, liksom övrigt deltagande, frivilligt och du har rätt att neka. Endast videodata som bara innehåller deltagare som samtycker till delning av videodata för utbildningssyfte kommer att delas.

## **7. Möjliga följder och risker med att delta i projektet**

Frågor kopplade till människa-djurrelationer samt klimatförändringar engagerar många och skulle kunna leda till diskussioner och eventuella konflikter som kan komma skapa känslor av stress och/eller obehag. Under gruppworkshopparna utvecklas verktyg för att skapa ett tillåtande klimat i klassrummet där olika åsikter, känslor och erfarenheter kan komma till uttryck och diskuteras respektfullt. Projektet förankras även i skolledningen.

## **8. Hur får jag information om resultatet av projektet?**

Du kommer fortlöpande att informeras om projektet, både under och efter projektets genomförande.


## **9. Vem finansierar projektet?**

Forskningsprojektet finansieras av Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession vid Göteborgs universitet. Varken doktorandforskaren eller forskningshandledaren får någon betalning från andra instanser, organisationer eller företag för att genomföra den här forskningsstudien.

## **10. Behandling av personuppgifter**

Om du har frågor eller klagomål på hur Göteborgs universitet använder dina personuppgifter är du välkommen att kontakta universitetets dataskyddsombud på [dataskydd@gu.se](mailto:dataskydd@gu.se). Klagomål kan också göras till Svenska Datainspektionen: klagomål och tips – [datainspektionen.se](http://datainspektionen.se).

### **11. Frågor?**

Om du har några frågor om forskningsprojektet är du välkommen att kontakta Jonna Håkansson via 

### **12. Informerat samtycke**

Det informerade samtycket är inget kontrakt. Du avstår inga rättigheter genom att signera det informerade samtycket. Din underskrift visar endast att du tagit del av information om vad studien innebär, att dina frågor blivit besvarade och att du gått med på att delta i studien. Du får behålla den här skriftliga informationen.



## Appendix 3

Kritisk djurpedagogik i miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning: ett utforskande av möjliga människa-djurrelationer tillsammans med lärare, elever, forskare och sociala rörelser

### Samtycke till att delta i projektet

Jag har fått muntlig och/eller skriftlig information om studien och har haft möjlighet att ställa frågor. Jag får behålla den skriftliga informationen.

- Jag samtycker till att delta i projektet *Kritisk djurpedagogik i miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning: ett utforskande av möjliga människa-djurrelationer tillsammans med lärare, elever, forskare och sociala rörelser*

Plats och datum	Underskrift
	Namnförtydligande

## Appendix 4

# Kritisk djurpedagogik i hållbarhetsundervisning

Gymnasielärare välkomnas till  
forskningsprojekt med möjlighet att  
utveckla sin hållbarhetsundervisning  
tillsammans med andra

**Skolan har i uppdrag att utbilda för hållbar utveckling** på ett sätt som lyfter flera dimensioner av hållbarhet och utvecklar elevernas förmåga och vilja att bidra till en hållbar utveckling. Samtidigt visar tidigare forskning att många lärare tycker det är oklart hur hållbarhetsfrågor ska integreras i undervisningen. I det här forskningsprojektet välkomnas gymnasielärare, i samtliga ämnen, att utveckla sin hållbarhetsundervisning tillsammans med andra. Projektet skapar en plattform för samverkan mellan gymnasieskolan, universitet och sociala rörelser som en väg framåt för att skapa transformativ hållbarhetsundervisning som kan bidra till mer hållbara och rättvisa sätt att leva.

**Frågor kopplade till klimatförändringar** och människans behandling av djur och miljö engagerar många unga samtidigt som många upplever en oro inför framtiden kopplat till just klimatförändringarna. Djurindustrins påverkan på miljön är idag en allt mer uppmärksammas fråga, men människans relation till andra djur har en central roll i hållbarhetsfrågor ur betydligt fler aspekter och har avgörande inverkan på såväl sociala orättvisor som hälsoproblem. Därför behövs kunskap om hur kritiska perspektiv på människans relation till andra arter och miljön kan introduceras i skolan och det här projektet introducerar *kritisk djurpedagogik* som en möjlig väg framåt. Skolinspektionen lyfter vikten av att arbeta med hållbarhetsfrågor med fokus på flera dimensioner och inom kritisk djurpedagogik strålar etiska, sociala, miljömässiga och ekonomiska dimensioner av hållbarhet samman.

# SAMVERKANSPROJEKT MELLAN GYMNASIESKOLOR, UNIVERSITET & SOCIALA RÖRELSE



**Kritisk djurpedagogik** är brett och kan introduceras på en mängd olika sätt i olika ämnen men kärnan i perspektivet är att utveckla kritiskt tänkande, empati och förmågan att diskutera och hantera svåra frågor samt göra egna ställningstaganden. Således kan pedagogiken bidra till att utveckla förmågor som är centrala för flera ämnen såväl som inför framtiden. Då projektet skapar samverkan mellan skolan, universitet och sociala rörelser är en förhoppning att det även ska bidra till att fler elever ser universitetsstudier som en möjlighet.

**Projektet utgörs av ett aktionsforskningsprojekt** och genomförs via gruppworkshoppar (med gymnasielärare, elever, forskare och sociala rörelser) där deltagarna utbildas i kritisk djurpedagogik och möjligheter och utmaningar med att jobba med denna pedagogik i gymnasieskolan diskuteras. Behov, frågeställningar och utmaningar som identifieras av medverkande lärare står i centrum. Tillsammans utvecklar vi undervisningsmaterial och -praktiker med koppling till kursplaner aktuella för medverkande lärare. Som en del av projektet introduceras kritisk djurpedagogik i de deltagande lärarnas undervisning. Även denna del är kollaborativ och exempelvis kan en forskare hålla workshops i era skolor. Hur och när pedagogiken introduceras i skolan utgår från diskussioner med berörda lärare och skolläring. Erfarenheter från introduktionen diskuteras under fortsatta workshoppar. Målsättningen är att starta upp workshopparna nu under VT22 och arrangera ca 8 träffar under 1,5 år. Utgångspunkten är att undersöka hur människa-djurrelationer och deras sociala, miljömässiga och etiska dimensioner kan adresseras i praktiken i skolan genom att arbeta tillsammans med dem som är experter på skolpraktiker, nämligen yrkesverksamma lärare, samt med personer som har kunskap om miljöfrågor och djurs situation i samhället och/eller kritisk djurpedagogik. Projektets målsättning är att skapa en plattform för kunskapsutbyte, reflektion och utvecklande av nya undervisningsverktyg.

**Skolinspektionen utför för närvarande en tematisk kvalitetsgranskning** kring huruvida skolor arbetar med hållbar utveckling på ett sätt som präglar utbildningen i sin helhet då utbildning för hållbar utveckling är ett ämnesöverskridande tema. Fokus i undersökningen ligger på huruvida undervisningen lyfter flera dimensioner av hållbarhet, främjar elevernas vilja och förmåga att påverka utvecklingen i en hållbar riktning och tittar på både sakinnehåll och former för undervisning. Det här projektet går i linje med det som lyfts som centralt i Skolinspektionens undersökning och ger skolor möjlighet att utveckla sin hållbarhetsundervisning i linje med rådande forskning inom fältet "utbildning för hållbar utveckling".

# **SAMVERKANSPROJEKT MELLAN GYMNASIESKOLOR, UNIVERSITET & SOCIALA RÖRELSER**



**Projektet utgörs av ett doktorandprojekt** vid Institutionen för Didaktik och Pedagogisk Profession vid Göteborgs universitet och har genomgått godkänd etikprövning. Projektet drivs av Jonna Håkansson som doktorerar i ämnesdidaktik med inriktning mot utbildning för hållbar utveckling. Håkansson har erfarenhet av att introducera kritisk djurpedagogik på högskolenivå samt vana av att skapa plattformar för samverkan mellan olika delar av samhället genom sitt engagemang i Göteborgs Universitets Nätverk för Kritisk Djurstudier i Antropocen (GU-CAS).

## **Kontakt**

E-post:



Tel:



***Välkomna att delta!***

## Appendix 5

# Overview of all workshops in the project

Below are two tables providing an overview of all workshops carried out in relation to each participating school in the project, ordered chronologically.

**Table 1 Workshops – School 1**

<b>Group and date</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Group 1 – WS 1</b> (220516, 2 h)	Teacher 1 (Swedish as a second language, religious education, School 1), teacher 2 (natural science, non-participating school) scholar 1, activist 1.	Introduction to project, establishing collaboration.  Initial discussions on how to engage with CAP.
<b>Group 1 – WS 2</b> (220613, 2,25 h)	Teacher 1, teacher 2, activist 1.  Scholar 1 (online, present 1,75 h)	Mapping process (presence of nonhuman animals in education).  Discussing normative pedagogy.  Introduction to the teachers' courses (religious education, Swedish as a second language, biology).
<b>Group 1 – WS 3</b> (220815, 3 h)	Teacher 1, activist 1, scholar 1.	How to introduce CAP in Swedish as a second language.  Developing assignments (poem, short story).
<b>Student group 3 – WS 1</b> (220916, 1,5 h)	5 students Year 2 (electricity and energy program).  Engaging with CAP in religious education.	Presentation on CAP.  Establishing collaboration.  Mapping process (presence of nonhuman animals in education).
<b>Group 1 – WS 4</b> (220923, 3 h)	Teacher 1, activist 1, trainee teacher (internship with teacher 1).  Scholar 1 (online).	Discussing experiences from introducing CAP in religious education and Swedish as a second language.  Planning lessons (Swedish as a second language – short story).
<b>Student group 1 - WS 1</b> (220927, 1,5 h)	10 students Year 1 (electricity and energy program).  Engaging with CAP in Swedish as a second language.	Presentation of CAP.  Establishing collaboration.  Mapping process (presence of nonhuman animals in education).
<b>Student group 1 – WS 2</b> (221018, 1,25 h)	5 students Year 1 (electricity and energy program).  Engaging with CAP in Swedish as a second language.	Discussing animals in zoos, animal production, veganism, impact by economic system.
<b>Student group 1 – WS 3</b> (221115, 1,5 h)	5 students Year 1 (electricity and energy program).	Evaluation of CAP lessons. Developing oral assignment (areas of animal exploitation).

	Engaging with CAP in Swedish as a second language.	Discussing animal rights activists, being vegan, human-animal relations, communication of animals, possible feelings of guilt when witnessing animal suffering.
<b>Group 1 – WS 5</b> (221115, 3 h)	Teacher 1, activist 1, trainee teacher.  Scholar 1 (online).	Discussing experiences of working with CAP in Swedish as a second language (short story).  Developing assignment initiated by students (areas of animal exploitation).
<b>Student group 1 – WS 4</b> (230321, 1,5 h)	5 students Year 1 (electricity and energy program).  Engaging with CAP in Swedish as a second language.	Evaluation of CAP lessons (content, student interest, experiences of normative pedagogy, interspecies sustainability).  Discussing veganism, contradictions in working with CAP while the school serves meat.
<b>Group 1 &amp; 2 – WS 6</b> (230323, 4 h) – joint final workshop	Teacher 1, 3 and 4, scholar 1 and 2, activist 2.	Sharing experiences from introducing CAP in different courses (challenges and opportunities).  Initiating work with a CAP resource bank.

*Overview of workshops – School 1.*

**Table 2 Workshops – School 2**

<b>Group and date</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Group 2 – WS 1</b> (220523, 2,5 h)	Teacher 3 (social science, School 2), teacher 4 (natural science, School 2), scholar 2, activist 2	Introduction to project, establishing collaboration.  Introduction to the teachers' courses (social science, natural science).
<b>Group 2 – WS 2</b> (220617, 3 h)	Teacher 3, teacher 4, scholar 2,  Activist 2 (online).	Mapping process (presence of nonhuman animals in education).  Discussing normative pedagogy.  How to introduce CAP in the courses (civics, specialization courses in humanities and social science, and natural science).
<b>Group 2 – WS 3</b> (220819, 3 h)	Teacher 3, teacher 4, scholar 2.  Activist 2 (online).	Presentations on CAS and CAP as starting point for discussions on how to introduce CAP in the courses.  Discussing student participation.
<b>Group 2 – WS 4</b> (221012, 2,75 h)	Teacher 4 (natural science), scholar 2, activist 2.	Planning how to introduce CAP in specialization course in natural science.
<b>Group 2 – WS 5</b> (221104, 2,75 h)	Teacher 3 (social science), activist 2.	Planning how to introduce CAP in civics and specialization course in humanities and social science.
<b>Student group 2 – WS 1</b> (221123, 1,25 h)	5 students Year 2 (social science program).  Engaging with CAP in their civics course.	Establishing collaboration.  Mapping process (presence of nonhuman animals in education).  Developing lesson plan (common assumptions about human-animal relations, and veganism).  Discussing using footage from animal factories in lessons.
<b>Student group 2 – WS 2</b> (221130, 1,25 h)	3 students Year 2 (social science program).  Engaging with CAP in their civics course.	Evaluation lesson (common assumptions about human-animal relations, and veganism).  Input on lesson plan (animal slaughter, using video material animal factories)  Discussing possibilities to address the animal welfare law and engage with interspecies sustainability during lessons.  Discussing animal production, veganism, class, agricultural subsidies by EU.
<b>Student group 2 – WS 3</b> (221207, 1,25 h)	4 students Year 2 (social science program).	Evaluation lessons (animal production in Sweden, animal

	Engaging with CAP in their civics course.	slaughter, use of footage during lessons).  Discussing normative pedagogy, the role of teachers, animal rights activists participating in lessons.  Discussing experiences of participating in workshops.
<b>Student group 2 – WS 4</b> (230208, 1,25 h)	4 students Year 2 (social science program).  Engaging with CAP in their civics course.	Evaluation of the whole CAP module (normative pedagogy, content, format).
<b>Group 1 &amp; 2 – WS 6</b> (230323, 4 h) – joint final workshop	Teacher 1, 3 and 4, scholar 1 and 2, activist 2.	Sharing experiences from introducing CAP in different courses (challenges and opportunities).  Initiating work with a CAP resource bank.

*Overview of workshops – School 2.*



## Appendix 6

## Overview of CAP modules/lessons in all courses

Below are tables describing how CAP was introduced in the two schools within all courses, i.e. Swedish as a second language, religious education, specialization course in natural science, civics, and specialization course in humanities and social science. The subject related aims refer to the subjects' aims, and central content as described in the different subjects' curriculums from 2011 (Gy11, The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011) since these were the curriculums used when the project was carried out. Additionally, the lessons refer to overarching aims in the curriculum for upper secondary school, in terms of promoting respect for our shared environment, international solidarity, and responsibility, enable engagement in social life, and encourage and enable taking personal positions (Gy11, The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, pp. 1, 2, 4). According to these aims the students should be able to participate in hindering harmful impact on the environment, develop personal positions in relation to global environmental issues and knowledge regarding how society's functions and humans' way of life can be adapted to enable sustainable development (Gy11, The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 4).

**Table 1: CAP module in Swedish as a second language**

What?	How?	Why? (CAP)	Why? (Swedish)
<p>Poem – <i>Cows on killing day</i> by Les Murray (1997).</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (45 min), 220920.</p>	<p>Teacher reading out loud to class.</p> <p>Students answering questions in writing, reading in pairs.</p> <p>Discussions in class.</p>	<p>Initiate discussions on who can and are allowed to be a subject.</p> <p>Enable a “cow standpoint.”</p>	<p>Reading and reflecting on different forms of texts.</p>
<p>Short story – <i>Oxgraven</i> by Ivar Lo Johansson (1984)</p> <p>Time: 2 months (ca 3 lessons a week (45-75 min), 220921-221019.</p> <p>Observations: 6 lessons.</p>	<p>Teacher reading out loud to class, reading and discussing in smaller groups, answer questions in writing.</p> <p>Lectures (on writing short stories, nonhuman animals as metaphors, stereotypes of nonhuman animals in Swedish expressions).</p> <p>Writing short story analysis.</p>	<p>Practice taking an animal standpoint.</p> <p>Addressing human-animal (power) relations and the use of nonhuman animals for human interests.</p> <p>Addressing historical perspective.</p>	<p>Reading and reflecting on different texts, including fiction.</p> <p>Adapting language to subject, aim, situation and recipient. Structure written texts.</p> <p>Learning about the construction of the Swedish language.</p>

<p>Addressing areas of animal exploitation (chicken industry, dairy industry, fur industry, zoos).</p> <p>Time: 4 weeks (ca 3 lessons a week (45-75 min), 221120 – 221220).</p> <p>Observations: 4 lessons.</p>	<p>Reading about different areas of animal exploitation from different sources (animal rights organizations, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the animal industry).</p> <p>Preparing and carrying out individual oral presentations.</p> <p>Reflective group discussions with starting point in the presentations.</p>	<p>Learning about and addressing exploitation of nonhuman animals in different areas.</p> <p>Reflecting upon the animals' perspectives, the responsibility of humans, and possibilities for changing the animals' situation.</p> <p>Discuss possibilities for less exploitative human-animal relations.</p>	<p>Practicing oral and written communication, presentation and narration.</p> <p>Using digital tools for supporting and improving oral accounts.</p> <p>Having dialogues around texts used within every day and societal life.</p> <p>Referencing, and critically considering written texts.</p> <p>Adapting language to subject, aim, situation and recipient.</p>
<p>Animal testing and ethical approaches.</p> <p>Time: 4 weeks (ca 3 lessons a week (45-75 min), 230130-230228).</p> <p>Observations: 3 lessons.</p>	<p>Lectures including information about animal testing, video clips (breeding facilities, and an animated short film).</p> <p>Engaging with material on alternative testing methods from the 3 R Center in Sweden.</p> <p>Discussions on different ethical approaches to nonhuman animals and what that would mean for the organization of society.</p> <p>Writing fictional texts focused on what a world without animal testing would look like as part of a writing competition arranged by the 3 R Center.</p>	<p>Addressing and reflecting upon animal testing and alternatives.</p> <p>Reflecting upon outcomes of different ethical perspectives.</p> <p>Imagining societies without animal testing.</p>	<p>Practicing oral and written communication.</p> <p>Producing written language.</p> <p>Text structure and pattern in narrative text.</p>

*Table describing how CAP was introduced in Swedish as a second language with (1 class in Year 1, electricity and energy program).*

**Table 2 CAP module(s) in religious education**

<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Why? (CAP)</b>	<b>Why? (religious ed.)</b>
<p>Introduction to CAP, CAS, and "religion and animals."</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson per class (45 min), 220902.</p> <p>Observations: 2 lessons.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (religion and animals). Answering questions related to lecture on CAS in writing.</p> <p>Address and contrast videos about the dairy industry from an animal rights organisation and a dairy company.</p> <p>Discussions on nonhuman animals and their role in society in relation to religion.</p>	<p>Initiate discussions and reflections on nonhuman animals and religion.</p> <p>Learn more about critical animal studies and try out such an analysis.</p>	<p>Broaden and deepen understanding about religions, ethical approaches and different interpretations.</p>
<p>Christian and Islamic texts addressing human-animal relations, nonhuman animals and/or nature.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson per class (40-45 min), 221124.</p> <p>Observations: 2 lessons.</p>	<p>Introductory lecture.</p> <p>Reading and discussing religious texts focusing on human-animal relations in smaller groups.</p>	<p>Critical reflections on religion and human-animal relations, focusing on different interpretations.</p>	<p>Addressing the world religions.</p> <p>Studying and analyzing religious texts.</p> <p>Broaden and deepen understanding about religions, ethical approaches, and different interpretations.</p> <p>Reflect upon how humans' moral approaches can be motivated in religion.</p>
<p>Christian and Islamic texts and human-animal relations.</p> <p>Judaism and eating practices.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson per class (40-45 min), 221125.</p> <p>Observations: 2 lessons.</p>	<p>Introductory lesson and interactive discussions.</p> <p>Discussion in whole class regarding the Christian and Islamic texts and human-animal relations (today).</p> <p>Judaism and eating practices (consumption of animals). One class listened to part of a podcast.</p>	<p>Critical reflections on religion and human-animal relations.</p> <p>Addressing animal consumption and production in relation to religion.</p>	<p>Addressing the world religions.</p> <p>Address how individual and group identities are impacted by religion, religious texts, and traditions.</p> <p>Reflect upon how humans' moral approaches can be motivated in religion.</p> <p>Address ethical issues in relation to world religions.</p>

*Table describing how CAP was introduced in religious education with (2 classes in Year 2, electricity and energy program).*

**Table 3 CAP module in natural science specialization**

<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Why? (CAP)</b>	<b>Why? (natural science)</b>
<p>Introduction to CAS, CAP, animal ethics and animal rights.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (90 min), 221110.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (how nonhuman animals were present in the students' lives).</p> <p>Personal narratives of transition to veganism.</p> <p>Collection of questions and areas students wanted to address during CAP module.</p>	<p>Create initial engagement, check students' starting points.</p> <p>Introduce animal ethics, and animal rights.</p> <p>Introduce an animal standpoint.</p>	<p>Develop an understanding for the relevance of natural science knowledge in society and for individuals.</p> <p>Introduction to one knowledge area focused during the course.</p>
<p>Animal production in Sweden.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (65 min), 221122.</p>	<p>Lecture on Swedish animal industries by animal rights activist, using information, images and videos produced by animal rights organization.</p>	<p>Critically address human exploitation of nonhuman animals for food.</p>	<p>Critically value scientific and non-scientific information.</p> <p>Knowledge in ethology.</p> <p>Learning more about a chosen knowledge area.</p>
<p>Human-animal relations and sustainability.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (75 min), 221123.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (sustainability, nonhuman animals and sustainability).</p> <p>Interactive discussions.</p>	<p>Critically address the role of human-animal relations in sustainability issues.</p> <p>Engage with interspecies sustainability.</p>	<p>Address relevant research. Interdisciplinary perspectives on a chosen knowledge area.</p> <p>Critically value scientific and non-scientific information.</p>
<p>Oral presentations on species used in animal production.</p> <p>Time: ca 3 weeks 230124-230214</p> <p>Observations: 2 lessons (oral presentations)</p>	<p>Preparation individual or in groups of up to 3 students.</p> <p>Studying different sources of information.</p> <p>Oral presentations in class, including some time for questions, reflections and discussions.</p>	<p>Gaining species-specific knowledge.</p> <p>Take an animal standpoint.</p> <p>Critically address domestication and animal breeding.</p>	<p>Deeper knowledge in ethology, genetics, nutritional knowledge, environmental chemistry.</p> <p>Analyze and search answers for subject relevant questions.</p> <p>Express knowledge and arguments orally and in writing. Use knowledge and concepts in natural science for communicating, addressing and using information.</p> <p>Practice carrying out natural science presentations.</p>

*Table describing how CAP was introduced in the specialization course in natural science (1 class in Year 3, natural science).*

**Table 4 CAP module in civics course**

<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Why? (CAP)</b>	<b>Why? (civics)</b>
<p>Introduction to CAS, CAP, animal ethics and animal rights.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (how nonhuman animals were present in the students' lives).</p> <p>Personal narratives of transition to veganism.</p> <p>Collection of questions and areas students wanted to address during CAP module.</p>	<p>Create initial engagement, check students' starting points.</p> <p>Introduce animal ethics, and animal rights.</p> <p>Introduce an animal standpoint.</p>	<p>Address societal issues and conditions from different perspectives.</p> <p>Thematic deepened knowledge in social issues.</p> <p>Use social science concepts and theories.</p>
<p>Animal production in Sweden.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (60 min), 221122.</p>	<p>Lecture on Swedish animal industries by animal rights activist, using information, images and videos produced by animal rights organization.</p>	<p>Critically address human exploitation of nonhuman animals for food.</p>	<p>Critically value information from different sources.</p> <p>Develop knowledge about power, equality, and sustainable development.</p> <p>Address different perspectives on how society is organized.</p>
<p>Human-animal relations and sustainability.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (90 min), 221129.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (sustainability, nonhuman animals and sustainability).</p> <p>Interactive discussions.</p>	<p>Critically address the role of human-animal relations for sustainability issues.</p> <p>Engage with interspecies sustainability.</p>	<p>Learning about sustainable development, power, democracy, and equality.</p> <p>Use social science concepts and theories.</p>
<p>Common assumptions of human-animal relations and veganism.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (60 min), 221130.</p>	<p>Introduction.</p> <p>Exercise with discussions on assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas.</p>	<p>Critically address and reflect upon common assumptions of human-animal relations and veganism.</p>	<p>Critically value information from different sources.</p> <p>Address how ideological, political, social and environmental conditions are impacted by individual, groups, and social structures.</p> <p>Learning about sustainable development.</p>

<p>Animal slaughter.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (60 min), 221207.</p>	<p>Lecture by animal rights activist.</p> <p>Watch 3-minute slaughterhouse video.</p> <p>Quadrilateral interactive exercise (camera surveillance in slaughterhouses).</p>	<p>Critical discussions and reflections regarding animal slaughter.</p> <p>Critically address differences between animal rights and animal welfare.</p>	<p>Critically review, value, and understand information from different sources and media when engaging with complex social issues.</p> <p>Practice oral debate.</p>
<p>Podcasts (collaboration with philosophy course).</p> <p>Time: 5 weeks, 221214-230118 (parallel to other courses).</p>	<p>Researching, preparing and recording podcast on chosen area of animal exploitation or a topic or question related to human-animal relations addressed during the course.</p> <p>Address what a society of interspecies sustainability could look like and how it could be achieved.</p>	<p>Critically address animal exploitation and human-animal relations.</p> <p>Take an animal standpoint.</p> <p>Envision a society of interspecies sustainability and justice as well as strategies to achieve this society.</p>	<p>Analyze social issues, use social science concepts and theories for addressing causes and consequences.</p> <p>Address different perspectives on how society is organized and a sustainable society.</p> <p>Ability to search for, critically review, value, and understand information from different sources.</p> <p>Oral and written presentation.</p>

*Table describing how CAP was introduced in civics (1 class in Year 2, social science).*

**Table 5 CAP module in specialization course in humanities and social science**

<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Why? (CAP)</b>	<b>Why? (social science)</b>
<p>Introduction to CAS, CAP, animal ethics and animal rights.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (60 min), 221110.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (how nonhuman animals were present in the students' lives).</p> <p>Personal narratives of transition to veganism.</p> <p>Collection of questions and areas students wanted to address during CAP module.</p>	<p>Create initial engagement, check students' starting points.</p> <p>Introduce animal ethics, and animal rights.</p> <p>Introduce an animal standpoint.</p>	<p>Develop deepened knowledge within a specific knowledge area.</p> <p>Interdisciplinary and social science perspectives on a chosen knowledge area.</p> <p>Use social science concepts and theories.</p>
<p>Human-animal relations and sustainability.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (90 min), 221111.</p>	<p>Lecture. Brainstorming (sustainability, nonhuman animals and sustainability).</p> <p>Interactive discussions.</p>	<p>Critically address the role of human-animal relations for sustainability issues.</p> <p>Engage with interspecies sustainability.</p>	<p>Learning about global development and justice issues, the relationship between the knowledge area and the surrounding world.</p> <p>Use social science concepts and theories.</p>
<p>Animal production in Sweden.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (90 min), 221118.</p>	<p>Lecture on Swedish animal industries by animal rights activist, using information, images and videos produced by animal rights organization.</p>	<p>Critically address human exploitation of nonhuman animals for food.</p>	<p>Critically value information from different sources and media.</p> <p>Address communication in media.</p> <p>Engage with organizations.</p>
<p>Civil disobedience, animal rights activists documenting inside animal factories.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (60 min), 221124.</p> <p>No observation.</p>	<p>Lecture facilitated by teacher alone.</p> <p>Reading opinion piece of activist documenting inside animal factories.</p> <p>Whole class discussions.</p>	<p>Learning more about and reflecting upon strategies to achieve change.</p>	<p>Thematic deepened knowledge in social issues.</p> <p>Critically value information from different sources and media.</p> <p>Connections between knowledge area and practice.</p>
<p>The animal welfare law.</p> <p>Time: 1 lesson (90 min), 221129.</p>	<p>Introduction.</p> <p>Group exercise (reading and discussing excerpts from the Swedish animal welfare law).</p>	<p>Critically address animal welfare laws, contrasting animal welfare and animal rights.</p> <p>Take an animal standpoint.</p>	<p>Critically value information from different sources and put forward lines of arguments with such critical awareness in mind.</p> <p>Critically address knowledge area and relate knowledge in humanities</p>

			and social sciences to the surrounding world.
Animal slaughter.  Time: 1 lesson (90 min), 221202.	Lecture by animal rights activist.  Watch 3-minute slaughterhouse video.  Read debate articles.  Quadrilateral interactive exercise (camera surveillance in slaughterhouses).	Critical discussions and reflections regarding animal slaughter.  Critically address differences between animal rights and animal welfare.	Critically address knowledge area and relate knowledge in humanities and social sciences to the surrounding world.  Process, analyze, and discuss knowledge area from different perspectives.
Nonhuman animals and philosophy (collaboration with philosophy course). Introduction to final assignment (podcast).  Time: part of 1 lesson (30 min), 221207.	Lecture on ecofeminism, animal care ethics, and relational ethics.  Introduction to final course assignment.	Reflecting on human-animal relations and the role of nonhuman animals with starting point in ecofeminism, animal care ethics, and relational ethics.	Thematic deepened knowledge in social issues, including philosophy.  Use social science concepts and theories.
Podcasts (collaboration with philosophy course).  Time: 3 weeks, 221207-221228 (parallel to other courses).  Observations: 1 lesson (working with podcasts).	Researching, preparing and recording podcast on chosen area of animal exploitation or a topic or question related to human-animal relations addressed during the course.  Address what a society of interspecies sustainability could look like and be achieved.	Critically address animal exploitation and human-animal relations.  Take an animal standpoint.  Envision a society of interspecies sustainability and justice as well as strategies to achieve this society.	Process, analyze, and discuss knowledge area from different perspectives using associated concepts and theories.  Critically address knowledge area and relate knowledge in humanities and social sciences to the surrounding world.  Express knowledge and put forward lines of arguments with critical awareness of different sources.  Present knowledge in different contexts, adapted to aim, recipient, and situation.

*Table describing how CAP was introduced in a specialization course in humanities and social science (1 class in Year 3, social science).*



## Appendix 7



## Information till forskningspersoner

Vi vill fråga dig om du vill delta i ett forskningsprojekt. I det här dokumentet får du information om projektet och om vad det innebär att delta.

### 1. Projekttitel

Kritisk djurpedagogik i miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning: ett utforskande av möjliga människa-djurrelationer tillsammans med lärare, elever, forskare och sociala rörelser

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### 2. Inbjudan

Du har blivit tillfrågad att delta eftersom en av dina lärare medverkar i det här forskningsprojektet. I projektet ingår en studie av vad som händer i klassrummet när kritiska perspektiv på människans relation till djur och miljö (kritisk djurpedagogik) används i miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning i gymnasieskolan. Du tillfrågas att delta i projektet eftersom en av dina lärare kommer att jobba med den här typen av pedagogik under lektioner där du deltar.

Du bjuds in att delta i det här forskningsprojektet men innan du bestämmer dig är det viktigt att du förstår varför forskningen utförs och vad den innebär. Läs igenom informationen ordentligt och diskutera med andra om du vill. Fråga om något är oklart eller om du vill ha mer information. Ta den tid du behöver för att bestämma om du vill delta.

### 3. Vad är det för ett projekt?

Projektet är ett samverkansprojekt där gymnasielärare, sociala rörelser, forskare och gymnasieelever arbetar tillsammans för att utveckla och introducera kritisk djurpedagogik (kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer) i gymnasieskolans miljö- och hållbarhetsundervisning. Projektet syftar till att undersöka vilka möjligheter och utmaningar som uppstår när kritiska perspektiv introduceras i gymnasieskolans hållbarhetsundervisning. Målsättningen är att projektet ska bidra till att utveckla nya former av utbildning för hållbar utveckling som kan bidra till mer hållbara sätt att leva.

Projektet fokuserar särskilt på hur kritiska perspektiv på människans relation till djur och miljö kan introduceras i hållbarhetsundervisning eftersom människa-djurrelationer är centrala för klimatförändringar, hälso- och miljöproblem samt social orättvisa.

För att undersöka detta utgår projektet från gruppworkshoppar där gruppen diskuterar möjligheter och utmaningar med att jobba med kritisk djurpedagogik i hållbarhetsundervisning. Gruppen utvecklar också undervisningsmaterial. Undervisningsmaterialet i kritisk djurpedagogik testas under lektioner i gymnasieskolan och doktorandforskaren undersöker vad som händer då (det är denna del av studien du tillfrågas att delta i).

Forskningshuvudman för projektet är Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession vid Göteborgs universitet. Med forskningshuvudman menas den organisation som är ansvarig för projektet. Ansökan är godkänd av Etikprövningsmyndigheten, diarienummer för prövningen hos Etikprövningsmyndigheten är Dnr 2021-04643.

#### **4. Måste jag delta?**

Att delta i projektet är frivilligt och du bestämmer själv om du vill delta eller inte. Om du bestämmer dig för att delta får du behålla den här skriftliga informationen. Du kommer bli ombedd att signera en blankett för informerat samtycke som tecken på att du vill delta i studien och har fått ordentlig information om projektet. Du kan fortfarande avsluta din medverkan fram tills dess att studien publiceras och du behöver inte förklara varför du inte längre vill medverka.

#### **5. Hur går projektet till?**

För att genomföra den här studien kommer doktorandforskaren Jonna Håkansson att medverka vid lektioner där du deltar, för att observera vad som händer när ni jobbar med frågor kopplade till kritiska perspektiv på människa-djurrelationer. Håkansson kommer vara med på era vanliga lektioner och det innebär inget extra arbete att delta i studien. Preliminär plan är att Håkansson deltar under HT22 och VT23.

Om du går med på att delta kommer lektionerna att spelas in med videokamera. Innan videokameran startas kommer vi fråga om det är okej att börja filma och invänta bekräftelse från alla närvarande. Om du (eller någon annan) ber oss sluta filma kommer vi göra det. Utöver videoinspelning kommer vi skriva anteckningar.

#### **6. Anonymitet och konfidentialitet**

All information som samlas in om dig under studien kommer behandlas så att inga obehöriga kan ta del av den. Du kommer inte kunna identifieras eller bli identifierbar i några av forskningsprojektets publikationer om inte annat önskas. Eventuell information som samlas in om dig kommer förvaras i ett låst kassaskåp och/eller i en molnlagring med lösenordsskydd. Skoluppgifter från dig kan komma att användas som data men det kommer inte påverka bedömning och betyg. Delar av data

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#### **7. Möjliga följder och risker med att delta i projektet**

Frågor kopplade till människa-djurrelationer samt klimatförändringar engagerar många och skulle kunna leda till diskussioner och eventuella konflikter som kan komma skapa känslor av stress och/eller obehag. Under projektet skapas förutsättningar att utveckla verktyg att hantera olika känslor, positiva såväl som negativa, samt diskutera ämnen som kan upplevas som kontroversiella och/eller känsliga.

#### **8. Vem finansierar projektet?**

Forskningsprojektet finansieras av Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession vid Göteborgs universitet. Varken doktorandforskaren eller forskningshandledaren får någon betalning från andra instanser, organisationer eller företag för att genomföra den här forskningsstudien.

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#### **10. Frågor?**

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Det informerade samtycket är inget kontrakt. Du avstår inga rättigheter genom att signera det informerade samtycket. Din underskrift visar endast att du tagit del av information om vad studien innebär, att dina frågor blivit besvarade och att du gått med på att delta i studien. Du får behålla den här skriftliga informationen.

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This thesis contributes to ongoing debates on how human-animal relations can be addressed in environmental and sustainability education (ESE) by exploring the potential of critical animal pedagogies (CAP) to address and disturb exploitative human-animal relations, enabling a re-consideration of how to live together with other species. In this feminist activist ethnography, teachers, students, animal rights activists, and scholars develop and introduce CAP in Swedish schools. Theoretically, the thesis draws upon critical animal studies. It reads animal standpoint theory with and through feminist affect theory, feminist philosophy, educational philosophy, and poststructuralist theory and pedagogy.

The thesis explores the didactical conditions for CAP in upper secondary education and how CAP possibly is transformed by this context. It is concerned with the (im)possibility for nonhuman animals to emerge as subjects and what human-animal relations are enabled or disabled. The importance of creating space to take an animal standpoint in ESE is emphasized and a sharp division between normative and pluralistic approaches questioned. It shows how CAP can contribute to ESE by addressing and challenging exploitative human-animal relations through engaging with interspecies sustainability.



**Jonna Kallaste Håkansson** has a background in gender studies and their research interests concern critical animal pedagogies and sustainability education.

