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Ca'Foscari
Venezia

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Multispecies health, wellbeing, and care: An antispeciesist critical study

Supervisor:

CH. PROF. FEDERICA MARIA GIOVANNA TIMETO

Assistant supervisor:

CH. PROF. ROBERTA RAFFAETÀ

Graduand:

MONICA FACCI

895475

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Abstract

The interdependency between human, animal, and environmental health has been widely recognized and lies at the basis of the One Health Initiative. However, besides praiseworthy premises, health objectives are far from being achieved, especially when billions of nonhuman animals continue to be exploited for human needs. This work aims to question, recalibrate, and challenge the One Health Initiative to take seriously the condition of nonhumans in the Animal Industrial Complex (A-IC) and specifically in factory farms. Oppositely, Farmed Animal Sanctuaries (FASs) are taken as an example of places of inclusion and interspecies care where the principles of One Health are respected. No violence, domination or any logic of interest will ever cross the doors of sanctuaries, differently from factory farms, where nonhuman animals are just mere disposable bodies.

But what happens if a virus enters these places? What happens when the economic interests of agrobusiness traverse the boundaries of these safe zones? Which bodies can be preserved or sacrificed for the One Health perspective? To answer these questions, a series of circumstances and events are taken into consideration. First, the conditions under which nonhuman animals live inside the A-IC; second, the wave of the African swine fever which hit Italy during summer 2023; third, the killing of the rescued pigs by Italian authorities at the sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi. These facts will be critically analyzed adopting the perspective of Critical Animal Studies, with the aim of promoting reflection on the management and manipulation of nonhuman life and promoting FASs as models of interspecies coexistence, justice, and care.

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Introduction

Among the many lessons ones can draw from the study of Environmental Humanities, there is one always emerges. Every discipline that this flourishing field of study encompasses, no matter how diverse these disciplines might be from one another, always lay on the same foundation: interconnectedness is key, and it is what characterizes our planet.

Understanding the complexity and the intricated web of interactions that shape our planet is fundamental to address current and future challenges. The environmental degradation, the climate changes, the management of resources, the loss of biodiversity, the development and spread of new infectious diseases… all these issues should be approached from different fronts and with an integrated, coordinated, and interdisciplinary approach.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Health is a fundamental condition for human and nonhuman existence, and it also represents a pivotal challenge for our future on this Planet. The One Health Initiative (OHI) recognized the potential of these risks and for this reason it highlighted the need of an integrated, coordinated, and interdisciplinary approach to confront with present and future health hazards. This initiative took shape from the collaborative efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) with the aim of simultaneously optimizing human, animal, and ecosystem health.

Despite the praiseworthy objectives of this vision, this dissertation critics the evident indifference of the OHI in dismantling the spaces where the health and the wellbeing of nonhumans – and even of certain humans – are fully overlooked, namely factory farm. Here care, if minimally provided, is instrumentally applied to ensure the perpetuation of a business that profit from the abuse, the exploitation, and the death of nonhuman individuals. The scale of this business is enormous. It is estimated that 900,000 cows, 1.4 million goats, 1.7 million sheep, 3.8 million pigs, 12 million ducks, and 202 million chickens are globally killed

and slaughtered for meat consumption every day (Roser, September 26, 2023) and that three-quarters (around 74%) of land animals live in factory farms (Ritchie, September 25, 2023). These huge facilities simply cannot guarantee the health of the individuals confined.

In stark contrast to these factories, there are places where nonhuman animals are cared for and valued in their own terms, rather than in capitalist terms. Animal sanctuaries are examples of places of inclusion and interspecies care, where the principles of One Health are embraced and respected. These places have been legally recognized by the Italian legislation and distinguished from farms as places of refuge for nonhuman animals who are not intended for food production. However, in case of health/economic crisis, such as during the African swine fever emergency, farms and sanctuaries are subjected to the same biosecurity measures and regulations. This indistinct treatment, beyond having caused the death of thousands of animals living within pig farms of the Lombardy region, it has sentenced to death nine liberated pigs who had been rescued from this very business and hosted in a sanctuary in the Pavia province.

This work will question, recalibrate, and challenge the One Health Initiative. Its limits and inconsistencies will be explored in light of the events which involved Italian pig farms and the Progetto Cuori Liberi sanctuary before, during and after the wave of African swine fever that hit the country in Summer 2023.

The materials and methodologies used for this dissertation combine literature research and a qualitative study conducted with the caregivers and volunteers of the sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi. A considerable part of the bibliography falls within the field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS), whose principles have guided this work. This field of research, whose roots can be found in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, is characterized by the commitment for practical changes and a political-oriented advocacy. The ten principles that define the discipline focus on the need of interdisciplinarity, on the intersectionality of oppressions, on the deconstruction of hierarchies, and on the promotion of a critical reasoning. Biomedical and life sciences literature concerning the African swine fever have been consulted mainly from the National Institute of Health (NIH) database. Finally, for news reports regarding the spread of the disease, the major national and local online newspapers have been considered.

Firstly, the One Health Initiative will be presented. Here, the premises and the salient historical events are briefly traced in order to illustrate the origin, the objectives and

potentials, but particularly the limitations of this vision. While recognizing the importance and the potential of this new approach to health and wellbeing, this work critically examines its biases and contradictions. The limits of One Health emerge in the discrepancy between the declared goals and the actual stagnation of governments and health organizations in in the face of nonhuman animal oppression and exploitation within the Animal-Industrial Complex, and particularly in factory farms. The considerations concerning these productive systems will highlight their incompatibility with the One Health mission.

The Animal-Industrial Complex, namely the assemblage of activities that profit from the exploitation, the abuse, the detention, and the killing of nonhuman animals, is also at the origin of a growing number of diseases outbreaks, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic represents just one example. With this premise, in the second chapter the connection between the outbreak of infectious diseases and the practice of intensive animal farming will be explored. In particular, the spread of African swine fever disease and its link to the pig meat production will be taken into consideration. An overview of the transmission and spread paths of the ASF virus, and the control measures put in place in case of an outbreak, precedes a critical analysis of the practice of mass culling, which is the only measure adopted in case of contagion. In this context, I will try to show how hierarchies of power, structures of care, and political and economic interests tend to protect some forms of human and nonhuman life, and sacrifice others.

The argumentation will then explore farmed animal sanctuaries. These places, where there are no moral species distinctions, host multispecies communities of nonhuman animals who have been rescued from abandonment, situation of carelessness, or abuse. The rise of the sanctuary movement, the objectives, the practices of care, but also the limits and the challenges will be presented, underlying the positive effects that these places generate on both human and nonhuman animals.

Lastly, a qualitative study conducted with caregivers, volunteers and a veterinary will be presented. These people actively contribute and help the individuals who live at the Progetto Cuori Liberi sanctuary, at Sairano, in the Pavia province. With a series of in-depth interviews, I wanted to navigate the spaces and the relationships that humans and nonhumans establish, to explore the visions and practices of interspecies care, and to make their voices heard.

The context in exam will reveal how anthropocentrism, capitalism and speciesism still permeate our vision and our relationship with the nonhuman world. With this premise, I will present my personal considerations and vision of possible perspectives for the future, with

the aim of shedding a light upon the sick relation humans have with nonhuman animals, and with the hope of healing this relation.

Chapter 1

One Health: a more-than-human approach to well being

"But there are special places outside the town where all blood and dirt are first washed off in running water. The slaughtering of livestock and cleaning of carcasses is done by slaves [condemned criminals sentenced to hard labour]. They don't let the ordinary people get used to cutting up animals, because they think it tends to destroy one's natural feeling of humanity. It's also forbidden to bring anything dirty or unhygienic inside the town, for fear of polluting the atmosphere and so causing disease".

Sir Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516)

1.1 The One Health Initiative: a brief overview

The concept of One Health achieved prominence in the past decade, and particularly after the spread of COVID-19 from the end of 2019 (Braverman, 2023). The idea at the basis is the following: people, animals, plants, and their environment share health outcomes. Gains in animal and environmental health benefit humans, and vice versa (Hinchliffe, 2023). This vision, at least in theory, marked a shift in the approach to health. However, this idea is not completely revolutionary and has roots in the history of care. As Woods and Bresalier (2014, 650) declare, "for One Health sceptics who argue that advancing human health has always lain at the hearth of veterinary endeavour, One Health history is simply veterinary history; there is nothing distinctive about it". Indeed, for some, One Health is just the latest of a series of integrated and collaborative approaches to care and this means that we could be able to trace a history of One Health.

Even if the creation of the first veterinary schools in Europe, dating back to the late 18th and the early 19th Century, had been perceived as the passage from the ignorance and the cruelty of the past, to a new Enlighted approach to animal healing, evidence of continuity tells us that doctors demonstrated interest in animal bodies way before the birth of the

veterinary profession. Doctors not only, driven by curiosity, used to study and investigate animal diseases, but sometimes even participated in the veterinary practice (Wood & Bresalier 2014). A bigger interest was then stimulated by the discovery of transmissible diseases from animals to humans, namely the zoonoses, such as in the case of rabies which could be contracted through dog bites. Zoonotic diseases, or zoonoses, are infectious diseases that are naturally transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans. Zoonotic pathogens may be bacterial, viral, or parasitic and can be transmitted by direct contact, indirect contact, vector-borne, foodborne, and waterborne (World Health Organization, 2020).

Woods and Bresalier (2014, 651) point out that "Zoonotic diseases, and the scientist who elucidated them, feature in all histories of One Health. Supposedly, it was from zoonosis that key connections between human and animal health were forged, and the two professions brough into closer assignment". The collaborations between doctors and veterinaries, at least in Britain, went also beyond zoonosis: animal bodies were analyzed to understand pathological processes, like inflammation, and used for disease experimentation.

Between the late 20th and the early 21st Century a further will to develop a stronger link between human and animal health emerged. "The drive for integration was inspired by a growing professional and epistemological separation of human and veterinary medicine, which arose partly from the politics of zoonosis control […], and partly from the changing use of animals in scientific research" (Woods & Bresalier 2014, 653). Calvin Schwabe, an American veterinary epidemiologist, is credited with coining the concept of One Medicine, considered as the precursor of One Health. He advocated for the idea of a close relationship between humans, domestic animals and public health and delineated an integrated human and veterinary approach to zoonosis in his monograph "*Veterinary Medicine and Human Health*", published in 1964. He then formalized the notion of One Medicine in the third edition of his work which appeared in 1984 (Cardiff et al, 2008) and drew together developments in comparative medicine, veterinary public health, epidemiology, nutrition, and international health in a single vision. The movement, which made inroads initially in the US and in Britain, was thus characterized by a self-conscious agenda and the desire for a unified vision of health.

Later, new initiatives took One Medicine into the field of conservation, resulting in what is often mentioned as "conservation medicine", a transdisciplinary approach to the study of human, animal, and ecosystems health to ensure the conservation of all (Braverman, 2023). In the work "*New Directions in Conservation Medicine: Applied Cases of Ecological Health*", A.

Alonso Aguirre, Richard S. Ostfeld and Peter Daszak argue that "This novel approach challenged scientists and practitioners in the health, natural, and social sciences to think about new, collaborative, transdisciplinary ways to address ecological health concerns in a world affected by complex, large-scale environmental threats" (Aguirre et al, 2012, 3).

The One Medicine and the Conservation Medicine initiatives influenced and paved the way to the subsequent One Health agenda which integrated in its concerns the environmental and wildlife aspects of health, and which originated because of the increase of alarming health challenges, in particular the wave of influenza coming from East Asia. Already in the 80s, the Hong Kong University virologist Kennedy Shortridge identified South China as a possible point of origin of influenza pandemics because of the ecosystem created by farming practices, animal husbandry systems, and wet-rice-paddy landscapes, providing opportunities for cross-species infections (Fearnley, 2020).

In 2003 the H5N1, a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, reemerged in Hong Kong and quickly spread throughout South Asia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Afterwards the virus moved towards north-west, reaching Egypt, Bangladesh, India and Europe (Fearnley, 2020). Along with avian influenza, diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) highlighted the need for a broad medical, veterinary, and scientific collaboration not only locally, but nationally and on a global scale (Gibbs, 2014).

The term "One Health" was proposed as a step forward to promote such collaboration. In 2005 the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) of New York headed a conference in which it was underlined the importance of the understanding of wildlife diseases and ecology in facing the emergence of diseases. During the conference the expression "One World-One Health" was introduced to encompass both medicine and ecosystem health. At the occasion, 12 recommendations, later recognized as the Manhattan Principles, were listed for establishing a holistic approach to diseases and for maintaining ecosystem integrity. In 2006 the American Veterinary Medical Association created the One Health Initiative Task Force and in 2007 the American Medical Association approved a resolution for increasing the collaboration between human and veterinary medical communities (Gibbs, 2014). Since then, One Health achieved global recognition and entered into the medical and scientific lexicon.

With the aim of enhancing research on the One Health sphere, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health

Organization (WHO) came together and formed an advisory panel, the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP), whose members are experts in a broad range of disciplines in both science and policy-related sectors. The ambition of this panel is to develop a policy framework that aims to simultaneously promote human, nonhuman, and environmental health. The definition proposed by the OHHLEP states that:

> One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems.
> One Health recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent.
> The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development.
>
> (World Health Organization, 2021a)

Figure 1.1: The visual representation of One Health as the result of the intersection between human, environmental, and animal health (Sanità24, Il Sole 24 Ore)

This definition highlights that: first, human, animals, plants, and environment form an integral system which needs to be considered in a coordinated, interdisciplinary, and intersectional way; second, that disease governance and control cannot focus on human health alone; third, One Health aims to operate beyond conventional state-based coordination, involving citizens, communities, and the private sector internationally

(Hinchliffe, 2023); forth health is not simply the absence of illness but is the condition under which we have physical, mental, social and ecosystem health. This means that the optimization of health is not a matter of being disease free but more a matter of taking care of relationships, as Hinchliffe (2023) writes "a matter of working with rather than against the environment" and additionally, a matter of living with nonhuman animals rather than making them life for us. With these premises, One Health appears as a step in the right direction.

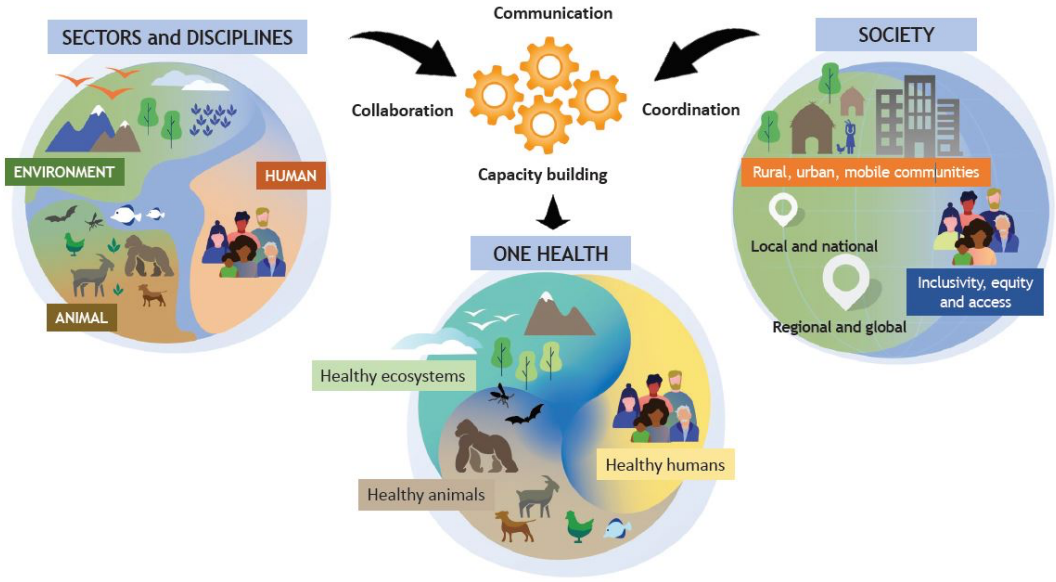

Figure 1.2: Graphic representation of the OHHLEP's definition of One Health (World Health Organization, 2021a)

According to the One Health Mission Statement (One Health Initiative, 2022), the objective of improving the lives of all species shall be achieved through:

1. Joint educational efforts between human medical, veterinary medical schools, and schools of public health and the environment;
2. Joint communication efforts in journals, at conferences, and via allied health networks;
3. Joint efforts in clinical care through the assessment, treatment, and prevention of cross-species disease transmission;
4. Joint cross-species disease surveillance and control efforts in public health;

5. Joint efforts in better understanding of cross-species disease transmission through comparative medicine and environmental research;
6. Joint efforts in the development and evaluation of new diagnostic methods, medicines and vaccines for the prevention and control of disease across species and;
7. Joint efforts to inform and educate political leaders and public sector through accurate media publications.

Even though the key driver for the One Health Initiative was the renewed focus on emerging infectious diseases, one important aspect of this approach to health was its alleged expansion of interest, research, and knowledge beyond zoonotic diseases, to include other hazards, both to human and animal health, such as mental health, chronic diseases, or antimicrobial resistance (Woods, 2023).

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (King at al., 2008, 261) "Our increasing interdependence with animals and their products may well be the single most critical risk factor to our health and well-being with regard to infectious diseases". However, instead of blaming nonhuman animals for being our source of illness, we should rather reevaluate the ailing relationship than human have established with the nonhuman world.

Despite the wide horizons of One Health, in the practice the inquiry seems to remain circumscribed. Some scholars have noted that one of the limtations of One Health lays in its pervasive anthropocentrism. Indeed, animal and environmental health are desirable because they eventually contribute to human health (Van Patter et al., 2023). Moreover, while human health is considered as the result of physical health and psychological, emotional, social and economic wellbeing, nonhuman health remains delimited within a disease-free status and within human-utility factors, such as animal productivity, animal welfare and ethical consideration of animal use (Van Patter et al., 2023).

Lainé and Morand (2020, 3) traced the history of One Health, lingering on its rooted imperial and colonial project to secure human and animal health in ordert to extract resources. In particular, they claim that:

> a large part of the rhetoric they [One Health researchers] use is not new but deeply rooted in the colonial sciences that aimed at developing local societies, their health, and the health of

their livestock, as well as their economies by favoring their integration into the Empire market as that time, and to the global market today.

The colonial capitalism of One Health is thus visible in the universalization of Western health values and assumption to the detriment of the neglected indigenous knowledge and in the commodification of nonhuman animals, which uses living bodies as material to increase production efficiency (Van Patter et al., 2023).

This means that One Health struggles to achieve its interdisciplinary and decentering aspirations and that it is the (Western) hu-*man* who is primarily benefiting from it. No education, engagement, investigation, or prevention efforts will be able to generate equitable outcomes if we do not recognize the severe conditions that animals are subjected to (Craddock & Hinchliffe, 2015). This is evident if we take in consideration all the lives subjugated to the Animal-Industrial Complex (A-IC) and notably to the animal agriculture system. Any attempt to understand and model new health relations should not avoid considering the complex cultural and hierarchical relationships that humans have established with nonhuman animals.

1.2 One Health and the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

The growing demand for animal products, which has characterized high income countries from the second half of the 20th Century, and that is now well established in lower-middle and upper-middle countries, has provoked huge structural changes in the systems of manipulation and use of animal bodies. Noëlie Vialles (1994), in her work *Animal to Edible*, pointed out that this process of reorganization coincides with the wider project of modernization fostered by Napoleon in France and in Europe at the beginning of the 19th Century. In the first instance slaughterhouses, which were originally located in urban spaces, were progressively exiled in peripheral areas, far from the sight of the population, both because of the need of wider spaces, but also because, using Shukin (2009, 62) words, during "the nineteenth century public culture began to be sanitized and sensitized through myriad practices, disciplines, and reforms best discerned, perhaps, by Foucault". Thus, these structures expanded and developed into modern factories, located in the outskirts of cities as both a town-planning policy to ensure public hygiene, and as a consequence of the shift

in sensibilities (Vialles, 1994). The French philosopher explained that the standardization of facilities devoted exclusively to the management of animal bodies along with new standards and sensibilities concerning "suffering, violence, waste and disease, 'miasmas', and finally animals themselves" (19) laid the foundations for the industrialization and also the concealment of meat production.

Those were the years of the technological outbreak and of the invasion of machines. Nonhuman animal bodies started to be seen as machines, described as machines, managed, produced, and substituted as machines (Piazzesi, 2015). An animal becomes "simply a machine for manufacturing flesh" (Vialles, 1994, 51). Farmers, as Benedetta Piazzesi (2015, 59) elucidates, praised the nonhuman animal as a "spontaneously functioning machine", but at the same time despised the "imperfections" of the machine body which continued to perform useless biological activities. With the industrialization, the nonhuman animal is seen as a hybrid, at the midpoint between machine and life, excluded from any possible moral consideration (Piazzesi, 2015).

Nowadays, factory farms represent the standard in the food systems, and involve the reproduction and raising of animals in highly densely populated environments, defined as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), which allow a low-cost way of producing animal products (Anomaly, 2015). In CAFOs, animals spend almost all of their lives in large, crowded sheds with extremely poor ventilation, they are fed by workers rather than being left free to graze and grow without the possibility of even seeing sunlight.

In the legislations of European countries, there is no legal definition of intensive farming. Differently, the "Regulatory Definitions of Large CAFOs, Medium CAFOs, and Small CAFOs" by the American Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies these facilities according to the number of animals they confine.

Animal Sector	Size Thresholds (number of animals)		
	Large CAFOs	Medium CAFOs[1]	Small CAFOs[2]
cattle or cow/calf pairs	1,000 or more	300 - 999	less than 300
mature dairy cattle	700 or more	200 - 699	less than 200
veal calves	1,000 or more	300 - 999	less than 300
swine (weighing over 55 pounds)	2,500 or more	750 - 2,499	less than 750
swine (weighing less than 55 pounds)	10,000 or more	3,000 - 9,999	less than 3,000
horses	500 or more	150 - 499	less than 150
sheep or lambs	10,000 or more	3,000 - 9,999	less than 3,000
turkeys	55,000 or more	16,500 - 54,999	less than 16,500
laying hens or broilers (liquid manure handling systems)	30,000 or more	9,000 - 29,999	less than 9,000
chickens other than laying hens (other than a liquid manure handling systems)	125,000 or more	37,500 - 124,999	less than 37,500
laying hens (other than a liquid manure handling systems)	82,000 or more	25,000 - 81,999	less than 25,000
ducks (other than a liquid manure handling systems)	30,000 or more	10,000 - 29,999	less than 10,000
ducks (liquid manure handling systems)	5,000 or more	1,500 - 4,999	less than 1,500

Figure 1.3: Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations size thresholds according to the Environmental Protection Agency

To meet the growing demand for cheap meat, factory farms and slaughterhouses have been transformed into efficient facilities in which, based on the Fordist model, units are disassembled and homogenized. However, as Vialles writes:

> Job fragmentation is fully effective only in connection with material that is perfectly regular and always the same. Here, though, the regularity is only ever approximate; the suspended body retains traces of the unique life that once animated it: illness it may have had, accidents it may have suffered, various anomalies that may characterize it. The contingency and individuality of the biological sphere resist the formal rigour of technical organization.
>
> (Vialles, 1994, 51)

Nonhuman animals maintain on their bodies the signs of the dire existence they have been forced to live. In CAFOs, nonhuman animals endure a life of confinement, painful practices, and physical alteration. Here, standard living conditions involve the use of tiny cages or corrals which do not provide sufficient room to express natural behaviors, the confinement in filthy and infected environments, extremely painful procedures, and genetic

manipulations which cause on animals both physical and mental trauma. Because such conditions often lead to the development of aggressive and unpredictable behaviors in nonhuman animals, physical alterations prevent them from causing injuries to each other. Thus, to bear extremely stressful conditions, mutilations (dehorning, castration, tail docking, beak trimming, teeth clipping) are routinely performed. Anesthetics or medicines for pain relief are rarely provided to limit drug residues in marketed animal product as much as possible. Clearly, such procedures are not performed out of compassion to avoid injuries, but simply to limit losses, thus profit.

Nonhuman animals such as cows and hogs are subjected to the exploitation of reproductive capabilities throughout their entire life. Their bodies are used as production machines until, after an uninterrupted series of pregnancies, they are killed and sent to slaughter. Their reproductive value collapse and what remains is a body whose worth lie in the flesh.

In CAFOs, the death of nonhuman animals, which is established from the moment of their birth, is part of the exploitation project maneuvered by humans. While male individuals are destined to a very short existence (for example, calves are slaughtered between theirn twelveth and eighteenth week of life, while male chicks are killed within few hours of birth) females individuals share the unfortunate fate of their mother's. They are thus imprisoned, carelessly kept alive in tiny cages, forcefully and repletely impregnated, and killed as soon the fertility and the productivity decline.

Farmed animals are confined for most of their lives in small, damp, filthy places and are forced into situations of extreme overcrowding. These conditions cause on them high levels of stress and frustration of their natural instincts and the prolonged state of stress, boredom and discomfort compromise the immune system and make animals more susceptible and prone to develop diseases. At the same time, permanent confinement and proximity allow an easier and quicker transfer of pathogens (Deckha, 2023) while the indoor spaces that lack of adequate light and ventilation allow the viruses to survive longer without a host. Finally, because of the genetic similarity between the individuals in factory farms, nonhumans can be even more vulnerable to specific parasites (Anomaly, 2015).

Besides being legitimized instruments of animal exploitation and abuse, CAFOs are also one among the leading causes of environmental degradation and pollution, which contaminate habitats, exterminate wild species, and undermine human health. The release of greenhouse gases, the land-use change, the biodiversity loss, the problem of water quality

and scarcity, the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides to grow animal feed, and the enormous waste of resources are just few of the environmental implications of factory farming (Horrigan et al., 2002). Among the others, the tremendous amount of animal waste produced in these facilities and the resulting impact for the air and water quality represents a big issue.

The manure produced in CAFOs is collected and stored in giant open-air piles or man-made lagoons which require large areas of land. Here the animal waste undergoes a process of anaerobic respiration (or anaerobic digestion) through which volatile organic compounds are converted into carbon dioxide and methane. Usually, just after this step, the release of manure is considered suitable for agricultural fields and thus it is spread or sprayed in the surroundings. This process causes the emission in the air of pollutants such as hydrogen sulfite (H_2S), one of the most dangerous pollutants emitted by factory farms, ammonia (NH_3), particulate matter, namely solid or liquid particles suspended in the air, and greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (NH_4) and nitrous dioxide (NO_2) (Hunt, 2015).

Manure lagoon systems, because they are characterized by high levels of humidity and warm temperatures, can contribute to virus reassortment and pathogens survival and transmission. These basins are typically located outside the facilities, exposed to surrounding ecosystems and the wildlife. Indeed, even though lagoons may not directly put human populations at risk because they are normally placed far from other structures and from human infrastructures, they can transmit pathogens to wild animals. Accordingly, infected wildlife from contaminated manure may spread infections to nearby nonhuman communities and human (Moore et al., 2021).

The spreading of animal waste in the environment can pollute surface waters and groundwaters. Groundwaters can be contaminated by CAFOs through runoff from land distribution of wastes, leaching from manure that has been improperly spread, or through leaks in storage or containment units. Contamination can thus reach rivers or streams because of the groundwater-surface water exchange fluxes.

When an excessive amount of manure is spread in the environments, a too high nutrient concentration generates diverse issues. Eutrophication takes place when a body of water contains an excess of nutrients causing a boundless algal growth which blocks sunlight, killing underwater plants and species who rely on these plants. Eventually, when the algae die, bacteria decompose then depriving the water with oxygen, causing further reduction in biodiversity. This process creates hypoxic (low oxygen) environments which in extreme cases

causes the death off live forms, creating the so called "dead zones". Ammonia pollution contributes to the process of eutrophication while nitrate-contaminated water can develop potentially fatal condition on infants that reduces the blood's oxygen carrying capacity. Finally, factory farms can contaminate water through the release of pathogens (bacteria, viruses, and parasites), hormones, and antibiotics (Hunt, 2015).

In a 2018 study, Poore and Nemecek collected and recorded data of the environmental impacts of the enire food supply chain, demonstrating that the current diets and production practices are destructive for both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Today's entire food supply chain generates 26% of all anthropogenic GHG emissions. Food production creates about 32% of the terrestrial acidification and about 78% of eutrophication (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). Moreover, the current agricultural system, which covers about 43% of the world's icefree and desert free lands, is extremely resource intensive. Specifically, the authors claim that:

> the impacts of animal products can markedly exceed those of vegetable substitutes, to such a degree that meat, aquaculture, eggs, and dairy use ~83% of the world's farmland and contribute 56 to 58% of food's different emissions, despite providing only 37% of our protein and 18% of our calories. […] We find that the impacts of the lowest-impact animal products exceed average impacts of sub- stitute vegetable proteins across GHG emissions, eutrophication, acidification (excluding nuts), and frequently land use.
>
> (Poore & Nemecek, 2018, 990)

The industrialized production of animal source foods is not only destructive for ecosystems. Scientists and doctors have revealed how animal products also pose direct serious hazards for human health.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Art. 25, declares that food is a human right. An adequate nutrition is a pillar of a healthy life. Nevertheless, the kind of nutrition and the foods which should stand at the basis of a healthy diet is something that is not always openly or clearly addressed (Kahn, 2023).

In November 2021, in the view of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, the World Health Organization published *The WHO COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health* which declared the ten "priority actions" for governments for achieving a more sustainable and healthy food system (Deckha, 2023). The 8th recommendation on climate change and health aims to "Promote sustainable and resilient food production and

more affordable, nutritious diets that deliver both climate and health outcomes" (World Health Organization, 2021b) However, when the Report provides the "Action Points" to achieve a healthy, sustainable, and resilient food system, phasing out animal agriculture and embracing the benefits of vegan diets are not even mentioned as desirable targets.

Diet-related chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease (CVD), type 2 diabetes (T2D) represent a real public health concern. Cardiovascular diseases are the world leading cause of mortality, responsible for almost one third of all deaths (Hemler & Hu, 2019). A recent study released by the Lancet, a leading journal in medical research, declares that in 2022 more than 1 billion people were obese (World Health Organization, 2024). Indeed, it is not surprising to note that obesity has been defined as an ongoing pandemic. Numerous studies have highlighted the correlation between the consumption of animal-based foods, especially red meats and processed meats (which are particularly rich in saturated fats, cholesterol, heme iron, sodium) and a high risk for cardiovascular health and obesity. On the other hand, plant-based diets, especially when rich in high quality plant foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts, have been associated with a lower risk in cardiovascular negative outcomes and the insurgence of chronic diseases such as T2D (Satija & Hu, 2018; Hemler & Hu, 2019). However, even if the scientific community has unanimously declared that moving away from animal-based diets and embracing vegan diets is an effective way to alleviate health burdens, governments and international organization still bashfully address the matter of dietary choices.

In the 2023 Information brief titled "Red and processed meat in the context of health and the environment: many shades of red and green", published by the World Health Organization, it is specified that red meats are classified as Group 2A carcinogen, which means that they are probably carcinogenic to humans, and processed meat as Group 1 carcinogen, meaning that they are certainly carcinogenic to human, especially if consumed in high amounts and when not part of a balanced diet alongside minimally processed plat-based foods (World Health Organization, 2023). Along with the direct hazards linked to the consumption of animal foods, the WHO Information brief makes also reference to another relevant issue, namely, the antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

In CAFOs, antibiotics are fed to animals to prevent, control, or treat infectious diseases. Thus, not only these treatments are given to treat infections, but also as a preventive way to be able to raise animals in such a horrific way that they need antibiotics to stay alive until they are sent to slaughter. Even worse, antimicrobials are given to healthy animals to promote

growth, increasing the weight gained per unit of feed consumed (Mellon et al., 2001). Antimicrobial resistance occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites, because of the abuse and abuse, no longer respond to antimicrobial agents which become ineffective, increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. The transmission of bacteria resistant to antibiotics may occur through cross-species contamination and through food and shared environmental sources such as contaminated water or crops grown with contaminated manure (World Health Organization, 2023). It is estimated that by 2050 antimicrobial resistant infections will be the leading cause of death worldwide (O'Neill, 2016).

Despite these issues linked to the consumption of animal flesh, the brief opens with a section which praises red meat as being a food "rich in vitamins and minerals which are highly bioavailable", "an important source of B vitamins such as vitamin B_{12}", adding that "Low consumption of vitamin B_{12} can lead to increased homocysteine, which is a risk factor for CVD" and that "100 g of lean beef would provide 79% of the daily recommendation of this vitamin" (World Health Organization, 2023, 5). Finally, the Information brief concludes stating that:

> Protein is an essential macronutrient facilitating the growth and repair of cells and development of hormones and enzymes. The role of protein in a healthy and sustainable diet is determined by quality of protein (that is, containing adequate amounts of amino acids to meet daily requirements per portion size) as well as quantity. Red meat (as well as meat generally) is a high-quality source of protein, containing all of the EAAs.
>
> (World Health Organization, 2023, 6)

Vitamin B_{12} is essential for human health. Compared to other B vitamins, B_{12} is not synthetized by animals, fungi, or plants. It is exclusively produced by microbes (mainly anaerobes) or archaebacteria. Even though the human intestinal flora can synthetize vitamin B_{12}, we are not able to absorb it since synthetization, which happen in the colon, is too distant from the location of absorption, namely, the small intestine (Gille & Schmid, 2015). For this reason, this vitamin must be introduced either through food or integration. The absence of the vitamin B_{12} in plant foods is often claimed as a demonstration of the fact that a vegan diet is not "natural" for human beings, who necessarily have to integrate it through supplements. In fact, if we lived in the so called "natural state" we would eat plant foods and drink water contaminated with soil, thus with the microorganism responsible of the B_{12} synthetization. Today, for clear hygienic and security reasons, this does not happen because

food is carefully washed before consumption. Likewise, in "natural" conditions, animals would get vitamin B_{12} through grazing and drinking contaminated waters. In particular, monogastric farmed animals like pigs and birds would acquire vitamin B_{12} directly from food contaminated by soil in which these bacteria are found, while for polygastric animals, such as ruminants, B_{12} is synthetized by the bacteria which are already present in their stomach, provided that they are supplied with an adequate quantity of cobalt, a metallic element found in the soil (Gille & Schmid, 2015). Indeed, for ruminant cobalt is essential for the microbial synthesis of vitamin B_{12} (González-Montaña et al., 2020).

Even if animal foods are always referred to as the only source of vitamin B_{12}, there are several factors that alter the concentration of B_{12} in their flesh, including the way they are raised and fed in factory farms (Gille & Schmid, 2015). The confinement in CAFOs prevent animals to get in contact with the soil and autonomously ingest vitamin B_{12}, which is thus supplemented in their feed (Stangl et al., 2000; Gille & Schmid, 2015). Supplementing vitamin B_{12} is necessary also for ruminants because in the soil, the concentration of minerals is one or two orders of magnitude higher than in the forage or concentrated feed which is given to them. (González-Montaña et al., 2020). "This use of B_{12} supplementation may be justified under certain conditions in which stress, disease or parasites decrease the food intake, deteriorate ruminal function and/or reduce intestinal absorption" (González-Montaña et al., 2020). In CAFOs these "conditions" represent the normality.

It is thus clear that there are several and intertwined reasons behind the necessity of going beyond factory farming. The enclosed structures, the prolonged confinement, the overcrowding, and the extremely poor care nonhumans receive do not allow to meet even the minimal standards of wellbeing. Furthermore, intensive farming represents one of the main contributors to environmental degradation due to the huge discharge of animal wastes, the consumption of resources, the loss of habitats and the liked biodiversity loss, and the release of pollutants in in waters and greenhouse gases in the air. Finally, the rise in the consumption of animal products has been associated with the insurgence of health issues such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity. For these reasons, CAFOs and all the risks and consequences linked to it not only harm animals as direct victims of this exploitative system, but also indirectly undermine human health and a good environmental state.

1.3 One Health limitations in the face of human exceptionalism and animal exploitation

The One Health Initiative calls for a unified and holistic approach to health and wellbeing, highlighting the need for a cross-sectoral, multilevel, and cross-species vision. It claims to promote an interspecies sharing of concerns and interest, to overcome the gap between commonly distant human populations and to demise species barriers (Craddock & Hinchliffe, 2015). Yet, even though the declared efforts of the One Health Initiative are "dedicated to improving the lives of all species – human and animal – through the integration of human medicine, veterinary medicine, and environmental science" (One Health Initiative, 2022), the actual interests are still confined in anthropogenic objectives and practices. In particular, the One Health mission statement falls short to protect the health interests of nonhumans as it renounced to express an explicit dissent against their massive exploitation which systemically characterize CAFOs. Any ethical reasoning concerning the health and the life of these individuals has been kept out of the debate. As Maneesha Deckha argues:

> the OHI has demurred from taking a public position against globally pervasive animal-use industries that pose continuing harm to humans, animals, and the environment. Specifically, the OHI has remained silent regarding the ethics surrounding one such prominent anthropogenic use of animals: the consumption of animals for their flesh, milk, or eggs.
>
> (Deckha, 2023, 157)

If the mission of One Health is to defend the health and wellbeing of all species, how can this initiative be so reluctant is recognizing the impossibility to conciliate its health objectives with the existence of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations? The declared integrated vision and objectives of One Health should not remain indifferent in the face of a system that rely on the instrumentalization, objectification, abuse, and death of the very individuals whose health it is supposed to protect.

Constructing a narrative of 'oneness', while remaining limited to a human-centered vision leads to clear inconsistencies. As Benjamin Capps declared, "humans as persons may be "vaccinated" to a disease […], but in the same instance, animals as nonpersons are "culled" to protect public health or economies" (Capps, 2022). Trapped within an economic system driven by the desperate longing for profit, nonhuman animal life is completely emptied of

any significance and what remains is a mere disposable body which destiny is to be enclosed, fattened, filled with drugs to sustain a miserable life, and eventually eliminated if unable the bear disease. In this regard, Maneesha Deckha (2023, 165) has accurately pointed out that "it is the status quo of industrializing animals for humans or corporate purposes that is a symptom of a greater disease of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism that OHI is attempting to combat". CAFOs are the most representative examples of the anthropogenic and capitalist vision we have about nonhumans. We have declared ourselves as the sole legitimate organizers of the life or death of other creatures that exactly like us have their interest and right to live and this commitment of domination for our own interests stands at the basis of the profound asymmetry of power that characterizes the human-nonhuman relationship (Clarke et al., 2022).

These inconsistencies and asymmetries are so rooted in our discourses and practices that they have been socially naturalized and rationalized. Since nature is considered by humans as their unlimited source of resources and services, animals, the products of nature, are classified and categorized, according to our interests and needs, as companion animals, working animals, entertaining animals or edible animals. This consideration, classification, and categorization always happen through the lens of human wellbeing: the efforts to connect human and veterinary medical schools, to assess, treat and prevent cross-species disease transmission and to mitigate the degradation of spaces, result to be directed towards the aim of avoiding hazards that eventually affects humanity. Animal and environmental health are therefore in themselves goals that we want to achieve to simply ensure the stability and safety for our species. Nonhuman animals are just kept outside this safe space as the right to health seems to belong only to the human species.

The human right to health is nowadays claimed by the international law and arise from the International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This treaty, adopted on the 16 December 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly (Sellars et al., 2021) recognizes in the Article 12 "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" (United Nations, 1966). The ICESCR states that this right, as many other human rights, is founded on our condition of shared humanity (Sellars et al., 2021). In other words, this recognition derives "from the inherent dignity of the human person" (United Nations, 1966). These words suggest that all and only humans deserve legal rights and that we merit these rights by virtue of our species membership. On the one hand, recognizing the idea that everyone has the same right to

health is undeniably fundamental and progressive. On the other, the assumption that species membership dictates the right of health is not remotely progressive as it erases more than 99% of the living beings on earth (Sellars et al., 2021). Moreover, this limited vision does not recognize the connection between human and nonhuman health, and the existence of nonhuman rights.

This work argues the need for a further expansion of the One Health Initiative. A truly inclusive approach to wellbeing should align with an anti-speciesist consideration of life. Speciesism, along with other forms of unjustified discriminations such as racism, sexism, ableism, classism and homophobia, refers to the fact of attributing a lower inherent moral status to the members of a certain species. The nonhuman animal oppression which arises from speciesism is the consequence of the rooted belief that humans are intrinsically more valuable than any other individual of any another species. This 'human exceptionalism' places our species at the center of all meaning, defining everything and everyone in relation to us and our needs. Humans have been placed as the "normative measure against which others are judged deficient, deviant, lacking […]" (Gruen, 2012, 213). At the same time, nonhuman animals are assigned with moral worth on the basis of their species membership. Some are valued and loved, other are exploited and slaughtered so that their bodies can provide us food. Yet other are considered as experimental subjects, sources of entertainment or industrial equipment (Caviola et al., 2018). Speciesism morally justifies a differential treatment of species, even though they are considered to have comparable mental and emotional capacities, such as pigs and dogs (Caviola et al., 2018).

According to different cultures and histories, the manifestation of speciesism can change our perception of the nonhuman life. In other words, speciesism manifests itself in all cultures but is expressed differently across the world. Even though dog and cat meat markets are in the decline (and will be illegal from 2027), the confinement, trade and slaughter of these animals was considered a steady practice in South Korea until a few decades ago. Meanwhile, the mere thought of consuming dog or cat flesh raises feelings of outrage and anger on people from Western countries. However, the same treatment, but performed on nonhuman animals that our cultural traditions have labelled as food, does not trigger those kinds of emotions on most people. Melanie Joy explains that the only reason behind this is our perception and that the reason for "such a powerful response to a shift in perception is because our perceptions determine, in large part, our reality" (Joy, 2010, 13). As a

consequence, in our reality (and for most people) it is outrageous to harm and kill a dog, but it is perfectly normal to exploit and slaughter a pig. Not because they are different, but simply because our perception of them is different, and consequently, out perception of their flesh is different.

Factory farms, slaughterhouses, circuses, zoos, laboratories and more remind us that speciesism is not simply a human prejudice or ideology. It is an established set of structures, a system of interspecies injustices rooted in a complex of material institutions that consistently and with impunity sacrifice the lives of nonhuman animals (Weitzenfeld & Joy, 2014). It is a cultural construction reinforced by discourses, narratives, stories, and a vocabulary that repeatedly devalue the life of nonhuman animals.

Anti-speciesism is one of the pillars on which the Critical Animal Studies (CAS) are based. From a Critical Animal Studies perspective, as mentioned before, speciesism must be understood as a complex of institutions, discourses, and affects that structure human existence on a distorted reality. The most common occurrences of speciesism are the exploitation, the objectification, and the consumption of nonhuman animals as food (Weitzenfeld & Joy, 2014). This movement, even before being a field of academic research, argues for an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary intersectional approach for a total liberation, encouraging specialized departments, degrees, and programs. The group that encouraged the investigation was the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs (CALA), founded in 2001 by Anthony J. Nocella II and Steve Best, and renamed Institute for Critical Animal Studies in 2006. CAS developed to challenge two specific academic fields, namely the Animal Studies (AS), rooted in the vivisection and the animal testing of the hard sciences and the Human Animal Studies (HAS), which perpetuate the socially constituted dichotomy between human and animals, leading scholars to see animals as objects without agency, only valuable for theoretical investigation (Nocella II et al., 2014). These fields do not align with CAS perspective because they abstain from fighting against oppression, exploitation or for the liberation of nonhuman animals. On the contrary, what characterizes CAS, as noted by Claire Jean Kim, "is that it is fiercely, unapologetically political. Critical animal studies scholars aim to end animal exploitation and suffering and have little patience for work that just happens to be about animals" (Kim, 2013, 461). Furthermore, CAS struggles for the liberation of all the oppressed groups, both nonhumans and human. It can thus be defined as an "anti-oppression movement" (Nocella II et al., 2014, xxvii).

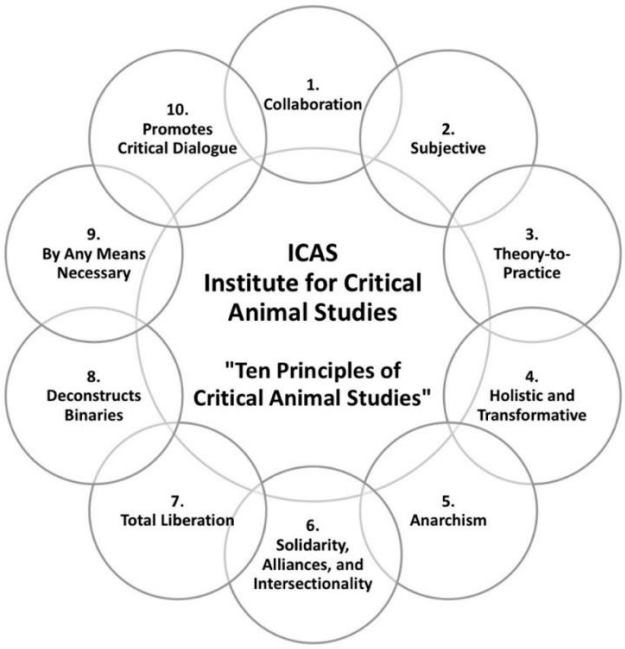

Figure 1.4: "The Ten Principles of Critical Animal Studies" (Best et al., 2007; Image source: www.criticalanimalstudies.org)

Steven Best, Anthony J. Nocella II, Richard Kahn, Carol Gigliotti, and Lisa Kemmerer proposed in 2007 "The Ten Principles of Critical Animal Studies" which claim that this field of research: 1) Pursue interdisciplinary collaborative writing and research in a rich and comprehensive manner […]; 2) Rejects pseudo-objective academic analysis by explicitly clarifying its normative values and political commitments […]; 3) Eschews narrow academic viewpoints and the debilitating theory-for-theory's sake position in order to link theory to practice, analysis to politics, and the academy to the community; 4) Advances a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions […]; 5) Rejects apolitical, conservative, and liberal positions in order to advance an anti-capitalist, and, more generally, a radical anti-hierarchical politics. […]; 6) Rejects reformist, single-issue, nation-based, legislative, strictly animal interest politics in favor of alliance politics and solidarity with other struggles against oppression and hierarchy; 7) Champions a politics of total liberation which grasps the need for, and the inseparability of, human, nonhuman animal, and Earth liberation and freedom for all in one comprehensive, though diverse, struggle; […]; 8) Deconstructs and reconstructs the socially constructed binary oppositions between human and nonhuman animals, […]; 9) Openly supports and examines controversial radical politics and strategies used in all kinds of social justice movements […]; 10) Seeks to create openings for constructive critical

dialogue on issues relevant to Critical Animal Studies across a wide range of academic groups; […] (Best et al., 2007).

The practical objectives declared by this intersectional, holistic, and transformative movement must be achieved through a process of total deconstruction of the traditional concepts of Man, Animal and Nature, and of the well-established dichotomies and hierarchies of Man-Nature, Man-Animal and Culture-Nature.

Part of the process of deconstruction questions the language we use to describe ourselves and the world that surrounds us. Indeed, the use of the word 'nature' or 'animal' always evokes in people's minds a clear separation from 'humanity' that perpetuates the erroneous understanding of ourselves as independent and autonomous rather than recognizing our inherent dependence from any other member of our ecosystems. The questioning of the words we use also concerns the medical linguistic repertoire.

To give an example that is paramount for this thesis, a 'zoonosis' is defined as a disease or infection naturally transmissible from nonhuman animals to humans. This definition inherently instills a perception of blame on nonhuman animals, claiming them to be the causes of a disease, and thus categorizing them as killable (Braverman, 2023). As Bjørn Ralf Kristensen points out:

> The term zoonotic, which refers to a disease transmitted from animals to humans, masks the relational elements at the core of this pandemic by centering instead on the physical viral properties of the disease. This is problematic because this is not truly a disease caused by animals, but rather it is rooted in the deeply fraught relationship that humans have with the more-than-human world, and indeed with those at the periphery of our own species.
>
> (Kristensen, 2020)

The term in its actual use fails to properly account for the exploitative relationship that human have established with nonhuman animals. The human species is framed as the victim of virulent beings, fostering a vision of nonhumans as something to be kept away from us. However, in most cases, diseases do not jump from animals to humans as a result of a simple and fortuitous contact. Transmission involves a repeated crossing that transcends mere meeting. Indeed, the reasons behind the development of pathogens and the following contagion are most of the time inherent in the relational configurations between humans and

nonhumans. The oppressive practices that characterize every aspect of the Animal-Industrial Complex stand as the basis of the increase in zoonoses that has been observed.

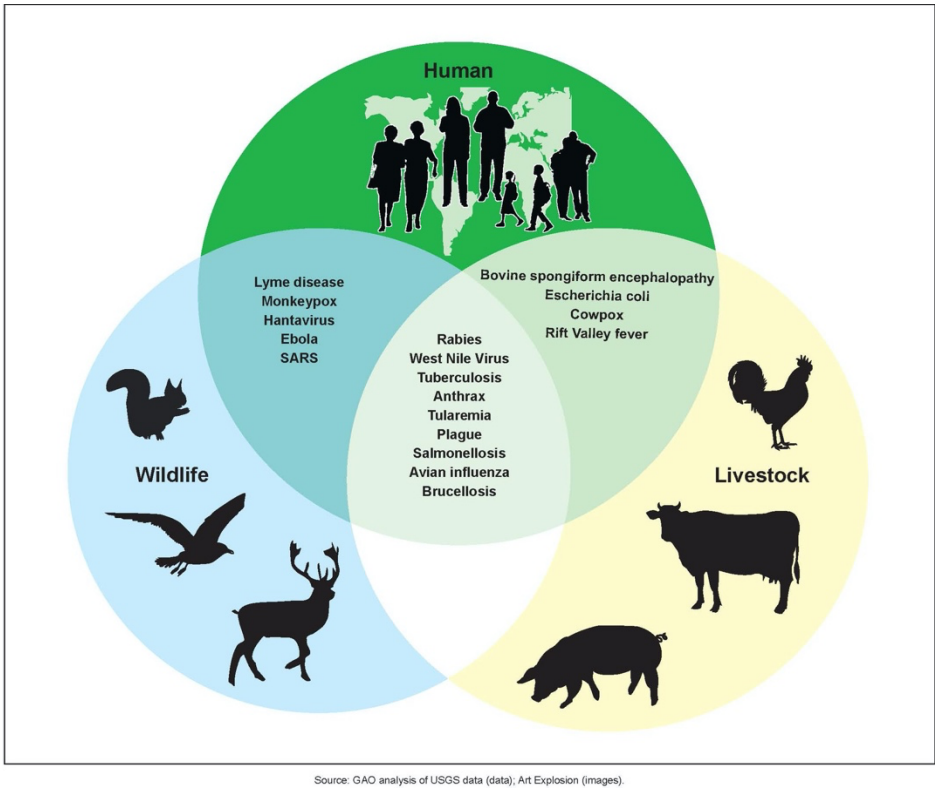

Figure 1.5: Representation of the concept of zoonosis, examples of zoonotic diseases and their affected populations; from the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2011)

In the report "Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic Diseases and How to Break the Chain of Transmission", provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), seven drivers of zoonosis are listed. All of them are anthropogenic and linked to the A-IC (Clarke et al. 2022):

1. Increasing demand for animal protein
2. Unsustainable agricultural intensification
3. Increased use and exploitation of wildlife
4. Unsustainable utilization of natural resources accelerated by urbanization, land use change, and extractive industries
5. Travel and transportation (humans and other animals)
6. Changes in food supply chain
7. Climate change

These drivers underline the necessity of rethinking our relationship with animals. Given the evidence that link the emergence of zoonotic diseases with the way we treat and manage nonhuman life, it clear that the corporate governance behind the scenes do not operate out of scientific ignorance, but taking "calculated risks" (Clarke et al., 2022). In other words, they continue to pursue a strategy of profit maximization over the life of nonhuman animals because their welfare is necessarily secondary to the profit that their body will return and because the economic benefits of their exploitation always outweigh the costs of a potential general culling. Despite a huge number of nonhuman animals die even before reaching the slaughterhouses, this does not represent a malfunctioning of the system, but just a factor that is intrinsic the whole cost of production.

On the contrary, our response to zoonosis, and in general to disease, must stem from the idea that human health depends on the health of nonhumans, the health of ecosystems, and viceversa, that is the very assumption at the basis of the OHI. Zoonoses remind us that we are animals, we are connected to nonhuman animals way more than we think, we share most of our genetic background with them.

Only by recognizing the beneficial entanglement of each and every species, we would be less encouraged to provoke harm on them. A multispecies vision of care can provide an alternative to the anthropogenic approach that led our planet to the current state of crisis. According to this vision, the equal consideration and inclusion of all species, minorities and those who have been subjected to any form of oppression, is a fundamental prerogative. When nonhuman animals are denied individuality and conceived as disposable bodies, it is not possible to regard them as multispecies partners (Deckha, 2023). An initiative whose focus is to protect all declinations of health for all species needs to move away from all anthropogenic, oppressive, and exploitative practices. As long as nonhuman animals will be considered as commodities to be consumed rather than individuals entitled with their own rights, the mission of One Health will remain elusive.

Melany Joy wrote that "The most effective way to distort reality is to deny it; […] And the most effective way to deny a reality is to make it invisible" (Joy, 2010, 40). The concealment and the creation of distance are the main reason of our distorted perception and our exploitative relationship with nonhuman animals. Factory farms are not simply a way to segregate nonhuman animals but are primarily a way to organize and manage the

spaces, the time, the movement, and the relation between nonhuman individuals (Piazzesi, 2015).

The distance referred to by Pachirat in *Every Twelve Seconds*, that physical and emotional distance that "we create through walls, screens, catwalks, fences, security checkpoints, and geographic zones of isolation and confinement" (Pachirat, 2022, 9) has been designed to separate nonhuman animals from our sight, but surely is not able to prevent the entry or the exit of microorganisms such viruses and bacteria. As we have learned from the 2020 pandemic, pathogens can easily and quickly reach every corner of our planet.

In the following chapter a case study will be presented and analyzed adhering to a Critical Animal Studies approach. The case study in question demonstrates how the current vision and practices to protect and promote nonhuman animal health are nowhere near the stated intention of the OHI, especially if we have to confront with the spread of a disease which undermine human interests. The wave of African swine fever that spread in Italy during summer 2023 will be illustrated and the responses and consequences will be investigated. After an overview of the disease, this chapter will critically read the events, present how the outbreak has been managed, how the media have reported the news and some considerations will be drawn. This analysis will try to argue the problematics of an exclusively human consideration of the phenomenon, also investigating the networks of cultural, economic and political relations.

Chapter 2

Intensive animal farming, infectious diseases, and the Italian wave of African swine fever

2.1 Infectious diseases and intensive farming

From the early XXth Century infectious diseases started to be effectively handled thanks to advances in modern microbiology, immunology, and the discovery of antibiotics. At the same time, large-scale epidemics started to involve primarily livestock because of the great expansion of industrialized farming after the Second World War (Kim & Chun, 2023). Indeed, one of the main epidemiological risk factors for disease spread was represented by the farming system.

Even though the confinement and the intensification of animal husbandry may have reduced the risk of first contamination between wild and farmed animals, the so-called entry risk, this system of production has undoubtedly worsened the consequences of contagion within the farms, namely the exposure risk (Espinosa et al., 2020). With factory farming, animals, diseases, and their movements may have become easier to monitor, but outbreaks are now undoubtedly more severe and difficult to control. Farms, particularly those which confine animals of similar genotype at an intensive level, are ideal places for contagion and disease spread. These facilities represent the perfect breeding ground for pathogens because they are characterized by the combination of overcrowding, extremely poor hygiene conditions, and low animal immunity that allow diseases to rapidly infect confined individuals. Infection is also boosted by the frenetic intensity of production which

characterize CAFOs. Moreover, genetic similarity and high density facilitate the evolution and mutation of pathogens, increasing the risk of developing zoonotic viruses (Espinosa et al., 2020). These circumstances are particularly alarming if we consider that factory farms have become the standard model of production, and that nowadays most of the meat and animal products come from large-scale operations.

REGIONE	NUMERO ALLEVAMENTI	DI CUI CON SOLO CINGHIALI	DI CUI CON MAIALI E CINGHIALI	NUMERO CAPI	DI CUI CINGHIALI	DI CUI MAIALI	DI CUI GRASSI	DI CUI MAGRONI	DI CUI MAGRONCELLI	DI CUI LATTONZOLI	DI CUI SCROFE	DI CUI SCROFETTE	DI CUI VERRI
ABRUZZO	635	1	9	52.939	62	52.877	11.282	8.539	13.259	13.709	5.146	777	16
BASILICATA	229	1	1	62.691	0	62.691	12.214	17.959	10.866	15.308	4.045	2.149	13
BOLZANO	239	0	1	2.192	0	2.192	214	160	271	446	335	697	6
CALABRIA	429	1	4	46.914	37	46.877	13.843	15.447	4.739	8.493	3.710	365	27
CAMPANIA	530	3	1	72.711	31	72.680	19.142	16.176	9.241	22.221	4.912	813	17
EMILIA ROMAGNA	968	8	3	981.457	191	981.266	305.533	210.979	160.514	239.397	48.908	14.768	48
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA	529	3	2	241.371	39	241.332	78.855	34.468	38.827	66.367	17.328	5.361	12
LAZIO	656	8	9	41.071	508	40.563	15.477	7.749	4.746	9.069	2.778	357	36
LIGURIA	31	0	1	193	0	193	63	13	13	30	36	22	1
LOMBARDIA	2.407	5	1	3.943.630	93	3.943.537	1.156.900	932.005	743.173	845.841	217.073	46.676	1.86
MARCHE	595	6	8	103.787	123	103.664	24.453	20.547	11.775	40.286	4.331	2.125	14
MOLISE	171	0	0	19.804	0	19.804	3.777	5.101	9.338	1.279	231	22	5
PIEMONTE	1.174	19	0	1.286.538	167	1.286.371	426.361	299.601	209.433	284.765	55.080	10.724	40
PUGLIA	473	0	6	38.394	71	38.323	6.655	6.784	2.717	10.288	1.322	253	26
SARDEGNA	11.240	5	28	161.049	473	160.576	2.325	38.150	14.107	31.113	59.822	3.734	11.32
SICILIA	1.476	1	11	59.895	153	59.742	6.956	22.761	9.180	12.179	6.612	846	97
TOSCANA	848	14	14	122.346	385	121.961	37.872	31.952	13.633	27.734	7.470	2.849	45
TRENTO	60	0	1	5.869	0	5.869	2.420	861	322	1.911	249	99	
UMBRIA	602	2	0	170.288	0	170.270	52.740	44.245	18.885	49.230	10.701	2.233	21
Totali	**25.249**	**84**	**112**	**8.131.569**	**2.508**	**8.129.061**	**2.363.624**	**1.825.909**	**1.354.712**	**1.948.686**	**496.482**	**108.666**	**17.9**

Figure 2.1: Data of the Italian pig farming sector from the Banca Dati Nazionale (Anagrafe Nazionale Zootenica)

Figure 2.2: Pigs farms and number of pigs as percentages of the total Italian pig population, from the Banca Dati Nazionale (Anagrafe Nazionale Zootecnica)

In Italy there are 25,249 pig farms (95,885 if we consider smaller family-run farms) according to the Banca Dati Nazionale (BDN). The Italian Ministry of Health specifies that family-run farms can have up to four animals, cannot move animals to other farms, and raise animals without commercial purposes, but only for self-consumption. The statistics concerning the Italian animal husbandry assets show that the largest number of facilities are concentrated in the Campania region, but the majority of animals are involved in the intensive type of production, which is mainly practiced in the Lombardy region, followed by Piemonte, Emilia Romagna and Veneto region. In the Lombardy region live almost 4 million pigs (48,5% of the total number of pigs), who are confined in 2,407 farms (Anagrafe Nazionale Zootecnica).

The Italian pig meat sector, in line with the European system, is formed by different supply chains, covering several processes. The various processes are performed either by separate organization, or by integrated realities. Figure 2.3 summarizes the network of stakeholders and supply chains.

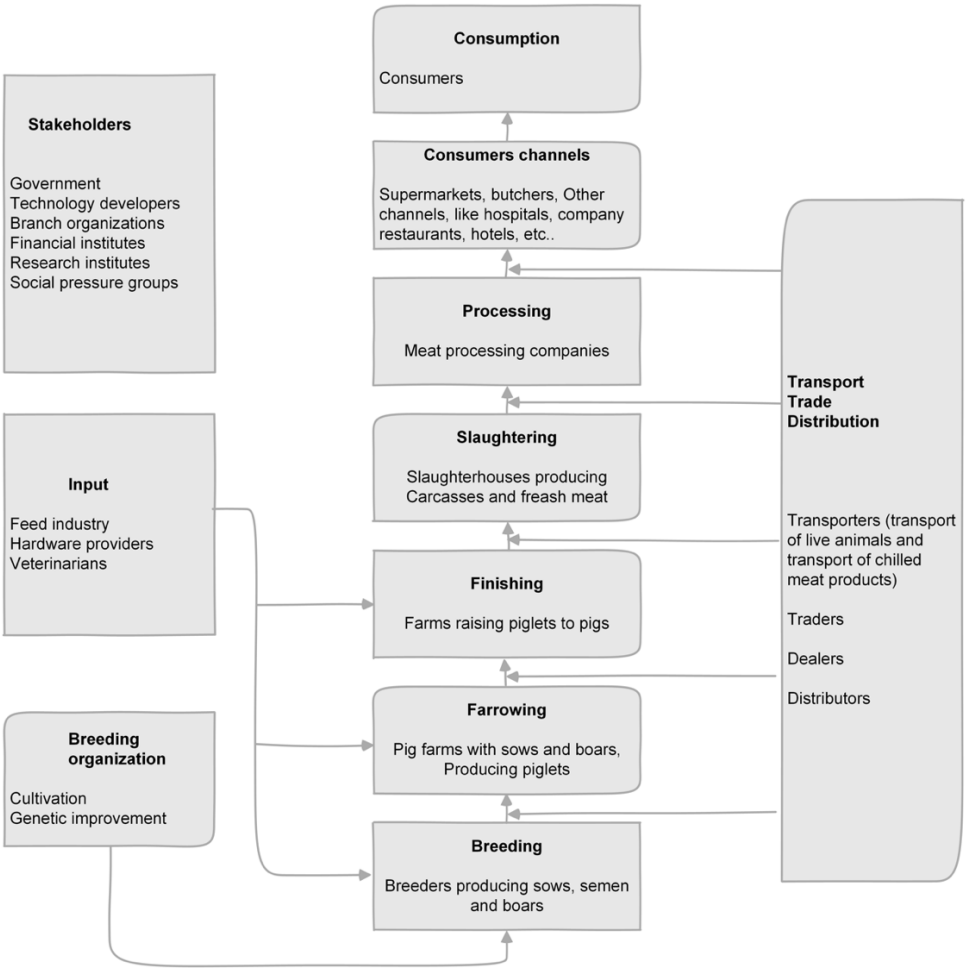

Figure 2.3: Pig meat production chain (modified from Trienekens et al., 2009, 3)

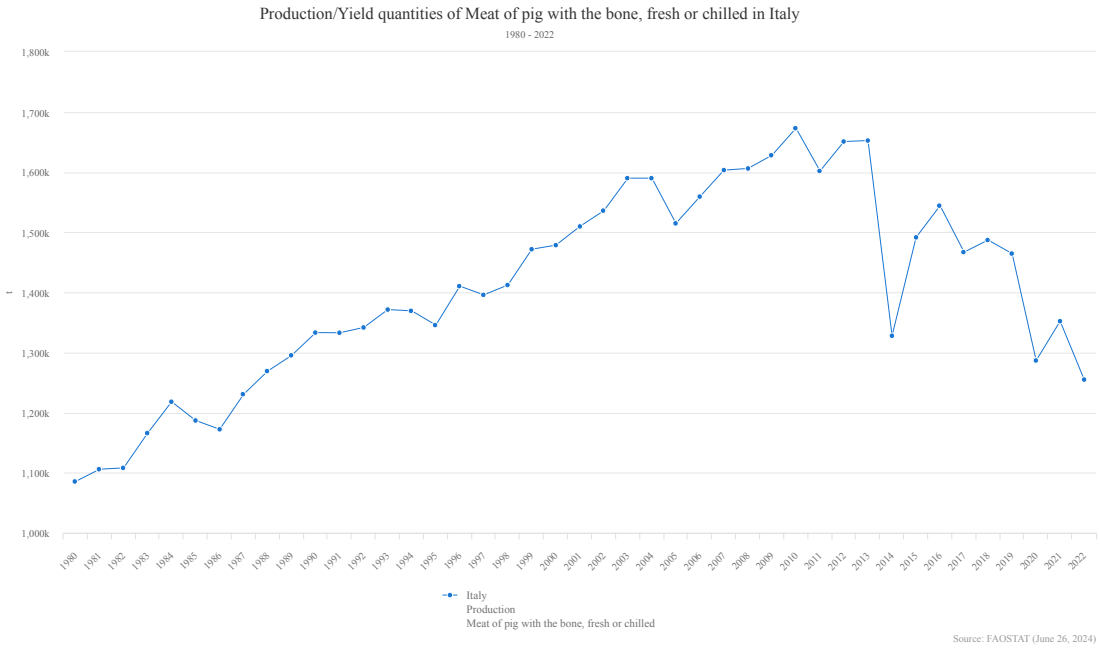

Figure 2.4: Trend of pig meat production in Italy. In 2022, Italian farms produced around 1,254,950 tons of pig meat (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAOSTAT)

2.2 The African swine fever: transmission, spread, and control measures

The African swine fever is a severe hemorrhagic viral disease that affects domestic pigs and wild boars. ASF was reported in the early 1900s in the sub-Saharan Africa, where it is still endemic. Precisely it has been notified in Kenya, in 1921 (Pavone et al., 2023). The source of infection was a virus[1] that spread from an ancient sylvatic cycle in which African wild suids, like warthogs, and argasid ticks represent the natural hosts (Dixon et al., 2020).

Out of the African continent, the ASF spread first to Portugal in 1957 and 1960 and from there to other European countries: Spain, France, Malta, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands. In 1978 a new wave of ASF occurred in Sardinia. It was then reported in Russia, in 1977, and in the late 1970s in Brazil, Cuba, and the Caribbean Islands (Pavone et al., 2023). In 2007 Georgia and the Caucasus region faced a new transmission wave, and the virus subsequently

[1] The etiological agent of the disease is the African swine fever virus (ASFV), a large double-stranded DNA virus, belonging to the *Asfarviridae* family, that mostly infect myeloid cells such as monocytes, macrophages, and the dendritic cells (Rolesu et al., 2021). The multilayered virion shape is icosahedral (20 faces) and reaches between 260 to 300 nm in size (Juszkiewicz et al., 2023).

reached the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Belarus. In 2014 ASFV spread to the EU Baltic States and Poland (Dixon et al., 2020). In 2017 the virus reached Czech Republic and Romania and in 2018 it reached Belgium and Hungary. Serbia and Slovakia were hit by ASF in 2019, while Germany and Greece were reached by the virus in 2020. Lastly, ASF, initially involving only wild boars, spread to Italy in 2022 (Pavone et al. 2023). Due to its facility of spread and its epidemic proportions, ASF is listed among the infectious diseases of primary importance and subject to mandatory notification.

On January 7th, 2022, a wild boar carcass, infected with African swine fever (ASF) has been found in continental Italy, in the municipality of Ovada, in the Piemonte region. After few days, new positive carcasses have been detected in the neighboring areas and in the provinces of Genoa and Savona, in the Liguria region. On May 5th, 2022, the virus at the origin of the disease was also found in a wild boar in Latium, in the northern area of the city of Rome, and later, at a short distance, on June 9th the disease reached a semi-wild type of pig farm (Ministero della Salute). Since May 2023, new cases of ASF in wild boar carcasses have been notified in the provinces of Reggio Calabria (Calabria region) and Salerno (Campania region). In the Calabria region, the wave of ASF involved six domestic pig farms (Ministero della Salute). Until the detection in the Piemonte region, the African swine fever virus (ASFV) had only been present in Sardinia, since 1978.

Despite the immediate application of control measures provided by the European and national regulations, the disease spread through almost the entire Italian territory, due to the movement of wild animals, but also through the mobility of people and vehicles. In particular, the most highly affected territory resulted to be the province of Pavia (Lombardy region) and the province of Piacenza (Emilia Romagna region). Even though ASF cases predominantly hit wild boars, in August 2023 the disease was notified in a pig farm in the Pavia province and within a few weeks the virus reached other nine farms (Ministero della Salute).

As other European countries, the Italian control policy was in line with EU regulations for notifiable animal diseases, in particular Regulation EU 2020/687, concerning the prevention and control of animal diseases transmissible to other animals or to humans, and EU Regulation 2023/835 which establishes special measures of control for the African swine fever.

ASF is highly contagious and lethal, with a morbidity which is close to 100%. The clinical signs of ASF are variable and not always easy to recognize. Most common symptoms are

high fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, difficulty in breathing, diarrhea, vomiting, red or blue lesions on the skin, particularly around the ears and the snout, hemorrhage, and abortion (Rolesu et al., 2021). Currently, no treatment nor vaccine are available to fight the disease. For this reason, strict sanitary and biosecurity measures are the only way to tackle the disease and prevent the spread of the virus (Blome et al., 2020).

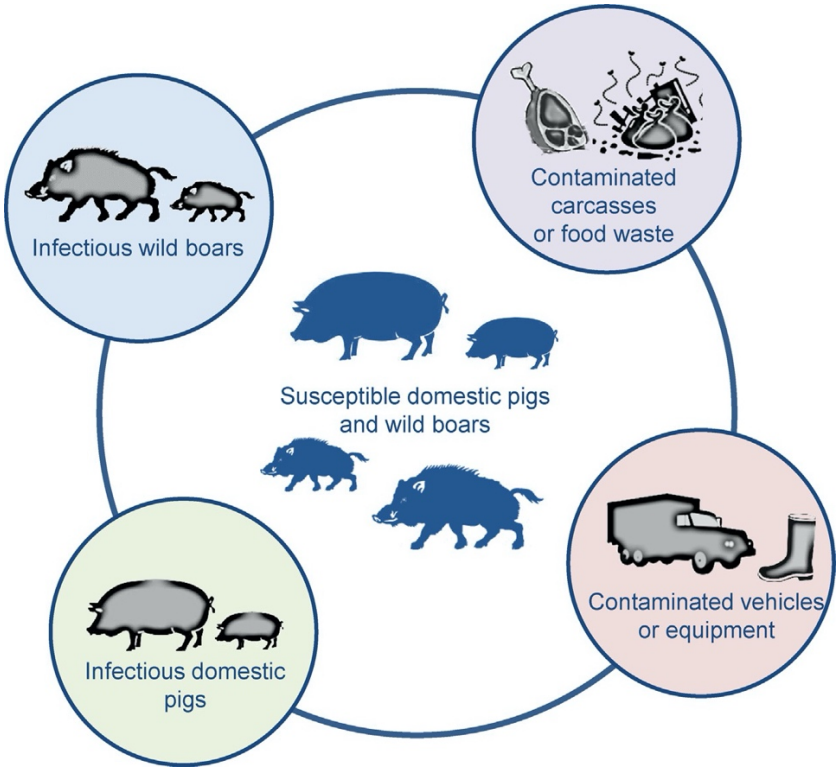

Figure 2.5: Potential routes of transmission of African swine fever virus in Europe. Soft ticks have not shown involvement in transmission in the European countries, in Russia and in the Trans-Caucasus region (Sánchez-Cordón et al., 2018)

The virus can infect domestic pigs, wild boars or other feral swine, and inanimate fomites such as carcasses. It can be found in contaminated habitats, tools, or other mechanical vectors, and in competent anthropod vectors, such as soft ticks (Blome et al, 2020). Once introduced in the domestic pig populations, ASFV can be transmitted by direct contact between animals, or by indirect contact, through contaminated objects of feed (Blome et al., 2020). Humans contribute to the spread of the virus through contaminated clothes, footwear, or equipment. Moreover, the virus can survive in blood and meat products over long periods

of time, and this is a common way of introduction of the virus in disease-free territories (Juszkiewicz et al., 2023).

The practice of swill feeding[2] also played an important for the spread of the virus. In China pig blood, which is considered a good protein source, is commonly collected from slaughterhouses and meat processing plants, and used to feed pigs or other animals (Wen et al., 2019). This unconcerned use of porcine materials as protein source for pigs in farms has worked as a "fire accelerator" for the ASF epidemic (Blome et al., 2020).

The AFSV is very stable in the environment, especially if it is cool and moist. Protein rich environments favors its survival, thus in raw refrigerated pork products ASFV remains infectious for up to 15 weeks, up to six months. In liquid manure, a stability of 100 days was observed, while in liquid blood, the virus can survive for 18 months at room temperature, and up to six years at 4°C (Blome et al., 2020). The virus may resist at a wide range of pH values and temperatures, remaining infectious for several weeks in carcasses. It is inactivated only through cooking, at very acid and basic pH values, or by specific chemical compounds (Pavone et al., 2023). The complex structure, the genotypic diversity, and the ability of the virus to adapt make it complicated to develop a vaccine (Juszkiewicz et al., 2023). The high resistance of the virus, its ability to quickly spread between individuals, and the lack of an efficient treatment or vaccine, explain why it is so difficulty to eradicate the disease. As Dixon et al. (2020, 224) claimed:

> Basic principles of infectious disease transmission indicate that the higher the density of susceptible animals and of pig farms, and the higher the rate of indirect or direct contacts between pigs and farms, the faster an infectious disease will spread through a population. ASF is no exception in this respect. In the absence of effective vaccines, understanding the importance of different transmission mechanisms of ASFV within and between farms is critical.

Currently, the only effective measures to limit the spread of the ASFV are proper disinfection and a series of biosecurity practices and requirements. Indeed, because of the absence of an efficient vaccine, biosecurity measures are pivotal in preventing the spread of ASF. For this reason, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization

[2] Swill feeding means feeding animals with raw, cooked, or processed food waste from households, restaurants, slaughterhouses, or meat processing plants.

for Animal Health (formerly the Office International des Epizooties, OIE) produced draft manuals for farmers and for the public with the purpose of mitigating the spread of the disease. Some examples of these manuals are "Good practices for biosecurity in the pig sector" (FAO & OIE, 2010) and "Preparation of African Swine Fever contingency plans" (FAO, 2009) and they focus on how to develop control strategies and solutions, especially for traditional small-scale pig production (Blome et al., 2020).

The state of emergence that resulted from the dissemination of infectious diseases in the early 2000s represented the moment when biosecurity practices started to arise and be of common interest. The FAO defined biosecurity as "a strategic and integrated approach that encompasses the policy and regulatory frameworks (including instruments and activities) for analysing and managing relevant risks to human, animal and plant life and health, and associated risks to the environment" (FAO Biosecurity toolkit, 3). Biosecurity not only aims for "the implementation of measures that reduce the risk of the introduction and spread of disease agents", but also "requires the adoption of a set of attitudes and behaviors by people to reduce risk in all activities involving animals and their products" (FAO Animal Production and Health, 3). The objective of biosecurity is to prevent, control and manage hazards to the human, animal, and plant life and health. This goal should be achieved though control of the safety of the supply chain, ensuring the sustainability of agriculture, safeguarding terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, protecting biodiversity, and, most importantly, preventing and controlling zoonotic outbreaks (FAO Biosecurity toolkit).

The strategy control is regulated in the EU and in other countries outside Europe. In the EU Member States, according to the epidemiological situation and the risk level, the areas affected by ASF are classified as (Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale", COVEPI):

- Restricted Zone I: an area in which ASF has not been detected (thus without infection) but which is considered at risk because it is in continuity with recognized infected areas (a sort of buffer area to demarcate the other two types of restriction areas;
- Restriction Zone II: area where ASF has been found only in wild boar populations;
- Restriction Zone III: area where ASF has been found in both domestic pigs and wild boars, or even without the presence of infection in wild boars.

General measures to contrast the spread range from passive and active surveillance, epidemiological investigation, the control of animal movement, quarantine, wild boar hunting, to the killing of infected pigs. If some individuals in a farm are found to be ill, all pigs are slaughtered. Afterwards, animals must be incinerated, buried, or properly composed, according to the EU Regulation CE 1069/2009 (Juszkiewicz et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). Moreover, the confinement facilities and the equipment are subjected to a process of disinfection with biocides, virucidal solutions against ASFV, and dried for at least 40 days (Juszkiewicz et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021).

If the disease manages to reach a farm, specific biosecurity protocols must be strictly followed. The process consists of three steps: the segregation, through the creation of barriers and the control of what enters and what exits; the cleaning, that will remove most of the contaminated pathogen; and disinfection, the final polishing step intended to destroy the infectious agents of animal diseases (FAO, 2010, Good practices, 4). According to an Italian ministerial decree n.173 (Decreto 28 giugno 2022) the biosecurity measures consist of:

- Structural protective measures, such as barriers, housing rooms, parking lots, filter zones, loading facilities, washing and disinfection storage systems and facilities;
- Management measures, such as farm biosecurity plan, procedures for entering and leaving from the facilities, procedures for the use of equipment, conditions for risk-based movements, conditions for the introduction of animals, feed, etc., quarantine and isolation measures, procedures for washing and disinfection, pest and rodent control.

If biosecurity measures fail to prevent the spread of the ASFV, confined nonhuman animals easily and rapidly get infected due to the high proximity, the precarious health due to the intensive system, and the favorable environmental factors. In case one individual of the herd shows symptoms of the disease, culling represents a common practice in order to control ASF in domestic pig holdings (Nga et al., 2022).

2.3 Culling: dying for whom/what?

Animal culling is a public health policy used as population control measure for different reasons, from human safety, conservation, to disease control (Lederman et al., 2020). This

practice can involve both wild and farmed animals and it aims to restrict their movements and limit the interactions with other animals and/or with humans.

In the 18th Century, as the dynamics of transmission and spread of pathogens started to be understood, targeted killing of domestic animals became a common method to manage the spread of animal diseases (Miguel et al., 2020). This practice, which can be applied to wild, farm or urban animals, is still today widely employed. It is the case of the culling initiative undertaken by the UK government, from 2013 to 2017, which intended to control the bovine tuberculosis (bTB) through the killing of badgers (who do carry the bTB and can transfer it to cattle); or the case which involved Denmark, where 17 million minks have been killed at the end of 2020 because they were carrier of a COVID-19 variant which had already been transmitted to 12 people[3]; or even the case of the thousands of stray dogs who are killed every year in Mongolia and Indonesia to avoid rabies (Lederman et al., 2020). The objective of this practice, which has demonstrated dubious effectiveness in terms of containment and costs, is to reduce or erase the possibility of infectious contacts by decreasing the number and the density of infectious animals, or completely eliminating ill and susceptible ones (Miguel et al., 2020). Individuals that are either infected, that can possibly be infected, or that represent potential carrier of pathogens are culled to prevent further spread (Meijboom et al., 2009).

Culling is an eradication measure which inevitably limit the risk of disease spread as it eliminates potential hosts for the virus. For particularly persistent diseases, like in the case of ASF, this provision is offered as the only effective way to erase the virus and to safeguard the interests of farmers, of consumers, and of animals themselves (Degeling et al., 2016). In this regard, culling seems to be grounded on the 'harm principle', a concept introduced by John Stuart Mill and then developed by other authors (Meijboom et al., 2009). A broad interpretation of this principle claims that the only legitimate reason for limiting someone's individual liberty is to prevent non-consensual harm to some others. This formulation, even though it originally excluded the consideration of nonhuman interests, is appropriated as a moral justification by the actors involved in the zootechnical sector. The elimination of the risks through the killing of the potential hosts of ASFV has been justified to secure the health of other animals and humans (Kim & Chun, 2023). Culling is thus legitimized as it should

[3] This is a case of reverse zoonosis, a disease transmission which happens from humans to animals.

prevent further harm. However, the apparent triviality of this principle should not lead to hurried and simplicist conclusions.

This control policy implicitly involves a tradeoff between interests and values that inevitably favors the former rather than the latter (Degeling et al., 2016). Even if the stated justification for culling is to protect health and social interests of both humans and nonhumans, the anthropocentric and profit-oriented evaluation of governments, authorities and stakeholders is performed mainly on economic terms. Animals can live and deserve protection as long as they stay within the production system.

This policy, dictated by the need to prevent the spread of the infection and to protect the animals from the virus, conceals a basic contradiction. If on the one hand, the objective is to safeguard the health and the life of as much individuals as possible, on the other, it is important to remember that in factory farms no aspect of nonhuman life is safeguarded. Their safeness simply guarantees the functioning of a systems in which nonhuman animals are just replaceable units. The purpose is not to keep them safe to let them live, but to keep them free from diseases so that their bodies can still generate profit; the aim is to save a life to be able to exploit it. The sacrifice of those individuals which are considered as potentially infected, will enable the cycle of exploitation, production, and consumption to go on. A meticulous calculation over the life and death of nonhuman life. Thus, the culling of thousands of farmed animals, beyond being a violent operation of mass killing, is primarily a project justified by an economic evaluation of cost and benefit. The ultimate goal is to avoid externalities to stakeholders whose profit and livelihood are at risk. A risk which is always analyzed and confronted through the lenses of anthropocentrism and speciesism. Furthermore, neoliberal policies were the first in line to support the proliferation of intensive livestock producers (Kim & Chun, 2023), which, as we have already discussed, favored violent ASF outbreaks. This sick intensive system, which is depicted as the victim of an uncontrollable virus, is in reality a leading cause of the proliferation of the disease. A vicious circle where the proliferation of profitable and expendable bodies leads to the proliferation of the ASF virus.

African swine fever has always remained a latent risk, out of the spotlight and the mass sensationalism because it has not directly threatened human life, like the other zoonotic epidemics of AIDS, avian flu, or SARS, with the most recent experience of Covid-19. With ASF, it is not the "leap across the human-animal divide" (Shukin, 2009, 184) that is feared. ASF remains behind the biological species barrier between animals and humans. What is at

stake is the productive dimension of power, as the collapse of the entire economy of meat. It is particularly by observing the political response to this non zoonotic disease that the nonhuman is revealed to be mere capital from the eye of the human.

Bruce Braun (2013, 45) has defined biosecurity as "those knowledges, techniques, practices and institutions whose concern is to secure valued forms of life from biological risks". ASF forces man to create a distinction within the same species which separates the (economic) valuable forms of life from the expendable and hazardous ones, as well as *farmed* animals from wild and companion animals. Those who have luckily avoided any contact with the virus will continue to live until their bodies have grown enough to satisfy human standards and to fulfill the life that was preordained for them. Those who have contracted the virus or could be possibly infected, and endanger other individuals, become worthless and even perilous bodies to dispose.

Biosecurity is thus expresses as power over (nonhuman) life (Braun, 2013). It enters the biopolitical dimension through an economic calculation of benefits and costs. It mutates into a political and economic program of government of biological beings which purpose is to produce fully "governable bodies" (Braun, 2013, 45) which can be moved, multiplied, or eliminated on the basis of anthropocentric needs. Disease interventions become economic and political processes that engage media, institutions, medical technologies that want to preserve privileged forms of life (Ahuja, 2016). Biosecurity remains embedded in a continuous process of evaluation in which it has to assess whether certain lives are valuable or disposable, and thus decide whether to protect or destroy them. This process is not limited to solely to the nonhuman life, but it also involves our social classes. As Ahuja (2016, 196) writes:

> Austerity, inequality, unemployment, and chaotic biological and economic risk— the symptoms of systems conducting greater masses of bodies and species through the processes of slow death—signal the exhaustion of populations under the combined banners of free markets and security; the ever-narrowing securitized zone of human life regenerates against the backdrop of a collapse of environmental and social systems.

Returning on Braun's considerations (2013, 48), he further clarifies that:

> the problem of biosecurity is not just a problem of securing life (in the sense of protecting and preserving life), but rather a problem of securing life against the *proliferation* of life. The problem

> to which biosecurity responds is thus that *too much life* – reflected in representations of the biological world as unruly, prolific, mutable, fluid, and the accompanying fear that continuously incubating within life are threats *to* life. As such, life must be secured *against* life.

Following Bruce Braun, culling represents an example *pre-emptive power* as it pre-empts the possibility of further contagion, exercising total control over the life and death of nonhuman animals. This kind of control shows that biosecurity can enter the so-called thanatological dimension (Braun, 2013), especially when it comes to the nonhuman realm. Thanatopolitics (*thanato* means death in the Ancient Greek), recalling Agamben and Foucault's interpretation of biopolitics, can be defined as the political calculation of what life must be killed so that others may live longer (Troyer, 2021).

If on the one hand the biopolitical reasoning around the concepts of life and death were exclusively limited to the human sphere, on the other, biosecurity opens to a broader consideration of life, not the human life, but the biological one. This inclusion emerges from the growing evidence of the human-nonhuman biological entanglements, as the One Health perspective has highlighted.

One Health, as discussed in the first chapter, recognizes the biological bond between humans, animals and plants and commits to protect the health and promote the wellbeing of all species. However, the way in which infectious diseases like ASF are managed and vanquished raises doubts and concerns about the anthropocentrism of biosecurity and the elusiveness of One Health in this regard. Can we truly claim that killing thousands of lives represents the best strategy to protect human and more-than-human interests? While economic and social considerations on the consequences of this disease widely dominates the academia and the media, what has been neglected is a critical consideration on farms as the leading cause of zootechnical epidemic and an ethical consideration of a such violent pre-emptive measure and policy. Moreover, the recurring compensations and funding that farms receive continue to feed a vicious circle. In fact, if in the areas affected by ASF farmers continue to repopulate their structures, they contribute to the survival of the virus by providing to it new possible hosts.

The interest of the vast majority of the literature about infectious animal diseases concentrate in the dynamics of infection, and how to prevent infection within this scheme of production and consumption. What is repeatedly overlooked is the production and consumption system itself which is rarely questioned or criticized.

2.4 An interspecies vulnerability

ASF control and eradication is extremely challenging because it is the result of the interaction between different factors, such as sanitary, economic, environmental, political, sociological, and cultural conditions. Even though the virus has a limited range of hosts, namely the *Suidae* family, and it lacks zoonotic potential, it represents a growing concern for governments and markets because it threatens a lobby that generates an economic value of millions of euros. Economic impacts fall back on lobbyists, on farmers, on workers because, due to the high mortality, they lose their 'animal capital', using Shukin words, and on importers and exporters because control measures impose national and international trade restrictions of pig meat and derived products (Cimino et al., 2021). More importantly, the disease directly put at risk the life of thousands of animals who, once infected, die after particularly painful symptomatology.

However, the mainstream media and the public opinion exclusively mention socio-economic externalities as the sole negative consequences of ASF. The production chains and industries which are mentioned as negatively affected by ASF are always linked to human activates and interests. These include (Cimino et al., 2021):

- The socio-economic sphere, with price variations and loss of markets;
- The psychological-cultural sphere, with the lowering of lobbyists and workers income;
- The medical-pharmaceutical field, because some medical products like Heparin and insulin are manufactured starting from pigs mucosa;
- The food chain, with the loss of the primary source of revenue and the prices inflation.

From this strictly anthropocentric evaluation it emerges that ASF is viewed and perceived as a just an economic issue which cause profit and market loss. The resulting economic instability is often addressed through compensation and government funding to avoid the loss of production chains and a derived state of precarity. A reflection upon the concept of precarity seems useful to introduce the idea of a shared vulnerability.

Judith Butler (2009, ii) defines precarity as the "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become

differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death". Isabell Lorey, in *State of Security: Government of the Precarious*, introduces her interpretation of the concept of precarious, and differentiates between 'precariousness', 'precarity' and 'precarization'. As Lorey (2015, 12) writes, "precariousness designates something that is existentially shared, an endangerment of bodies that is ineluctable and hence not to be secured, not only because they are mortal, but specifically because they are social". She specifies that precariousness is a condition which belongs both to the humans and the nonhumans and that "social relationality is primary" (Lorey, 2015, 15). In other words, as for humans, nonhuman life is not simply 'natural', it is constitutively social. On the other hand, precarity "denotes the striation and distribution of precariousness in relations of inequality, the hierarchization of being-with that accompanies processes of othering" (Lorey, 2015, 12).

Nicole Shukin (2018) has noted how the speciesist consideration of nonhuman animals is an example of the politics of precarity since vulnerability is unevenly allocated across different species. Even if there is a tendency to conceive only the human life as subjected to precarity, in reality, both humans (or better some humans) and nonhumans suffer a process of precarization. As Shukin observed "humans and nonhumans are simultaneously if differently precarized in ways that can involve tearing them apart and pitting species against one another in the government of risk" (2018, 115). While ASF is fought to avoid economic and human precarity, it is rarely discussed that nonhuman are the first victims of this form of human-induced precarity. On the one hand they suffer precariousness because of an imposed confinement, exploitation and poor hygienic conditions which represent, in Lorey's words, the first endangerment of their bodies. On the other, when diseases enter factory farms, like ASF entered Italian farms, nonhuman animals experience precariousness because farming conditions pave the way for the second body endangerment, the virus. Indeed, as explained in the first paragraph of this chapter, it is the fact of being enclosed in high proximity that facilitate the virus survival, and the higher the density of animals and the rate of contacts between them, the faster the infection will spread through the population. For this reason, human imposed segregation to such a large number of nonhuman animals exponentially increases the chance of contracting and spreading the disease, making their existence precarious and putting their life a risk.

Precarity in farming systems involves both human and nonhuman animals. While the biological virus only affects nonhumans, the 'virus' of precarity is not limited by barriers of species. Consequently, the biological immunity does not secure the economic and social

sphere. It is when the biological danger soars that the limitations of the whole systems are revealed. The process of precarization of nonhumans lives simultaneously sustain and trap the humans who live and depend on capitalism. Precarity is thus the result of the systemically unsafe condition dictated by the capitalist economy, which is supposed to work for and support the interests of few. While the agribusiness categorizes, selects, and organizes and the lives of nonhuman animals according to their species and the productivity of their bodies, a similar mistreatment also involves human minorities. In this regard, it is fundamental to remember that in this capitalist, exploitative and anthropocentric system, not all '*anthropos*' equally contribute to and benefit from the resulting profit.

Humans are rarely the focus of attention in the discussion around meat production. However, as nonhumans, they are victims of the same system of hierarchies and powers. Melanie Joy (2009, 73) defined the workers involved in the carnist lobby as "invisible victims – not because they are not seen, but because they are not recognized".

Even if the European pig meat value chain represents the largest subsector in the food industry, companies face great competitive pressure. For this reason, a shared focus on cost reduction and centralization of companies throughout Europe has been reported (Battistelli et al., 2020). Workers are more and more vulnerable to exploitation and forced labor while owners and directors take fiscal advantages from exploiting precarious and flexible labor[4]. The people who are mainly employed to do this draining work are socially and culturally excluded minorities such as foreigners, undocumented migrants, or black people. The percentages of foreign workers in the pig meat industry are very high. They represent 29% of the whole workforce in the breeding phase (both EU and non-EU workers), 50% in the slaughtering phase, and 25% in the processing phase (Battistelli et al., 2020).

The volume *Meat-up Ffire. Fairness, Freedom and Industrial Relations across Europe: Up and Down the Meat Value Chain* is the result of a two-years research project financed by the European Commission which aims to fully investigate the pig meat sector. The authors, from a series of interviews to Italian workers, revealed that:

> In this context and sector, it is not uncommon for employment contracts to be marked by a lack of any social or financial responsibility toward workers; as well as reduced social security contributions; wages below the level set in national collective agreements, or at any rate too

[4] Slaughterhouses recently introduced robotic technologies to overcome insufficient human resources, accelerate the slaughter process and standardize the meat quality (see Kim et al., 2023).

> low for the quantity and quality of work performed; repeated violations of regulations on working hours, compulsory leave, and holidays; violations of workplace health-and-safety standards; degrading working conditions; and methods of surveillance or housing conditions that belong to the symptomatic indicators of labor exploitation.
>
> (Battistelli et al., 2020, 169)

This precarity in the workplace has severe repercussions on health. CAFOs and slaughterhouses expanded and flourished as a result of the industrialization of the production line, and this put a high pressure on workers to keep up with the demand (Slade & Alleyne, 2023). CAFOs and slaughterhouses workers, who often lack of regular contracts, are exposed to hazards because they receive little, if any, training and are not equipped with proper safety devices. Moreover, due to the intensification of working conditions, a growing number of employees suffers from occupational diseases which include musculoskeletal and psychosocial disorders (Battistelli et al., 2020). Daily tasks are primarily based on manual, repetitive and monotonous activities cause heavy physical load and work-related stress. CAFOs workers, who are continuously exposed to unhygienic conditions, may develop respiratory diseases, neurological degeneration, and convulsions (Joy, 2009).

Slade and Alleyene (2023) reviewed 14 studies and collected key findings on the psychological impacts of slaughterhouse employment. From this revision emerge:

- The prevalence of mental health issues, with low levels of psychological wellbeing;
- Coping mechanisms, such as the need to conform to hegemonic masculinity in order to successfully complete the work. This leads workers to deny, diminish, and repress their emotions as a form of self-regulating coping mechanism;
- The link to criminal actions, with slaughterhouse employment associated with an increase in total arrests and arrests for sexual offending.

Psychosocial disorders associated with factory farming and slaughterhouse employment results from prolonged exposure to violence, limited independence, low level of social support at work, lack of decision-making autonomy, social vulnerability and isolation, job insecurity, overwork, and underpayment (Battistelli et al., 2020). Moreover, employees in animal factories may be intimidated and bullied, both physically and psychologically, if they fail to respond to orders (Joy, 2009).

The situation is aggravated by the fact that, as reported by Battistelli et al., (177), "in Italy, as in other European countries, there is a strong tendency to underreport work-related accidents and occupational diseases, this owning to several factors, such as lack of awareness, the overwhelming nature of complex administrative procedure, or a fear of losing one's job".

In order to guarantee the production and to stay within the market, owners burden the shoulders of workers who endure low wages, precarious and illegal working conditions, human trafficking and other criminal actions. Within the factory, human is mere workforce to exploit, in the same way the nonhuman is abused. The factory farm becomes the interface where (some) humans and (some) nonhuman animals meet and come closer. As both take part in the production machinery, the worker becomes almost comparable to the animal, or even becomes a working animal.

When the agrobusiness is faced with diseases outbreaks, like pig meat farms and slaughterhouses faced ASF, working conditions become even more difficult and workers become essential components to keep the death mechanism going. To limit the virus spread, workers must follow stringent and limiting biosafety measures such as self and equipment sanitation, recurring substitution of clothes and limitations of movements and encounters.

This condition of exploitation, social exclusion and precarity, beyond causing physical and psychological disorders, fuels an attitude of contempt and violence towards nonhuman animals, as if they were the cause behind their state. Given the brutality that surrounds CAFOs, it can be assumed that workers who experience prolonged exposure to violence, eventually develop a form of detachment to it. Such adaptation results from a mechanism of 'routinization' (Joy, 2009), namely the repetition of an action until who performs the action becomes desensitized to it. Gail Eisnitz (2007, 87), an agricultural investigator, interviewed American slaughterhouses workers, and one of them revealed that:

> The worst thing, worse than the physical danger, is the emotional toll. If you work in that sick pit for any period of time, you develop an attitude that lets you kill things but doesn't let you care. You may look a hog in the eye that's walking around down in the blood pit with you and think, "Gog, that really isn't a bad-looking animal". You may want to pet it. Pigs down on the kill floor have come up and nuzzled me like a puppy. Two minutes later, I had to kill them – beat them to death with a pipe. I can't care.

Another worker told Eisnitz (2007, 94):

> I've taken out my job pressure and frustration on the animals… There was a live hog in the pit. It hadn't done anything wrong, wasn't even running around the pit. It was just alive. I took a three-foot chunk of pipe – and I literally beat that hog to death. […] It was like I started hitting the hog and I couldn't stop. And when I finally did stop, I'd expended all this energy and frustration, and I'm thinking, what in God's sweet name did I do?

Though we cannot justify these behaviors, and on the contrary these atrocities must be condemned, they are the sad and inevitable result of an extreme, irrational, and self-destructive system, in which violence generates more violence.

During ASF outbreaks policies such as animal culling are dictated by the necessity of eliminating bodies which have become useless for human needs. The overproduction, the impossibility of trading pig meat products and the necessity to limit as much as possible the economic loss were the reasons for which thousands of nonhumans have been killed and disposed.

Despite the ASF outbreak in Italy gained media attention, the fate of the animals and the harsh and precarious working conditions people had to endure did not capture the public gaze. The concern mainly regarded the strong economic and political interests which nowadays shape the food industry.

2.5 Health emergency or economic emergency?

An analysis of national and regional Italian media and newspaper articles, published during and after the ASF outbreak of summer 2023, shows that the interest was almost entirely concentrated on the economic and social damages which resulted from the disease. ASF has been defined as an "true economic disaster" which poses "a very high risk to pig farm and the market of meat and meat products" (Varese News, 12 Gennaio 2022).

It is evident that the dominant discourses around ASF management, and more broadly around the health and wellbeing of nonhuman animals, fail to question the mechanisms of power by which the anthropocentric uses of nature and other animals are justified. The normalization and naturalization of the process through which those bodies are generated, moved, confined, and killed highlights how the commodification of nonhuman lives represents a culturally and socially justified, or even accepted practice.

From publications of the academic, the international institutions and the media emerges that the interest and the efforts concentrate on how to tackle the issue which interest the farming system. Health programs, policies, initiatives, and measures are put in place to avoid and confront hazards to (some) humans, while no resources are employed to overtake or change such a problematic system which weighs on the shoulders of vulnerable humans and nonhumans.

The risks and the damages are not fairly shared. Policies and plans of actions are developed based on human interest, and harm to animals is hardly taken into consideration. If the One Health Initiative continues to avoid questioning the issues related to factory farming and continues to neglect the related negative health and wellbeing outcomes, it will continue to turn its back to the distress of millions of animals who everyday day suffer and die in farms, and of all the workers who are called upon to do what nobody wants to do or see. The One Health Initiative, which should attempt to dismantle human-animal/environmental hierarchies, often ends up reinforcing them (Kim & Chun, 2023).

The improper implementation of biosecurity measures by the Italian health authorities made impossible to control the ASF spread, and this results in the mass culls of thousands of animals. On June 16th the first positive carcass infected by ASF was found in the municipality of Bagnaria and in the following days the disease spread through several pig farms in the Pavia province. Throughout summer 2023, nine ASF hotspots have been identified in the Lombardy region. In November 2023, reports declared that about 46,500 pigs have been culled, most of whom have been killed preemptively (Gussoni, Lombardia Notizie Online, 2 Novembre 2023), in the attempt to contain the outbreak.

The Italian NGO Essere Animali documented and released, in collaboration with the NGO We Animals Media, footages of the violent culling which occurred during the 2023 Summer in the province of Pavia. The organization reported that, during the process, irregularities and animal abuse occurred. The issues concerned deficiencies in the facilities and in biosecurity procedures, the inadequate management of culling with additional suffering for animals, and the incompetence of the appointed staff (Montuschi, Essere Animali, 7 Settembre 2023).

The following series of images, extracted from the Essere Animali website, show the process of culling through carbon dioxide (CO_2) inhalation[5], also defined as controlled atmosphere stunning[6]. The animals are pummeled and conducted inside metal containers which are filled with CO_2. That causes difficulty in breathing, hypotension, lungs burning, muscular spasm and eventually lead to death after minutes of terrible suffering.

Figure 2.6: Operators move the animals towards the containers for the process of culling though CO2 inhalation (Montuschi, Essere Animali, 7 Settembre, 2023)

[5] In the United States of America, the death penalty is still nowadays in force in 31 States. Among these States, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Oklahoma authorize the execution of prisoners through the inhalation of nitrogen, which starve them of oxygen until they die. This method has been performed for the first time on a human being on January 25th, 2024, as alternative to the more common practice of lethal injection. On an experimental basis, the method of execution through inhalation has been shown to cause outrageous suffering in non-human mammals.

[6] The controlled atmosphere stunning with CO_2 is a culling measure which establishes the immersion of pigs into a high concentration of stunning gas. Animals are placed into a closed box prefilled with a high concentration of CO_2 The inhalation of carbon dioxide reduces the pH of the blood and cerebrospinal fluid, which causes respiratory, metabolic and brain cell intracellular acidosis, and eventually induces a state of unconsciousness in the animal. High concentration of CO_2 (90%) was reporter to significantly reduce basal activity of the brain (Dalla Costa et al., 2021).

Figure 2.7: Mass culling operation at a temporary slaughter site through CO_2 gas chambers (Montuschi, Essere Animali, 7 Settembre 2023)

Simone Montuschi, President of Essere Animali has decleared:

> We think it is essential to show images that show that, in the face of all the failings of the health authorities and our institutions, in a period of time in which public money has been spent on inadequate measures and biosecurity has not been sufficiently stringent, it is the tens of thousands of pigs that will be slaughtered in these days, amidst atrocious suffering and in the absence of adequate stunning, who will pay the highest price.
>
> (Eurogroup for Animals, September 14, 2023)

The culling ordinance, emanated by the Agenzia di Tutela della Salute (ATS), the Health Protection Agency of Lombardy, did not affect only farmed pigs. It also included the pigs saved from the food industry and hosted in animal sanctuaries.

It has been the case for the sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi of Sairano, at the outskirts of Pavia, which was notified with a culling order for both sick and healthy animals. With this ordinance, nine pigs hosted in the sanctuary received their death sentence. Despite the alarm launched by the sanctuary, the legal mobilization undertaken by the *Rete dei Santuari Liberi* (the Italian network of sanctuaries), and the 14 days garrison organized by activists and

volunteers, the police force violently entered the doors of the sanctuary and killed the animals on the 20th of September 2023.

Figure 2.8: Activists and volunteers protecting the Progetto Cuori Liberi sanctuary, in the early morning of the 20th of September 2023 (Lifegate, 21 Settembre 2023)

The ASF officially arrived at the sanctuary on the 2nd of September, when two of the forty pigs hosted at Cuori Liberi suddenly died. The killing ordinance from the regional authorities is notofied three days after, on September 5. The same ordinance that in farms leads to the killing al all the individuals, arrives at Cuori Liberi, an antispeciesist sanctuary for liberated animals. The regional court (in Italian, the Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale or TAR) rejects the request for suspension of the ordinance and refuse any type of compromise with the sanctuary.

The pigs who lived at Cuori Liberi had been saved from a system of oppression, exploitation and abuse which measured their existence in exclusively humans' terms. When nonhuman animals enter a sanctuary, they are stripped of any label, they regain the rights that had been taken from them and live a life in the greatest possible freedom, far from anthropocentric logics of profit. They are valued in their own terms and their care and wellbeing is put in the first place. This explains why the killing of these nine animals, who were considered by the sanctuary caregivers and volunteers as family members, is particularly problematic. Sanctuaries are places of animal liberation and the nonhumans who live in these

places should not be subjected to the same regulations (which remain atrocious and devoid of ani ethical consideration) that are applied to animals destined for food production.

In the following chapter I will define the features of animal sanctuaries, focusing on the places where former farm animals are hosted and cared for. Farm animal sanctuaries are committed to take care of the individuals they rescue, to support their physical and psychological flourishing, to recognize and embrace their individuality, and to not exploit them in any way. Understanding the importance and the uniqueness of the mission of sanctuaries, which stand in stark contrast to animal farms, should convince us that these two realities cannot respond to the same regulations, not even in the case of health emergencies.

Chapter 3

Farmed Animal Sanctuaries

The Sanctuary Here,
I have nothing to be afraid of.
I climb up this hill.
I get down in this valley.
I watch my face floating in the water of this river.
Shady trees make me sleep.
Birds wake me up.
Beasts give me way and return my greetings.
Ashutosh Dubey (2005)

3.1 The rise of the movement

On May 16, 2023, the Ministerial Decree of March 7, 2023, concerning the management and the functioning of the I&R system, namely the registration system for operators, for the establishments and for the animals, was published in the Italian Official Gazette (in Liberazioni, n. 54, 2023). Point 12, paragraph 3 of the Decree claims "Permanent shelter (so-called *sanctuary*): sheltering activities for cattle, horses, sheep and goats, pigs, cervids and camelids, poultry, rabbits, bees, animals of aquaculture species identified and registered with 'permanent shelter' orientation" (Decreto 7 marzo 2023). Even if the existence of establishments for the "keeping of animals for purposes other than zootechnical uses and food production" was already recognized by the Decree 134 of August 5, 2022 (Decreto 5 agosto 2022), the Ministerial Decree March 7, 2023, represents a fundamental achievement for the legal recognition of animal sanctuaries (Ibidem).

Etymologically, the word sanctuary derives from the Latin *sanctuarium*, composed of the noun *sancta* or *sancti*, which means holy thing or holy people, and the suffix *-arium*, which in combination with a noun defines a place where things are kept. Sanctuary literally means the place where holy things are kept (Abrell, 2016). Originally, for the various religious traditions,

it represented the sacred place, spatially separated by boundaries from the profane powers (Pachirat, 2018).

The word spread and took its contemporary meaning in the fourth century, when English churches begun offering protection to fugitives evading arrest or violence, a legally recognized practice which continued till the early seventeenth century (Abrell, 2016). The practice of providing a safe space to oppressed or vulnerable people muted into different forms, such as the modern legal practice of ensuring political asylum to persecuted individuals or as the New Sanctuary Movement, the restoration of the Sanctuary Movement of the Eighties which established the so-called "sanctuary cities" where immigrants could find a safe space (Abrell, 2016).

In the last three decades a new movement emerged in response to the mass industrial killing, consumption, and exploitation of nonhuman animals (Quick, 2024). Animal sanctuaries, born in the US and then spread all over the continents, developed as intentional spaces, built upon strong ethics and values, in order to rescue, nurse and provide a safe existence to nonhuman animals.

The animal sanctuary movement is still enlarging and represents a fundamental activist response against the human violence inflicted on nonhuman animals (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015). Many sanctuaries have proliferated around the world with the aim of saving nonhumans from an array of contexts in which they are exploited, abused, or killed (Abrell, 2017). According to the species and the animal use they challenge, sanctuaries take different forms and employ diverse approaches to care (Abrell, 2017). Different types of sanctuaries can be identified, among which wild rehabilitation centers, exotic animal refuges, animal companion shelters, centers for equines often rescued after careers in competitive events, and sanctuaries for farmed animals, which are commonly confiscated and rescued from the agricultural industry (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015). No matter the kind of sanctuaries, all face similar difficulties and challenges, among which fund raising, administration, land and infrastructures needs, caregivers' management and education, advocacy mission, and economic and political pressure in cases of disease outbreaks (Abrell, 2016).

3.2 Sanctuaries for former farmed animals

The birth of Farm Sanctuary represented a milestone for the growing animal rights and sanctuary movement. This sanctuary was founded in 1986 in California "to combat the

abuses of factory farming, advocate for institutional reforms, and encourage a new awareness and understanding of farm animals and the benefits of plant-based living" (farmsanctuary.org). The founders Gene Bauer and Lorri Houston started rescuing injured and sick animals coming from the Lancaster Stockyards, one of the largest American stockyards. Their rescuing activity was followed by activism campaigns, investigations, and public protests. The "No Downers" Campaign, for example, aimed to prevent the transport and slaughter of incapacitated and suffering animals (farmsanctuary.org).

Figure 3.1: The Farm Sanctuary van protest in 1986 (Image source: Jane Broadwater, https://www.farmsanctuary.org/)

On May 30, 1988, Farm Sanctuary united 600 people at the Lancaster Stockyards to demonstrate against the cruelties caused on animals. Lancaster Stockyards agreed to release sick, injured and unwanted animals and give them to the Farm Sanctuary. This was the first time that an animal protection organization was granted legal authority to rescue animals from a livestock facility. As a founding example in the U.S., Farm Sanctuary paved the way for many other alike projects in the country and in the world in their mission for rescue, education, and advocacy.

Figure 3.2: Gene Bauer speaks at the protest at the Lancaster Stockyards, May 30, 1988 (https://www.farmsanctuary.org/)

Later, a great contribution to the movement was given by the co-founders pattrice and Miriam Jones who launched the Eastern Shore Chicken Sanctuary in the Maryland in 2000, before moving in 2009 to Vermont and founding the VINE Sanctuary (vinesanctuary.org). As the co-founders explain in an interview (Fletcher, 2019), VINE stands for "Veganism Is the Next Evolution", meaning that veganism is a necessary step to reach interspecies, social, and environmental justice. But VINE also stands for "Veganism Is Not Enough", meaning that veganism is a necessary path, but not the solely way to minimize animal suffering and exploitation. Indeed, more active efforts are fundamental to trigger structural changes. In the interview, pattrice and Miriam Jones explain that being an LGBTQ-led animal sanctuary, they took the initiative to uncover the linkages between speciesism and homophobia/transphobia, creating a bridge between the animal and the LGBTQ+ liberation movements. Indeed, as we can read at point four of the Ten Principles of Critical Animal studies claims, hierarchical ideologies should be seen as part of an interlocking global system of domination, and for this reason they should be addressed with a joint effort.

Usually, farmed animal sanctuaries (FASs), as Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015, 51) explain, "are located in traditional farming communities, partly because this is where the

necessary infrastructure exists […]; partly because this is where current zoning laws create a legal opening; and partly, perhaps, because this is where we "see" farm animals, and imagine them belonging". FASs bring together different groups of domesticated animals, normally cows, horses, pigs, goats, chicken and other birds, with the aims of providing not just a physical refuge, but also a safe space where they can embrace individuality and be part of a community. Here nutritional needs, care, treatments for injuries and illness are provided, and individuals' behaviors, preference and emotional needs are pleased. In general, the foundational premised at the basis of sanctuaries is that they try to provide to animals a qualitative improvement of their life over the life they have conducted before.

Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015, 51) summarize six ethical commitments common to many existing farmed animal sanctuaries. These key features include:

i. *Duty of care*. Provide a safe, healing environment for animals who have been abused by humans and the agriculture industry. Put the needs and safety of animal residents first.
ii. *Support for species-typical flourishing*. Provide an environment that allows animal residents to engage in a range of behaviors and activities considered natural for members of their species.
iii. *Recognition of individuality*. Appreciate animals as unique personalities, with their own needs, desires, and relationships.
iv. *Non-exploitation*. Challenge conventional ideas of domesticated animals existing to serve human needs. Eschew use, sale, or other commercial activity involving animals.
v. *Non-perpetuation*. Prevent animals from breeding to subvert the future of animal farming. Dedicate resources to rescuing animals already in existence.
vi. *Awareness and advocacy*. Educate the public about animal sentience, and the cruelties of animal farming. Foster respectful engagement with sanctuary residents as "ambassadors" for the billions of animals suffering in the industrial agriculture system.

FASs are ethically and politically opposed to the industrial farm system. They display an alternative narrative about nonhuman animals, proposing new ways of living with them and demonstrating a commitment to assure their wellbeing. By doing so, they aim to dismantle

the industrialized and commodified human-nonhuman relationships (Quick, 2024). The animals who survive the A-IC, who thrive in their freedom, and who are still able to show trust, love and friendship challenge the dominant anthropocentric vision of animals as sources of food, clothing, entertainment, or test subjects. Thus, sanctuaries become sites of resistance where traditional hierarchies of human-nonhuman power completely fall (Pachirat, 2018). Scholars who are contributing to enlarge this limited subfield of Critical Animal Studies argue that sanctuaries can offer a "praxis of empathic engagement" (Abrell, 2017, 4), enabling the understanding and the valuing of nonhumans experiences.

Since sanctuaries can rescue and host an extremely tiny percentage of all the animals who are victims of the Animal-Industrial Complex (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015), a wide public engagement is fundamental to generate a transformative change. The great mission of total liberation for all species for which sanctuaries strive can only be achieved through awareness rising and educational projects.

Public outreach and visits of sanctuaries help neglected stories to emerge (Taylor et al., 2023). These stories have as protagonists the animals that are commonly seen as source of food, such as cows, pigs, chicken, goats and so on. Experiencing a direct contact with farmed animals, knowing their stories, and acknowledging their personalities help us blur the line between the conventional 'pet' and 'livestock' categories (Taylor et al., 2023). The educational experience at sanctuaries allows visitors to meet the animals for themselves, to interact with animals as individuals. In this regard, sanctuaries play a pivotal role in the process of awareness raising. Indeed, they can provide alternative ways to embrace education, advocacy, and public awareness with the aim of producing transformative changes in the perception and treatment of nonhuman animals (Quick, 2024).

A rooted ideology that sanctuaries aim to combat is the one that sees animals as objects and living properties. On the contrary, in these places animals are seen as beings who not only can, but always do occupy subject positions in their relationship with humans (Abrell, 2016). Beyond fighting for a more egalitarian interspecies power dynamics, sanctuaries battle for a broad recognition of animal subjectivity.

Placed within the realm of the Critical Animal Studies and embracing an antispeciesist ideology, sanctuaries' work is a reflection of an activist and political effort to create multispecies spaces of care and respectful coexistence. Logics of power, exploitation, and profit are left outside the borders of these safe spaces. As Taylor et al. (2023, 222) observe:

> While not always obvious, deeming someone worthy of care is a political act. It allows them to be seen as a 'someone' (subject) rather than a 'something' (object). […]. In a world that constructs animals as lesser beings who are also commodities for our use, the idea that we might care for and be intimate with other species *for no monetary gain* has radical potential. Irrespective of species, proper care is a relational process inclusive of empathic attitudes, respectful beliefs and actions, and attunement to personal preferences.

3.3 Health, wellbeing, and care: definition and assessment

Assuring the health and the wellbeing of abandoned, exploited, and abused animals is a founding commitment for animal sanctuaries. But what defines health and wellbeing and how can they be assessed?

For frail, ill, and neglected animals, care is indispensable for reacquiring a status of health and wellbeing. In its simple definition, care implies the satisfaction of individual's basic needs, like water, food, and shelter. Another important part of care entails the treatment of physical injuries and ailments which are often caused by the living conditions animals had to endure. (Abrell, 2016). In many cases, the animals that arrive at sanctuaries suffer from chronic diseases and injuries due to industrial agricultural practices of production maximization. Selective breeding accelerated growth cycles, overpopulation, and abuse of drugs lead to severe physical deformity, joint and foot weaknesses, and strong susceptibly of developing chronic or infectious diseases (Anomaly, 2015).

Beyond the basic needs necessary to sustain the biological life, sanctuaries identify further requirements for the achievement of health and wellbeing. These requirements include socialization, mental enrichment, freedom to move, and the interaction with the surrounding environment and with other animals. Indeed, as the WHO declares in the preamble of its Constitution, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Like for us, the health of nonhuman animals also depends on psychological and social factors.

Care is not a just the concern for the health of the biological life. As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) explains, concern and care have related meanings – both derive from the Latin word *cura*, meaning care and attention – but they express different qualities. Concern denotes "worry and thoughtfulness about an issue" (42), while care "adds a strong sense of attachment and commitment to something" (42). Being concerned reflects a state of stillness,

of inaction; on the contrary, the quality of care can easily turn into the related verb "to care", and this verb implies a more active sense of doing, that concern lack (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). This reflects that fact that care is "an ethically and politically charged practice, and one that has been at the forefront of feminist concern with devalued agencies and exclusions. In this vision, to care joins together an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 42).

In 1965, the United Kingdom Government performed an investigation to examine the welfare of intensively farmed animals. The investigation (Brambell, 1965), led by Professor Roger Brambell, resulted in the publication of the *Report of the Technical Committee to Enquire into the Welfare of Animals kept under Intensive Livestock Husbandry Systems*. The recommendations included in this report became known as the Brambell's Five Freedoms, formalized in 1979 in a press statement by the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council. The Five Freedoms was the earliest model developed to evaluate animals' (precisely the ones under human control such as captive wildlife, farmed animals, and pets) health and welfare and they included:

1. Freedom from thirst, hunger, or malnutrition,
2. Freedom from discomfort,
3. Freedom from pain, injury, or disease,
4. Freedom to display most normal patterns of behavior,
5. Freedom from fear and distress.

While many countries, jurisdictions, and organization have incorporated these freedoms in their guiding animal health policies, this model had an important limitation, since it assumed that the mere absence of negative states (thirst, hunger, pain and so on) ensures wellbeing, which is not necessarily true (Mellor, 2017).

For this reason, in 1994 Professor David Mellor and Dr. Cam Reid proposed an alternative model (Mellor & Reid, 1994) to the already established concept of Five Freedoms, to think about animal welfare and try to assess it. In this first proposal we can read that "The freedoms are now transformed into 'domains of potential compromise' and are redefined better to emphasise the extent of welfare compromise rather than the ideal of absence of compromise" (Mellor & Reid, 1994, 1). The first 1994 version of the model has been subsequently updated till the realization of the final version in 2020 (Mellor et al., 2020) to

incorporate contemporary developments in animal welfare science thinking. The updates incorporated the current knowledge of interactions between physiological mechanisms and the expression of particular subjective experiences, called affects or affective states (Mellor et al., 2020). The five Domains Model was designed with the aim of facilitating a systematic, comprehensive, and coherent animal welfare assessment (Mellor, 2017). According to the latest update[7], the five domains are: 1) Nutrition; 2) Physical Environment; 3) Health; 4) Behavioural Interactions; 5) Mental State.

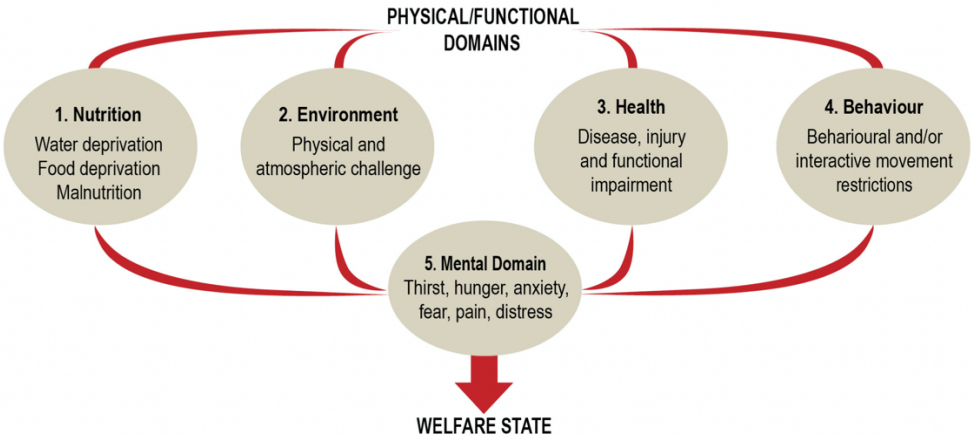

Figure 3.3: The 1994 Five Domains Model (Mellor & Reid, 1994)

While the earliest version of the model mainly focused on the optimal care of animal's physical/functional state and on the condition of being free from any identified problems (the negative affects), from the early 2000s, animal welfare scientists gave more and more relevance to positive affective experiences (Mellor et al., 2020). As t Mellor et al. (2020, 5) explain "This was motivated by the recognition that good or acceptable animal welfare […], cannot be achieved simply by mitigating or avoiding negative experiences and that some pleasurable experiences are needed as well". For this reason, a growing interest was directed towards nonhuman's psychological health. The revisions of the model were intended to include in the first four domains internal and external circumstances that may generate positive affects which, as with the negative affects, were assigned to the fifth (the mental) domain. Positives experiences, when present, enhance animal's wellbeing. These pleasurable experiences include, but are not limited to, the following:

[7] For the 25-year history of the Five Domains Model see Mellor et al., 2020.

> variability that provides an optimal balance between predictability/controllability and novelty/unpredictability, meeting species-specific needs for movement and exercise, access to preferred sites for resting, thermal comfort and elimination behaviours, environmental choices that encourage exploratory and foraging behaviours and durations, availability of a variety of feeds having attractive smells, tastes and textures, and circumstances that enable social species to engage as fully as possible in bonding activities with familiar conspecifics, the calming comfort of being in a group of familiar conspecifics and, as appropriate, other affiliative interactions such as allogrooming, bonding, maternal, paternal or group care of young, play behaviour and sexual activity.
>
> (Mellor et al., 2020, 5)

In what follows, a brief description of the domains from the 2020 Model is presented.

The Domain 1: Nutrition refers to the food and water availability. Negative nutritional conditions include nutritional inadequacies such as restricted water intake, restricted food intake, poor food quality, low food variety or excessive energy intake which lead to the negative effects of thirst, hunger, weakness, malnutrition, and gastrointestinal pain. On the contrary positive conditions may include a correct availability of water and food, and a balanced and variegated diet which generate positive effects of wetting, satiety, pleasure of eating and drinking and gastrointestinal comfort (Mellor et al., 2020).

The Domain 2: Physical Environment focuses on the affective impacts of the physical and atmospheric conditions to which animals are subjected to. Negative conditions such as confinement, overcrowding, air pollution, thermal extremes and loud environments cause different forms of discomfort (Mellor et al., 2020). On the contrary, enhanced ambient conditions improve animals' general wellbeing.

Domain 3: Health refers to the wellbeing impacts of injuries, diseases, and different levels of physical fitness. The presence of injuries, functional impairments, and of poor physical fitness causes pain, debility, weakness, malaise. Oppositely, achieving or maintaining a good physical health is accompanied by general comfort, functional capacity, vitality, and pleasurably vigorous exercise.

While Domains 1 to 3 mainly focus animal care-related conditions, Domain 4 focuses on animals' behavioural factors, namely agency. Agency emerges when animals show "voluntary, self-generated and/or goal-directed behaviours. More specifically, agency indicates the intrinsic propensity (genetic and/or learned) of an animal to actively engage with its physical, biological and social environment" (Mellor et al., 2020, 13). Accordingly, this Domain show

if interactions with the environment, with other nonhuman animals and with human beings hinder or enhance the expression of animal agency, and then evaluates the responses to situation-related factors. This Domain highlights the intrinsic capacity of sentient animals to "consciously self-select goal-directed behaviours when interacting with key features of their environment, with other non-human animals and with humans" (Mellor et al., 2020, 18).

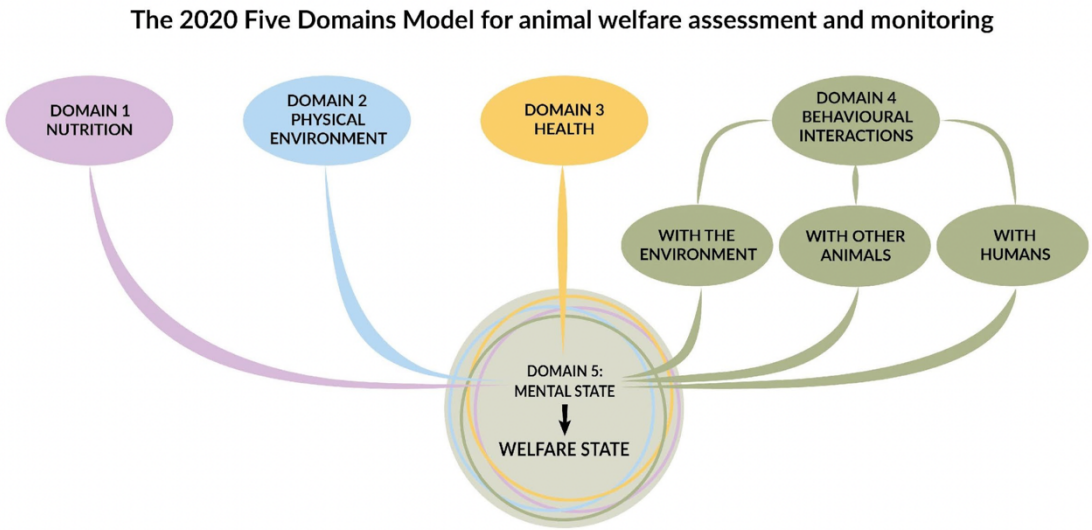

Figure 3.4: Updated illustration of the 2020 Five Domains Model (Wilkins et al., 2024)

The 2020 revision of the Five Domains Model is particularly relevant because it highlights the positive impacts that some human-animal interactions are likely to generate. A few examples include: the companionable presence of people, like caregivers, whose animals are closely bonded which provide company and a feeling of safety, the presence of persons who provide preferred foods, tactile contact, and enjoyable routine activities, the calming presence of familiar persons, and so on.

Although this model makes an important step forward in considering animal's mental state and behavioral factors, the arguments remain devious if applied to farms. The problematic aspect is that animal welfare, if sought within a system that by definition is based on exploitation, is only a way to slyly improve the system itself. Indeed, these welfare assessment models were developed primarily for those who raise animals to kill them, and those people are seldom interested in the wellbeing of the individuals they breed, except for purely economic reasons.

3.4 Limits and possibilities for farmed animal sanctuaries

A further objective of sanctuaries for former farmed animals is to allow and foster nonhumans to freely establish species and multispecies relationships, which, as described above, are fundamental for the psychological wellbeing. This should not be surprising, since a peculiarity of domesticated animals is precisely the inclination for interspecies sociability (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015). In FASs, it is not striking to note the prevalence of cross-species friendships, demonstrating that domesticated nonhuman animals do not have necessarily predefined pattern of species preferred company.

All farmed animals are social animals, and as social beings they "have a strong inclination to be part of things, to participate, to belong" (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015, 61). Their bonds are diverse and flexible and their ability to trust, cooperate, communicate and to exist sociably are the features that enabled humans to domesticate them (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015).

Without any doubt, humans have largely exploited and abused this ability of interspecies sociability. For this reason, sanctuaries efforts to rebuild renewed human-nonhuman relationships entails that the lives of those animals who are lucky enough to reach these places should be as free as possible from human forcing and control (Abrell, 2016). In effort of achieving justice in our relations with nonhumans, they should be free to show preferences about when and how they want to relate to us and to other species. Farmed animal sanctuaries can provide safe places for these entanglements to take place.

However, while being places where former farmed animals find relief after a life of confinement and mistreatment, some scholars have highlighted the limits and have raised questions about the extent to which the human-nonhuman hierarchies can be subverted (Abrell, 2016).

Despite the praiseworthy efforts of farmed animal sanctuaries to assure a safe and happy life to the hosted individuals and establish a respectful coexistence with humans, some scholars claim that these efforts are limited and never fully complete. In his work *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets*, Yi-Fu Tuan reminds the readers that domestication and domination share the same Latin root, *domus*, which means "house" (Tuan, 1984). From domus derives *dominus*, which literally means "master of the house". Tuan's consideration of domestication as domination represents a sly and less evident front of the anthropocentric control and exploitation of animals (Pachirat, 2018). In this view, all forms of animal

domestication are necessarily and inherently exploitative as, due to a history of selective breeding maneuvered by humans, domesticated animals are condemned to a life of dependency and servility (Pachirat, 2018). Indeed, as Piazzesi (2023, 151) specifies, this process of domestication/domination, in the history of human's control over animals, has mostly concentrated on those species which were considered as "docile and possibly useful". Docility, in fact, is a fundamental prerequisite for a more effective and profitable exploitation (Piazzesi, 2023).

According to many Animal Rights (AR) theorists, the only reason why humans entered in relation with nonhuman animals imply the will to capture, enslave, and breed them for anthropocentric purposes. Thus, the idea of domestication is already a violation of nonhuman's rights. For this reason, these theorists claim that the very category of 'domesticated animals' should be dismantled (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). As Gary Lawrence Francione asserts:

> we ought not to bring any more domesticated nonhumans into existence. I apply this not only to animals we use for food, experiments, clothing, etc. but also to our nonhuman companions …We should certainly care for those nonhumans whom we have already brought into existence but we should stop causing any more to come into existence… it makes no sense to say that we have acted immorally in domesticating nonhuman animals but we are now committed to allowing them to continue to breed.
>
> (Francione, 2007)

According to this vision, the mission of AR theorists would not be simply the realization of a society where nonhuman animals rights are respected. Rather, they seek to protect nonhumans from the human societies. However, this vision may be seen as a bit absolute.

Farm animals are far from being archetypical animals. On the contrary, for centuries they have been selected, breed, and eventually genetically modified. Sanctuaries represent places in which the individuals who have been victims of this distorted system are welcomed and cared for. Domestication does not necessarily have to encompass hierarchical relationships and conditions of exploitation. In this regard, it would be more appropriate to speak about what Haraway (2003) has defined as co-evolution. Haraway talks about co-evolution in *The Companion Species Manifesto* and specifies that mutual adaptations of visible morphologies in humans and nonhumans are both biological and cultural consequences of a co-evolution (Haraway, 2003). Co-evolution and companionship mean considering nonhumans as

subjects and recognizing the complexity, values, abilities, materialities, and history of all beings (Haraway, 2003).

A further limitation ascribed on sanctuaries is that these places could still be seen as form of forced captivity which constrains animals' possibility to move freely as they may otherwise do (Abrell, 2016). Ecofeminist philosopher Lori Gruen defined captivity as "a condition in which a being is confined and controlled and is reliant on those in control to satisfy her basic needs" (2011, 133). Even though the aim, besides rescuing and care, is to allow individuals to acquire individuality and freedom, sanctuaries still partially reflect Guen's definition of captivity. Abrell talks about the "sanctuary paradox" (Abrell, 2016, 240) referring to the situation in which sanctuaries try to foster psychological animal wellbeing within conditions of captivity, which in turn can have the opposite effect.

As Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015, 54) have noted in their discussion about spatial arrangements, "Rather than challenging our ideas about farmed animals, this kind of setting may inadvertently reinforce assumptions about where farmed animals belong, what forms of society and behavior are "natural" for them, and their relationships to humans". This setting risks to frame nonhumans as "voiceless innocents" (Taylor et al., 2023, 227) who are waiting for the paternalistic hero to come and save them. This narrative can perpetuate the animal oppression because it focuses on the singular rescue story without any consideration on the structural, systemic, and rooted domination. This unwitting paternalistic approach that keeps animals in their presumed 'rightful place' may inadvertently limit their freedom, dignity, and wellbeing. This dilemma, well documented in the literature on human sanctuaries, challenges the so-called care-giving total institutions, such as homeless shelters, centers for victims of domestic violence, orphanages, institutions for people with intellectual disabilities, retirement communities and so on. In their view, FASs have not adequately addressed the risk of limiting animals' participation in key decisions affecting their lives and diminishing their wellbeing. To conclude, Donaldson and Kymlicka highlight that:

> This is not to say that rights are not respected, or that interests are not represented in informal and unstructured ways. But the point of comparing FASs to human care-giving institutions is to alert us to the fact that it is never sufficient to rely on the well-meaning intentions and ad hoc practices of caregivers and administrators to empower those in their care.
>
> (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2015, 56)

While it is important to remain critical regarding the human treatment and approach towards animals, it is important to remember that sanctuaries represent points of departure, not the final destination, or as Emmerman (2014, 230) argues the "one step in the work of moral repair".

The AR movements have typically focused on a set of rights, the so-called *negative* rights, namely the right not to be killed, tortured, confined, owned and so on. However, very little have been said about the *positive* rights they deserve, such as the obligation of considering nonhumans' needs, the obligation to rescue individuals who have been harmed by human activities, or the obligation to care for those who have become dependent on us. These duties are defined as *relational*, namely the duties that arose "not just from the intrinsic characteristics of animals (such as their consciousness), but from the more geographically and historically specific relationships that have developed between particular groups of humans and particular groups of animals" (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011, 6). In the context of human rights, we recognize that individuals have basic and inviolable negative rights, but we also give much relevance to positive and relational obligations towards other groups. This generates different duties such as the duty of care, hospitality, accommodation, reciprocity, justice (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011), and these duties should be reflected and have the same moral complexity when we inevitably relate with nonhuman animals. In the work *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Righs* (2011), Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka try to challenge the skepticism about whether animals should be involved in some sort of relations with humans and to offer and alternative framework, open to the empirical and moral complexities of the human-nonhuman relationships. As the authors declare "Once we recognize these brute ecological facts about the inevitability of human-animal interaction, a host of difficult normative questions arise about the nature of these relations, and the positive duties they give rise to" (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011, 8).

While it is crucial to recognize the exclusionary and sometimes contradictory nature of sanctuaries, it is also important to remember that the mission of these spaces of care is to alleviate the life of animals who came into existence within a context of capitalist domestication which sanctuaries try to combat. Sanctuaries do not host animals for human purposes (they are not categorized as pets, as food producers, or as entertainers). They rescue animals that would have no other alternative in life but death and exploitation. For this reason, captive spaces in sanctuaries are uniquely meant to easily administer practices of care and to protect the hosted animals from external dangers.

Regarding the comparison of FASs with structures which rescue people in need, we can underline a fundamental difference. While homeless shelters, centers for victims of domestic violence, orphanages, institutions for people with mental disabilities, and retirement communities are arranged for a temporary stay, farmed animal sanctuaries are not places of provisional care. If on the one hand human shelters operate with the purpose of returning the residents to their "normal" lives, FASs are conceives as "forever homes" for the nonhuman animals (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2015, 51). This means that sanctuaries are examples of communities in which nonhuman's possibilities of living a meaningful existence are empowered rather than limited. Putting into practice the vision of sanctuaries as multispecies communities would mean giving to nonhumans the possibility to experience: a strong sense of belonging, given that the community is their home, and they are permanent residents and members; the absence of fixed hierarchical relationships; self-determination, given that they are not confined into predetermined roles; and citizenship, since nonhumans are active members of the community and not passive wards. According to Donaldson and Kymlicka (2016), this is what makes the very difference between sanctuaries and total institutions. FASs represent one of the few places where multispecies intentional communities can thrive.

FASs, beyond rescuing and caring for animals on a practical level, fight the cultural legitimation of human dominion over other species. They can help reevaluate the very concept of farmed animals, which most of us view as something different and distant, objects more than living sentient individuals. Through the recognition of nonhuman subjectivity and the creation of relationships of care, caregivers, volunteers, and visitors will deem animals as morally worthy and at the same time urge us to abandon the idea of human supremacy (Taylor et al., 2023). The same supremacy that has labelled animals as voiceless beings, creating an unreachable distance and imposing an indestructible silence. This imposed voicelessness has precluded us from listening to animals (Oliver, 2020). In sanctuaries the possibility of listening and settling interspecies relationships remain open within practices of care.

Without ignoring their issues and limitations, we can claim that sanctuaries represent, as Timothy Pachirat explains,

> spaces of ongoing, and necessarily imperfect, practices of entangled empathy, spaces for the development of always provisional enactments of interspecies possibility written in the messy

language of mutual care, affect, and embodiment rather than in the clean analytic prose of academic books and articles" (Pachirat, 2018, 23).

3.5 Farmed animal sanctuaries in Italy: Cuori Liberi and the *Rete dei Santuari di Animali liberi*

Progetto Cuori Liberi was inaugurated on the 13th of April 2018. This project was born to create a safe space of peace for all nonhuman animals who survive abuse, exploitation, and abandonment. With the aim of giving the opportunity to live a life free from human control, the founders, Ivan and Federica, created a space where the theories of antispeciesism come into practice.

Cuori Liberi, together with other fourteen sanctuaries, is part of a bigger project which unites all these realities into a single name with shared purposes. In Italy, the *Rete dei Santuari di Animali liberi*, developed to create a network of sanctuaries and combine all projects which share the objective of creating places of refuge and care for animals and improving the relationship between humans and nonhumans. From 2014, this network provides a space for disclosure, collaboration, and change. The network pursues two main objectives: first, to host refugee animals, seeking to provide the best possible living environment for nonhuman animals, taking into account their species-specific and individual needs; second, to engage directors, caregivers and volunteers in an educational effort, contributing not only to the salvation of the animals hosted, but to some extent also of those outside the sanctuaries. The opening to the public is thus crucial to achieve this objective (Rete dei Santuari di Animali liberi in Italia).

The Italian network displays a "Charter of values" (*Carta dei Valori*) that provides the paramount values to which a sanctuary must adhere to in order to recognize itself as such (Rete dei Santuari di Animali Liberi in Italia, 2024, September 2). The Charter, which is composed of nine articles, specifies that "The member sanctuary must be run by a nonprofit association, entity, or foundation" (Art1). The Charter emphasizes the importance of rejecting speciesist, violent, and discriminatory attitudes, both towards animals and people, highlighting that the "greater respect for other animals is inseparable from liberation from all other forms of discrimination, be it gender, sexual orientation, color, ethnicity, etc." (Art. 7). The structures that welcome nonhuman animals should "ensure the highest quality of life" (Art. 2) and "No subject should be used in any way" (Art. 5) to satisfy human needs or

desires. Because these places recognize that the overriding goal is that one day sanctuaries may no longer exists, "New births must be necessary stopped" (Art.4) because these individuals "would take away valuable space for other outside individuals in need" (Ibidem). For the same reason "the purchase of nonhuman animals is not beneficial […]. Much better to focus on cases of seizure, breeding closures, findings […]" (Art.3). Finally, the Charter recognizes the fundamental role of advocacy and of the openness to the public, "in order to contribute not only to the salvation of those housed, but also in part to those outside" (Art. 6).

The network plays a key role in supporting all Italian sanctuaries by assisting the in legal and political battles. A fundamental battle waged by the network focuses on a series of legislative modifications concerning farmed animal sanctuaries.

Through the Ministerial Decree 7th March 2023, Italian sanctuaries received the first legal recognition. Before the publishment of this Decree, there was no official definition of sanctuaries because no legislation described their characteristics and certified their existence. However, despite the relevance of this Decree, a careful reading of the attached Operation manual for the management of the Identification and Registration system (*Manuale operativo per la gestion del Sistema I&R*) has revealed some criticalities that needs to be overcome in order to fully protect nonhumans hosted in sanctuaries.

According to this operational manual, a sanctuary belongs to the category of "faunal collections" (*collezione faunistica*) and is defined as a "shelter for animals other than dogs, cats and ferret". These places, despite they are destined for animals which are not intended for food production, are in fact registered as breeding farms (Animal Law Italia, 05/06/2023). Indeed, at point 12 of the paragraph 2.4 ("Type of activity", page 23), we can read that the operator who is responsible for the sanctuary:

> shall identify and register in the BDN [*Banca Dati Nazionale*] the animals held in the collections with different methods depending on the animal species:
>
> a) the faunal collections with cattle, horses, sheep and goats, pigs, deer and camelids, poultry, rabbits, bees, aquaculture animals, for the purposes of registration in BDN, are registered as farms with a "faunal collection" orientation […].

Furthermore, in the same paragraph (page 24, point 10) it is declared that the possibility, on exceptional cases, of producing foods and slaughtering the animals kept in these "farms" is possible when regulated, and must be authorized by the competent ASL (*Azienda Sanitaria Locale*). It is thus clear that sanctuaries, despite opposing the zootechnical use of animals, continue to be formally considered as farms (Animal Law Italia, 05/06/2023).

This partial recognition is insufficient and highly questionable, not only from a symbolic point of view, given that sanctuaries are the exact opposite of farms, but also from a juridical and managerial perspective. The African swine fever emergency and the measures employed to limit the contagion, besides endangering thousands of animals on farms, has strongly affected those who manage animal sanctuaries. Indeed, in these cases directors, caregivers and volunteers are compelled to align to the biosecurity regulations imposed on farms and to follow non-functional sanitary procedures, which are even more problematic when imposed on sanctuaries for liberated animals (Liberazioni n. 54, 2023). Furthermore, this unsatisfactory recognition does not guarantee a differential treatment between farms and sanctuaries in case an individual tests positive to the ASF virus. This means that if the presence of the virus in a sanctuary is reported, the hosted pigs, whether healthy or not, receive the same culling ordinance which is imposed on farms.

The culling ordinance emanated by the Health Protection Agency of Pavia and addressed to the nine liberated pigs hosted at sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi, member of the Italian network of sanctuaries, represents a sad example of the failure to recognize these places of animal liberation. Despite the biosecurity preventive measures adopted by Cuori Liberi, the fact that the pigs were already isolated to avoid possible contacts with the outside, and the status of liberated animals not intended for food production, the nine pigs have been killed after disputes and violence inflicted by security forces towards the activists who fought with their bodies to prevent the execution.

These events shed a light on the problematic legal and political consideration of nonhuman animals and of the status of animal sanctuaries, but also on the way health agencies and authorities managed the diffusion of the virus in the Lombardy region which, as noted in the previous chapter, hold half on the Italian pig population. The inefficiency of the culling practices carried out by the health authorities has been demonstrated by the new wave of African swine fever that have involved Italy just one year after the Summer 2023. The death of thousands of animals inside the gas chambers was of instrumental utility for

the A-IC in the failed attempt to avoid further contagion in pig farms and the associated economic damage.

While media and authorities claimed that intensive farms would represent protective barriers against the spread of the virus, perfectly able of managing a possible outbreak thanks to the prompt intervention of the authorities, the reality showed that these places created the conditions for the emergence and the amplification of this epidemic. On the contrary, in smaller realities such as sanctuaries, condemned as dangerous incubators and spreaders of viruses, sanitary measures and biosecurity protocols could have been more easily and strictly followed. These places, where the health of every single individual is protected, could have turned out to be the centers in which to study and gain a deeper understanding of a disease that seems to have no apparent cure. Here nonhuman animals are individuals worthy of care, and their health and wellbeing are in no way related to anthropocentric interests.

The subversive political act of deeming animals worthy of care, which stands in the opposite direction to the careful calculus of the zootechnics, challenges the still too limited anthropocentric approach of the One Health Initiative. The latter, as already mentioned, has failed to problematize factory farming as incubators of diseases and to highlight the importance of improving the lives of all species, and I would add of all individuals, to achieve overall health.

In the final chapter of this work, I will present a qualitative research conducted with people who daily perform acts of care towards nonhuman animals. Through in-depth interviews with the staff and some volunteers of the sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi I tried to navigate the spaces, the relationships, and the challenges they had to confront in the face of the ASF wave. I investigated what care mean for both humans and nonhumans. Listening to the stories of those who do the caring could give us insight into the ways humans can challenge the traditional view of nonhumans (Taylor et al., 2023).

I tried to immerse myself in the places where a truly holistic perspective of care, like the one professed but not necessarily pursued by One Health Initiative, comes into life through daily practices. The conversations with the interviewees revealed that the events of September 20th, 2023, represented yet another case in which the One Health Initiative failed to advocate for nonhumans and its principles have been ignored.

This represents an effort of raising the voice over "the silences created, and often demanded, by a sanitised neoliberal academy that does not support (and is often openly

hostile to) work that challenges its patriarchal and Enlightenment rationality – a rationality that has little space for the rich lives of other animals" (Taylor et al., 2023, 230). A challenge to the classic academic production of knowledge and the consolidated ways humans establish relationships with nonhumans. This means "moving away from the hu-*man*-centered writing towards a *more-than-human* writing" (Huopalainen, 2020, 961).

With this final chapter I will try to "create further space for the multiple nonhuman animals around us" (Huopalainen, 2020, 961), showing that practices of care are not only beneficial for those who primarily need assistance. In this respect, I hope this mirrors the daily practices, the ethic, the personalities, and the challenges faced not only by Cuori Liberi, but by the countless sanctuaries around the world, where space is being made for individual animals.

Chapter 4

A critical analysis to ponder the future

After what happened to the pigs, if it wasn't for all the other animals, we would not have been able to go on. Taking care of them was a way to heal the suffering we were facing

(Int2)

4.1 Methodologies and objectives

This chapter presents a qualitative study conducted in Summer 2024. It focuses on the stories and experiences of the people who personally engage in the caring of nonhumans animals in the context of the farmed animal sanctuary. Through their narratives I investigated the interspecies relationships which rise in a sanctuary, and I tried to understand their perception and representation of care.

I argue that the entrenched speciesism which is present in the field of veterinary medicine does not align with the authentic purpose of the veterinary practice, nor with the objectives proposed by the One Health Initiative. I have critically examined the context and the events concerning the wave of ASF and I argue that the killing of the nine liberated pigs at the Cuori Liberi sanctuary represented a defeat from the scientific, medical, and ethical and point of view. As Timeto (2023, 102) writes "any theoretical contribution can and should be a form of advocacy". Accordingly, this work will be an attempt to understand the dynamics, the practices, and the imaginaries of multispecies care but foremost this represents a form of advocacy, for all nonhuman animals who still live under the economic, political, and cultural human domination, and for all humans who are trying to subvert this domination.

In August 2024, I have conducted five interviews – four in person and one through video call – with some involved caregivers, volunteers and a veterinary who work and give a contribution at the sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi. For the in person interviews I met the respondents in Sairano, a district of the municipality of Zinasco, in the Pavia province. Pavia and its provinces are located in the Po Valley, in North Italy, where the highest concentration of intensive farming is found. Sairano is also the place where the Progetto Cuori Liberi was born, on the 13th of April 2018. Unfortunately, I could not visit the sanctuary and experience the direct contact with the hosted nonhumans. As explained in the previous chapter, what characterized most farmed animal sanctuaries is the possibility to open their doors to the public as part of and educational and advocacy mission. However, the renewed emergency of African swine fever and the linked threats force many sanctuaries to limit or completely avoid the contact between nonhuman animals and visitors. For this reason, I undertook the interviews outside the gates of Cuori Liberi. Since I could not enter the sanctuary, my respondents, through their descriptions, stories, and anecdotes, brough the sanctuary out for me. Through their words I navigated in those spaces, in their relationships, and in their challenges. I tried to immerse myself in the places where inclusiveness and cohesiveness, so extolled by the One Health Initiative, really take shape.

With the written consent of the respondents, I recorded our conversations[8] to be able to transcribe and translate them and hold the salient points. Their openness and willingness to contribute to this work allowed a deep exploration of participant's thoughts, beliefs, and experiences.

For the methodology employed in the interviews I referred to Mario Cardano's work *La ricerca qualitativa* (Cardano, 2011). The discussion guide for the interviews was composed of four sections and twelve questions through which I tried to assess: 1) the participants'

[8] I conducted the interviews in Italian. I have then listened to the recordings of the interviews, transcribed, and translated them into English. All respondents are Italian and currently live in Italy. Before the interviews all respondents signed a written informed consent form for in-depth interviews. Through this form the respondents declared that they were of legal age at the time of the interview, that they understood the basic information of this project, that they were aware that the interview would remain anonymous, that they could decide to not answer questions they did not prefer to answer, that they could interrupt the interview at any time, that they could decide to allow or forbit the use the information from the interview (informing the interviewer within one month of the interview), and that they agreed to share their personal experience. The names of the respondents have been anonymized and referred to as Int1, Int2, Int3, Int4 and Int5, assigned according to the chronological order in which I interviewed them.

encounter/experience in the sanctuary, 2) the interspecies relations with nonhuman animals, 3) the management of the health and care of the individuals hosted at the sanctuary, 4) and the perception/narrative of the events before and after the arrival of the ASF. During the interviews, some topics have been explicitly introduced by me as the interviewer, others emerged naturally from the respondents. The aim of the first section was to get into confidence with the respondents and to know about the journey and the reasons that conducted them to the sanctuary. Through the questions of the second section, I tried to explore the interspecies relationships that emerge within the context of the sanctuary and to understand the dynamics of these interactions. In the third section I investigated respondent's vision of the sanctuary as a multispecies space of care with the aim of revealing the mutual benefits for both human and nonhumans. Finally, through the fourth section I gave space to their testimony and feelings in relation to the events that took place on the 20th of September 2023.

4.2 A journey towards the sanctuaries

Int1 has been vegan for many years but revealed that "the real change in me occurred when I interfaced with the reality of the sanctuaries". He claimed, "in the sanctuary I saw the animals with totally different eyes, even though I was already a vegan activist".

Coming from a rural context of the Po Valley, where farms and butchers are widely present, the sight of animals directed towards slaughterhouses or of dismantled body parts in butchers' shop was for him the "normality" (Int1). However, the direct encounter he had with a calf who was waiting for his death, terrified and tied to the wall, completely revolutionized his vision of what the society classifies as farm animals.

Int1 approached the world of sanctuaries in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impossibility to work due to the regional and national restrictions gave him the time to "reorganize" his life and learn more about the world of sanctuaries. Int1 claimed:

> I had started going to the sanctuary [referring to the Progetto Cuori Liberi] to not think about so many things and to detach myself from the world. [...] There I realized where I needed to be. From the reality of the sanctuaries, I understood that this was the world I wanted. There you could breathe a culture, a different idea from where I had grown up.

Int2 started his experience as a volunteer for *Una Zampa per la Spagna*, an Italian association founded in 2010 with the aim of saving dogs and cats and stopping their massacre in the *perreras*, the Spanish municipal kennels where stays or abandoned animals, if not adopted, are killed after ten days or so they entered. After few years dedicated to help dogs and cats, Int2 said, "I started to ask myself why I was not helping the *other* animals". A that time Int2 was vegetarian, but after the entrance in the world of farmed animal sanctuaries, he soon became vegan.

The categorization and the different treatment that nonhuman species receive represent the foundation of speciesism. This division labelled nonhuman animals as pets when they are allowed to establish with us relationships and enter the human space, as farmed animals when their bodies cane provide humans products or services, and wild animals when they live outside the urban spaces and seems to have no relation with us. In the history of sheltering, only the first category was considered worthy enough to deserve human rescue and care. Indeed, from mid 1800s, animal shelters have focused on the rescue and rehabilitation of dogs and cats. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, from the mid 1980s shelters for the so-called farmed animals started to emerge.

Farmed animal sanctuaries advocate for the deconstruction of speciesist frameworks. In these places nonhuman animals have a name, they can self-determine and express their individuality. They can manage their time as they wish and they can choose whether they want to interact with individuals of the same species, or with individuals of a different species, both human and nonhuman. Int1 explained that "You realize that they [nonhuman animals] make choices, you see that they decide to interact with some humans and not with others". There are countless examples of strong relationships with individuals of different species: "the goose with the goat, the pig with the cat, the sheep with the cow".

Int3 is the last in chronological order to have entered the community of the sanctuary. Until a year ago he was a meat eater and had never crossed the threshold of a sanctuary. For him, the events that took place on the 20th of September 2023 represented the turning point. As he claimed, "those images [referring to the images of the brutality of the intrusion of the authorities and the following culling and disposal of the pigs] will remain etched in my memory for my whole life". He asserted that shortly after that day he eliminated meat and any animal product from his diet. Then, the change of habits was followed by the desire to actively help the sanctuary. Int3 revealed:

> I often say that they are the ones who take care of us. The peace and serenity that you feel is a place like this, you do not feel anywhere else. When you enter, you find peace and you understand by yourself what antispeciesism means. You do not need to make an effort, it comes naturally.

He highlighted how the sanctuary allows to create friendships, with both humans and nonhumans, and to build a community that arises from a common purpose. Talking about the importance of the participation and the development of a community, Int2 reminded the importance of a non-exclusionary approach of the antispeciesist movement. He thus affirmed that "for me, antispeciesism is not just about animals, it is about people too. You cannot separate one from the other". Int4 also mentioned this aspect, defining the sanctuary as a "second home and a big family". Int2 revealed:

> I was always afraid that I had wasted time, it seemed that I was always late. Then instead, from that moment [referring to the moment he started to work in the sanctuary] I no longer feel late, on the contrary, I feel satisfied. I no longer run after the time. In enjoy my time. This is also something that animals taught me.

Int4 became vegetarian many years ago and started to visit sanctuaries about four years ago. Being vegetarian, she said that she wanted to know more about the animals and declared "I thought that going to the sanctuaries and actually see the animals was a great way to know them". Two years ago, when she discovered that there was a sanctuary so close to her place, she decided to volunteer and participate more actively. She became a full-fledge volunteer and now she helps at the sanctuary at least once a week. She then explained:

> When you started to frequent a sanctuary more actively and *know* the animals, you understand that a pig, a cow, or a sheep behaves exactly like the dog that you have at home. They are all the same, nothing changes. What changes is just the vision that people have of them.

This statement immediately reminded me of a passage from the book "The Cow with Ear Tag #1389" by Kathryn Gillespie (2018, 5) where the author writes:

> The first time I met a pig face-to-face, I was shocked by how much she seemed like a dog. Her name was Ziggy, and she was a large, three-legged, pink farm pig at Pigs Peace Sanctuary in

> Stanwood, Washington. I approached and she snorted at me and prodded my hand with her snout. I scratched her behind the ears and rubbed her back. With one impressive thump, she flopped over on her side on the ground and stuck her legs out. Judy Woods, the sanctuary director, said expectantly, "Well?"
> "Well, what?" I asked, puzzled.
> "She obviously wants you to scratch her belly!"
> "Oh!" I immediately knelt and rubbed her belly with my hand.
> "Use your finger nails," Judy instructed. And I did.
> Ziggy closed her eyes and laid her head back on the grass. If I stopped scratching, even for a moment, she would raise her head and look at me, and Judy would say, "She didn't say you could stop."
> Over years of volunteering at Pigs Peace, I've gotten to know many different pigs who live there—enormous Baily (blind at birth and living in the sanctuary's "special needs" area), old Betsy (rescued from a family farm where Animal Control found her, too weak to stand, resting her head on the body of one of her dead pen-mates to keep from drowning in the mud), and Honey (a piglet found with crushed hind legs on the floor of a pick-up truck when the driver was stopped for a DUI).
> These animals each have stories and personalities of their own, with distinct likes and dislikes, histories, and emotional traumas they carry with them.

An interesting detail that I have noticed at the end of all interviews is the connection and the different experiences of respondents concerning the sanctuary and the dietary choice. Int1, Int2, Int4 and Int5 (who will be introduced later) became vegetarian, and then vegan, years before getting to know the reality of the sanctuaries. Int 3, instead, was the only interviewer who became vegan after learning about the existence of sanctuaries. The news concerning the African swine fever and the case of Cuori Liberi introduced him to this place, to its mission and in general to the whole movement. For him, veganism was an immediate choice, following the events of September 20.

4.3 Interspecies relationships and practices of care

During our conversation, Int4 emphasized the positive effects the volunteer activity generates on her. It gives an incomparable feeling of joy and fulfillment. "Knowing that you are helping them and contributing to making them feel good, makes *you* feel good".

The sense of peace and serenity that have been mentioned by all the participants during the conversations is not something sporadic or unusual for us humans. The positive effects that nonhumans, and more broadly everything that is alive, generate on us can be explained through the concept of *biophilia*. The term biophilia (*bio* meaning life, living, and *philia* meaning friendship, love) was first used in 1973 by the German psychoanalyst Enrich Fromm in his work *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* to describe a physiological orientation towards everything that is alive and vital (Spanjol & Zucca, 2023). In his view, the deep affiliation humans have with other forms of life and nature as a whole is rooted in our biology and developed in naturecultural histories: we are genetically predisposed to interaction with the natural world. The term was then used by the American biologist Edward O. Wilson in his book *Biophilia* (1984), which assigned to it a more evolutionary and ecological meaning (Spanjol & Zucca, 2023). According to his theory, the human species demonstrate "an innate attraction on a biological basis for nature and for all its forms of life" (Wilson, 1984, 1). In this sense, as Spanjol and Zucca (2023, 109) claim, "this interest is the product of the co-evolution between humans, non-human animals, and the environment", originated in the era when humans lived in much closer contact with the living diversity.

Human divergence from the nonhuman world began with the Wester colonial and plantation era, when the first property relations subjugated indigenous humans and nonhumans. Later, with technological developments of the 19th and 20th Century, this divergence further amplified, creating separated spaces and imaginaries for the so-called livestock and companion animals, and fundamentally changing human perception and interaction with the nonhuman world. This revolution transformed breeding spaces and techniques, as Piazzesi claims, "drastically putting an end to the utopia of gentle and universal domestication of living beings conceived by French naturalists in the first half of the XIX Century"[9] (2023, 15). Nowadays, blinded by modernity, our relationships with other species are dominated by the extractivist paradigm of capitalist that has severed the bonds of care and attention for nonhuman life and the ecosystems in general.

This detachment, however, did not prevent us to still experience the benefits of this affiliation. "Emotions raised by animal interactions […] and more generally by natural settings can be so pervasive as to induce behavioural and physiological changes in the human mind and body, resulting at times in inexplicable healing phenomena." (Antonioli, 2005, 4).

[9] Quotation translated from Italian into English, from *Del governo degli animali* (Piazzesi, 2023).

Indeed, bonding and companionships are essential features of social animals (and humans are social animals), and affection is something that can be experienced within interspecies relationships. As Lori Gruen (2014) argues, it is empathy that allows individuals to create and preserve social bonds and to understand and negotiate their social relations. In her thinking about the limitations of the popular framing of animal liberation and the relationships humans establish with animals, she developed the concept of *entangled empathy* as a way to rethink our relations with nonhumans. Gruen (2014, 3) defines an entangled empathy as:

> a type of caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing. An experiential process involving a blend of emotions and cognition in which we recognize we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsive and responsible in these relationships by attending to another's needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities.

This type of caring may provide new insights into how we can improve human-nonhuman relationships (Gruen, 2014) and I argue that sanctuaries are already places where these entanglements take shape.

Research on the effects of human-nonhuman interactions is still relatively new, however some studies have demonstrated the positive health effects of these relations. The main interest in this field of research have mainly focused on the health effects on humans of companion animal ownership, the health effects of contact with a companion animal, and the health effect of animal-assisted interventions (AAIs), namely the therapeutic, rehabilitative, educational, and recreational activities that involve companion animals (Friedmann & Krause-Parello, 2018). On a physical level, human-animal interactions have shown to decrease the levels of cortisol, a hormone linked to conditions of stress, and lower blood pressure. On a psychological and social level, relationships with animals can reduce loneliness, increase feeling of belonging and boost the mood (NIH, February 2018).

One of the first scientific evidence derived from a 1980 study by Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch and Thomas, which showed that dog owners were more likely to be alive one year after a hospitalization for coronary heart disease, compared to non-owners (Friedman et al, 1980). After this study the authors started to look at the features of companion animals that would promote cardiovascular health. The authors hypothesized that companion animals could provide social support by providing different stimuli, reducing loneliness and

depression. Furthermore, they claimed that nonhuman companions may contribute to enhance psychological parameters by increasing feeling of safety, reducing stress and anxiety.

As mentioned above, research on the benefits of human-animal interaction is rather new and tend to focus only on a limited range of nonhuman species (the species that we consider as companions, namely pets, and mostly dogs and cats), and on a limited number of people (normally people affected by specific physical or psychological disorders). There are very few examples that take into consideration the animals that are culturally classified as farm animals, and these include the study by Bente Berget and Bjarne O. Braastad (Berget & Braastad, 2011). This study claims that animal-assisted therapy with farm animals for human with psychiatric disorders may reduce depression and anxiety and increase self-efficacy and self-esteem. Moreover, there is very little knowledge about the positive effects of interspecies relationships on nonhumans.

What needs to be underlined is that the approach of the commonly known practice of "pet therapy" risks to be too instrumental and opportunistic towards nonhuman animals. Some authors have underscored the problematic consideration of these individuals as service animals, and not as equal individuals within a relationship. Indeed, as Kelly Oliver (2020) explains in her work concerning service dogs, the status of these individuals struggles to be recognized beyond the service they perform. The immaterial and affective labor that these animals perform through social company, affection, and love becomes part of the anthropocentric system of care (Shukin, 2018). Despite the growing evidence of mental and physical health benefits of human's interaction with nonhuman animals, the emotional relationships are often devalued by laws that consider nonhuman companions as properties (Oliver, 2020). Rather than companions, law considers service animals as tools that help people to achieve health results. They are regally viewed as a mere equipment that must perform a task for us humans. Oliver (2020, 113), referring to service dogs, explains that:

> Their importance as tools or equipment is acknowledged, while the importance of their emotional support is either suspect or must be quantified in terms of functionality. In other words, these animals are valued in terms of what tasks they perform and how those jobs enhance the performance of human beings. Furthermore, all of these studies and discussions about them revolve around the benefits for humans rather than whether or not there are benefits for the animals themselves.

During the interview with Int1 he mentioned the ambiguous and sometimes problematic condition of nonhuman animals within the animal-assisted interventions (AAIs). He then counterposed the consideration of nonhuman individuals in sanctuaries who are not valued as property nor as a service. In sanctuaries animals completely overturn their status and change it from a profit producer ("*da reddito"*) to care creditor ("*da debito"*). "Out there they owe something to man, here we owe something to them […] This must be very clear: they don't owe nothing to us" (Int1). Herein, I believe, lies the revolutionary vision of the sanctuary: the possibility to see nonhuman animals beyond the anthropocentric evaluations of benefit and utility; the willingness to care for other living beings without the expectation of receiving something in return; respecting and valuing all life forms in their own terms.

To the question "How do you approach the animals who are hosted in the sanctuary?", all respondents agreed on the answer: you approach the animals if they want to, and with the upmost respect. The approach is very cautious because, as Int1 explained "They do not owe us relationship. They do not have to be domesticated and we do not want to domesticate them". It is up to nonhumans to decide which kind of relationship they want to establish. As Int4 said "That's *their* home, so it is all up to them… and if they want something from you, they make it clear". Unfortunately, there are individuals who, after months or even years, still show signs of their difficult past. For some, the memory of what they have experienced will never leave them. Int2 underlined that even after six years, there are individuals who do not let humans to get close. However, respondents highlighted the ability of some individuals to regain trust in humans. Some come from unbearable situations of abuse and exploitation, yet, after a while, they manage to tolerate the human presence and finally trust their caregivers. Some will never do it. "Some teach us that it is possible to forgive" (Int2). What emerged from the conversations is that caregivers and volunteers do not force the contact with nonhuman animals. This approach seeks to give primary importance to the animals' will to enter in relationship.

Even if in sanctuaries the contact and the relationship with humans is not imposed on nonhumans, they can be useful on some occasions. Indeed, a relationship of trust allow caregivers to perform specific treatments or therapies on individuals who need them. Int3 brought the example of a pig who regained trust in humans after several month from the arrival at the sanctuary. The trust allowed a caregiver to treat an ear infection through ear drops without the need to block and immobilize the pig, a practice that often causes stress

on animals. "When he first arrived [referring to the pig]" he said, "this would not have been possible".

Care and healing represent fundamental aspects of the sanctuary's mission. Daily practices of care allow animals to always have available water and good quality food and to sleep, eat and gaze in a clean environment. Another important condition for the health and wellbeing of nonhuman animals is the presence of a shelter and adequate spaces for their needs. In this regard, both Int1 and Int 2 mentioned what Abrell (2016, 240) has defined as the "sanctuary paradox", namely the necessity to hold and contain animals in enclosed spaces. Int1 said that this is something they often reflect on, with the aim of providing to the animals the maximum level of autonomy and freedom within the physical and management limitations of a sanctuary. Then he added: "We work so that sanctuaries will no longer exist in the future, we would like to close tomorrow because that would mean that there are no more animals to be saved". Accordingly, Int 2 claimed: "On the assumption that sanctuaries should not even exist because they are bigger cages, what we can do is offer to them the best treatments and care, and a life free from human oppression". Animals are certainly subjected to spatial limits and small constraints, but these limitations are always related to their safeness. For example, birds are usually protected by special fences to avoid predators from the outside, and smaller animals could be separated from larger animals to avoid accidents.

Moreover, we should not forget that most of the animals that arrive at sanctuaries are individuals who are not used to live in the open, and probably would not survive in larger unknown environments and in conditions of complete autonomy. The desire to give them back their freedom, in fact, clashes with the issues and difficulties that nonhumans may encounter outside the sanctuary, such as obtaining water and food, possible accidents, predation, hunting and so on. These challenges, which would not represent an issue for animals born in the wild, are very problematic for individuals born and raised within farming systems. Even though the ideal would be to have huge spaces available, in the reality caregivers and volunteers in sanctuaries must deal with economic and practical management difficulties. As Int2 declared "We are always in the middle between what we want to do and what we can actually do".

We should also remember that many animals are injured and made disabled by the industrial complex in which they had been placed. Indeed, disabled animals are not incidental in the A-IC. In a way, all farm animals, far from their archetypes, are rendered disabled by this industry that through time has modified, drained, and taken to extremes their bodies. In

the A-IC, disability is defined in terms of productivity. Here the norm is represented by the over productive body, while the one who does not keep up with the frenetic production is disabled, completely devalued, and thus disposable. A common ableist narrative concerning animal health in farms is the "better off dead" narrative (Taylor, 2017), according to which, in certain conditions of disability, death is more desirable than life (as if death was not already their predefined destiny).

In her work *Beasts of Burden* (2017) Sunaura Taylor explores the concepts of disability and ableism, two social construction that are projected on both human and nonhuman animals. On her discussion about human understanding of disability affecting animals she writes:

> Many of our ideas about animals are formed by our assumption that only the "fittest" animals survive, which negates the value and even the naturalness of such experiences as vulnerability, weakness, and interdependence. When disabilities occur, we assume that "nature will run her course," that the natural process for a disabled animal is to die, rendering living disabled animals not only aberrant but unnatural.
>
> (Taylor, 2017, 85)

However, sanctuaries offer numerous examples of disabled animals who live and thrive. Andrea, a cow born in a dairy farm and now hosted at Progetto Cuori Liberi, is a living example. Int2 told me that Andrea arrived at the sanctuary with a severe infection that was affecting her four legs. Had she remained in the farm, she would have been suppressed. At Cuori Liberi, after a treatment of antibiotics and an anti-inflammatory cure, Andrea has recovered the use of three legs and now compensates for the lack of the fourth limb by shifting its weight forward and walking is her own unique way.

Disability is ubiquitous among farmed animals. To satisfy the growing demand of cheap animal products, nonhuman animals are bred in such physical extremes that they are likely to endure bruises, abscesses, broken bones, reproductive disorders, chronic illness, and serious psychological issues (Taylor, 2017). These injured, diseased, deformed, debilitated, or exhausted animals represent an economic burden, and thus are disposed rather than cared (Somers & Soldatic, 2020). The only "care" they receive is represented by preventive antibiotic treatments that will allow them to survive till their slaughter. The recent diseases outbreaks (such as the mad cow disease, foot to mouth disease, swine flu, avian flu, and the most recent wave of African swine fever) have highlighted the leading contribution farming systems has in the survival and spread of viruses. Somers and Soldatic (2020, 38) wrote that

"A healthy animal in a factory farm is an oxymoron, hence the necessity of antibiotics" and as we have already highlighted, antibiotics abuse leads to increasingly resistant and virulent pathogens.

In farming systems, illness and disability represent a factor of economic loss, with huge implications for profit. Ill animals, and those who have been in contact with ill individuals, having completely lost their market value, are not only viewed as killable, but also as disposable (Taylor, 2017).

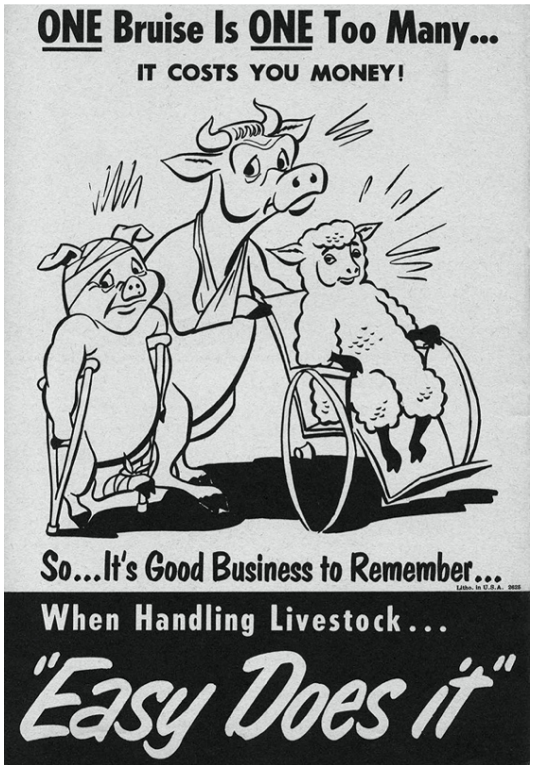

Figure 4.1: Profit has always represented one of the main reasons why farmers shout not mistreat and beat farmed animals. The figure shows the cover of a pamphlet from the 1940s or 1950s by Swift & Co, a meat processing plant. The aim was to persuade employees to not use excessive violence on animals because it cost money to the industry (Taylor, 2017; Image source: http://www.ep.tc.)

What also needs to be highlighted is that disabled bodies are not only the result of the unhealthy environment they inhabit. Animals such as chickens and pigs grow and arrive to weight excessively more than they usually would. As mentioned before, the bodies of these animals are the result of years of selection and normalization with the aim of producing controllable and living machines capable of an ever-increasing production. These animals, whose legs can now barely carry the weight of their own bodies, are intentionally and

instrumentally rendered disabled to produce larger and leaner muscles. As Taylor states, they are "manufactured to be disabled" (2017, 96). This manipulation then makes it difficult to counterpose what is normal and healthy from what is abnormal, disabled, or ill. As Piazzesi (2015) explains, the normality for the breeder represents the "non-pathological", which translates into (re)productive normality. In Piazzesi's (2015, 98) words:

> The norm that we find in intensive farming is therefore entirely focused on the discourse of productivity, and since productivity is closely linked to the biological functions of the animal body-machine, it is easy for this type of productive normality to overlap and be confused with the discourse on the health and illness of the animal. […] The highly productive animal is the fully healthy animal; the body that alters the productive standards is evidently unhealthy.

Even though sanctuaries are places where people try to restitute to nonhuman animals what was taken from them, namely their lives, what is not often mentioned is the constant closeness to death, which derives from the unfortunate existence animals have conducted. In this regard Int2 affirmed:

> Sometimes you have to deal with very strong feelings, some of which are really destructive. You are so close to life, but equally so close to death. People may think you get used to it, but you don't. So many animals arrive to the sanctuary, and they are physically and mentally devastated, some die within a short time. It is sad to look in their eyes and see that they no longer have life in them.

The care and the treatment of nonhuman animals cannot overlook economic factors. Indeed, as for any animal belonging to any species (human and nonhuman), medical care often involves very high costs. Breeders have no interest is trying to treat and heal animals they raise. Within the productive system, animals are just mere disposable pieces of a gear that must continue to work. In their profit optics, ill, disabled, and non-performative bodies represent wastes that need to be eliminated and substituted. Moreover, it is important to remember that those who least of all are committed to protecting the health of animals are also those who receive thousands of euros in subsidies every year.

The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which represent the largest expense (around 30%) of the European total budget, strongly influences its food system (Kortleve et al., 2024). The European Commission defines the Common Agricultural Policy

as "a partnership between society and agriculture that ensures a stable supply of food, safeguards farmers' income, protects the environment and keeps rural areas vibrant" (European Commission). This partnership was established by the European Union to ensure a fair living standard for farmers, to stabilize markets, and to guarantee security of supply and reasonable prices for consumers. Despite the wide recognition of the necessity of a transition to a low-emission food system (which translates to a transition towards a more plant-rich diets), CAP continue to support high emissions livestock farming through direct payments, commodity support for livestock products, or explicit support linked to the production and consumption of animal products, such as the EU School Milk Scheme (Kortleve et al., 2024). In a study published by Nature food Kortleve, Mogollón, Harwatt and Behrens (Kortleve et al., 2024, 289) write:

> Animal products [in 2013] supplied only 35& of calories and 65% of proteins consumed in the European Union. Yet the large majority, 82% of the CAP budget for food production, was spent on animal products, of which more than half (44%) was allocated to animal feed production.

Int3 introduced this problematic topic, commenting that through this system of subsidies, which is possible thanks to the public money, "it is as if I become an accomplice to their business". Quite the opposite, animal sanctuaries do not receive any kind of economic aid from institutions. They stay standing exclusively with their own resources which derive mainly from private donations.

Another interesting aspect that emerged from all the respondents concerns the ageing of animals. In animal sanctuaries, individuals regain the right to age. Comparing the life expectancy of the so-called farm animals with their natural life expectancy reveals a huge sad reality. The natural life expectancy of these animals is incredibly longer compared to the age at which they are slaughtered. As the images below show, cows, pigs and sheep can live up to 20 years, but in farming systems are otherwise killed within few years, if not months, from their birth. Broiler chickens, who are normally slaughtered 40 days after their birth, can live on average up to ten years. Concerning this point, during the conversation with Int3 he explained that unfortunately very often the animals which arrive at the sanctuary do not reach their natural life expectancy. In particular, chickens, turkey, and geese who come from intensive systems die after few years because they develop severe respiratory syndromes,

infections due to feet mutilations, and their nervous and circulatory system are not able to support life any longer.

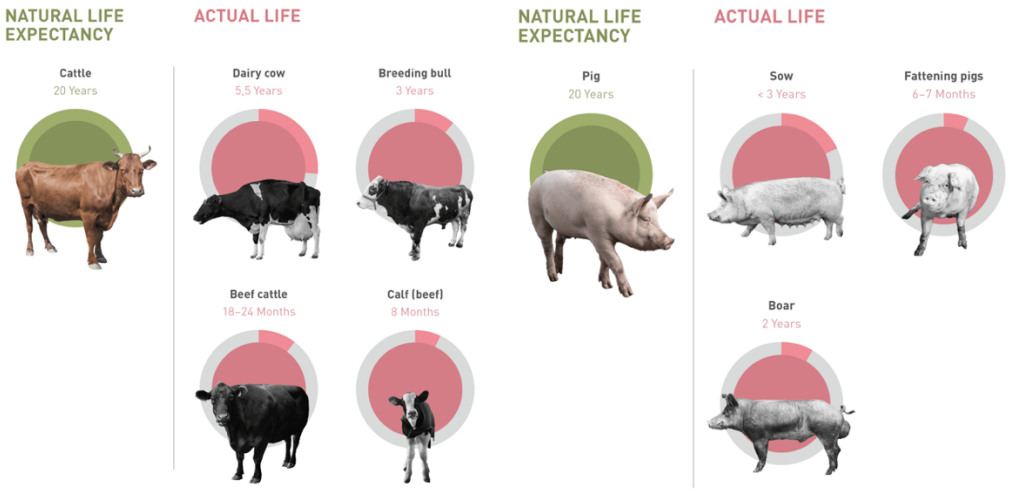

Figure 4.2 and **Figure 4.3**: The life expectancy of cows and pigs inside and outside the farming system (Four Paws International, 2024, April 22, Source Image: https://www.four-paws.org/campaigns-topics/topics/farm-animals/age-of-farm-animals).

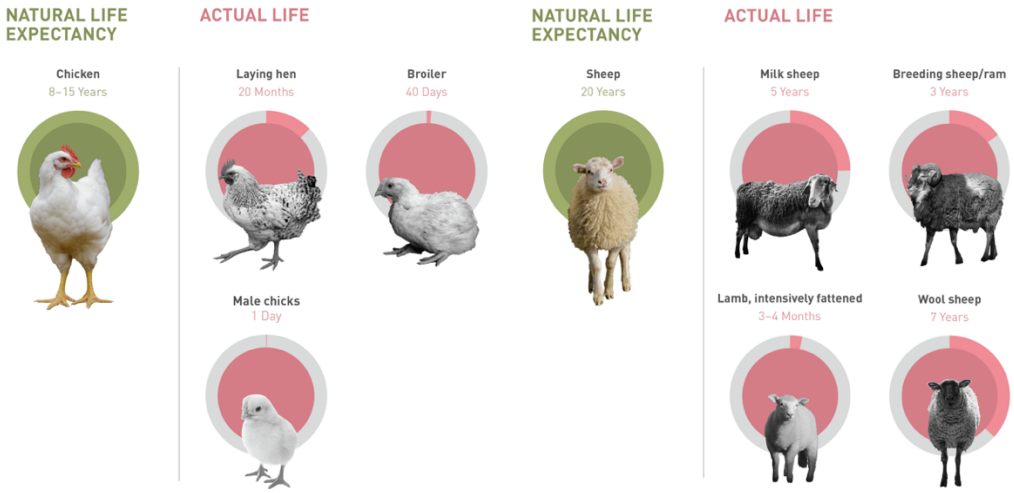

Figure 4.4 and **Figure 4.5**: The life expectancy of chickens and sheep inside and outside the farming systems (Four Paws International, 2024, April 22, Source Image: https://www.four-paws.org/campaigns-topics/topics/farm-animals/age-of-farm-animals).

Caring and assisting of elderly farm animals is something that can seldom be experienced outside of sanctuaries. For this reason, sanctuaries were the first realities to experience with the treatment of certain diseases that were not contemplated in the traditional veterinary world. Aging means encountering pathologies that rarely manifest themselves during the first years of life, such as oncological diseases. In these cases, care becomes a very delicate matter.

Int1 and Int 2 both mentioned the fact that sometimes not even veterinarians know how to deal with pathologies related to the aging. Int2 added:

> Sometimes at the clinic, veterinarians thank us because we bring them animals who are so old and who have developed tumors or other kind of diseases, and this give them the opportunity to see pathologies they have never seen before […] Some veterinarians have defined as four-year-old pig as 'old', when outside farms they can live up to 15, even 20 years.

The last respondent who took part to the interviews, Int5, is a veterinary who has gained experience working for several years with animals hosed in different sanctuaries across Italy. She explained that since she was a child, she has always been close to animals, not only with those animals we consider as pets, but also the ones we see belonging to the farm. "For me", she said, "they were just companion animals". During our conversation, she explicitly criticized the problematic contradictions and the speciesist and utilitarian approach that characterize the current veterinary practice.

4.4 Speciesism in the veterinary practice

Veterinarians, just like all individuals in our society, have grown up accustomed to the idea that some animals are life companions for us humans, and other animals represent sources of food or services. What then happens when they enter the veterinary school is that this idea is reinforced both in the theory and in the practice.

According to Int5, from the first year of university, veterinary students become accustomed to ideologically and practically separate pets from livestock (in Italian the expressions used are *animali d'affezione* and *animali da reddito*). Despite the growing awareness and the development of new sensibilities concerning the animal wellbeing, the ethical question does not occupy a pivotal role in the current academic training of veterinarians. Quite the opposite, the veterinary practice, and particularly within the subcategory of farm animals, is anchored to a vision based on exploitation and profit (Gunnarsson, 2006). Whether they are used for companionship, entertainment, experimentation or as source of food, nonhumans seem to be always measured according to the benefits they can bring to humans.

In his study from 2006, after examining the definitions of health and disease in several veterinary textbooks, Gunnarsson concludes that "[t]he naive definition of health in veterinary medicine seems to be that health is no more than the very absence of disease, which can be considered as a dichotomous definition" (1).

De Paula Vieira and Anthony (2020) emphasize the importance of promoting animal welfare science and veterinary ethics in order to foster a more ethical and critical thinking within the veterinary practice. Moreover, they underline the urgent need for veterinarians to use their voice in issues involving the moral status of animals. In particular, De Paula Vieira and Anthony (2020, 7) claim that the next challenges for veterinarians and the veterinary profession involve: 1) Re-envisioning the nature of disease treatment that goes beyond traditional conceptions of health or clinical matters, including animal welfare; 2) Re-imagining professional duties when it comes to disease prevention at the intersection of animal-human-ecosystem health; 3) Developing core competencies in animal welfare science and ethics in order to navigate discourses concerning competing priorities and socio-political ideologies and to provide professional leadership in animal welfare; 4) Taking a more active role in the development of novel network devices, monitoring technologies and automated animal welfare solutions, and understanding their effects on the welfare of animals, human-animal relationships, and the veterinary profession in general.

This revised multidisciplinary veterinary approach is consonant with the objectives declared by the One Health Initiative and underline the importance of a holistic vision of diseases, of the intersection of human-nonhuman-ecosystem health, and of the need to extend ethical responsibilities and wellbeing concerns to the nonhuman species.

The American Veterinary Medical Association underlines the urgency for veterinarians to have proficiency in the animal welfare science and ethics in order to become leading advocates for the welfare of nonhuman animals (De Paula Vieira & Anthony, 2020). However, in the animal welfare narrative, an important consideration is missing. The concept of animal welfare keeps alive the rooted anthropocentric conviction that it is acceptable to confine, breed and kill sentient beings according to our will. This vision maintains some nonhuman animals inside the human-made category of farm animals, in which individuals are considered as expendable, controllable, and exploitable. As evidence of this, talking about ethics and welfare, De Paula Vieira and Anthony (2020) write that "acquiring skills in ethical reasoning and animal welfare science methods" help veterinarians to "better engage with a variety of stakeholders" (17), that "the involvement of veterinarians can ensure that more

attention is paid to monitoring the welfare and health of animals on-farm" (16), and that that welfare scientists or veterinarians trained in animal welfare can "determine the best possible techniques for humanely terminating animals under different conditions" (16). This demonstrates that within the discourses around animal ethics and welfare, nonhumans are still seen as producers of goods or services, and their life are never considered an end in themselves.

The debate concerning the huge economic and political interests connected with the exploitation and slaughter of animals in the farming industry and the ethical battles in favor of their protection should see veterinarians at the forefront. However, they are generally/usually the greatest absentees of this debate. Veterinarians, and especially the so-called livestock veterinarians, are instead instructed so that they can ignore the cognitive dissonance to which they are exposed.

The University of Milan holds one of the most ancient university degrees in Italy dedicated to the veterinary medicine. In the Study Manifesto of the degree it is claimed that:

> The objective of the degree course is to train graduates with technical-professional and ethical skills that enable them to play their role in the treatment and prevention of diseases of livestock, companion animals and non-conventional species, in animal health supervision within the national health service in relation to zoonotic risks and potential repercussions on the economic-productive sector, in the control of food of animal origin and related production technologies, in the protection of animal welfare and in the technical and sanitary management of production, nutrition and reproduction of farmed species.
>
> (Università degli Studi di Milano)

Reading the study plan of the degree, it is evident that a huge amount of training is devoted in preparing veterinarians to be employed in the meat, dairy and slaughterhouse industries and for these sub-fields of study conscientious objection is not foreseen.

In commenting the academic path of veterinarians, Int5 added that "Something that is never said is that even livestock veterinarians get accustomed to think in terms of economic savings". They operate so that nonhuman animals can continue to live and endure the breeding conditions, and especially under the condition that no traces of drugs remain in their bodies, despite the mission of the profession would be to defend the health and wellbeing of nonhuman animals. Indeed, veterinary medicine graduate students are required to abide by an oath. The professional oath of the veterinary profession recites:

> On joining the Profession and aware of the importance of the act I perform, I solemnly promise to devote my skills and abilities to the protection of human health, care and welfare of animals, fostering respect for them as sentient beings; to promote public health and the protection of the environment; to engage in my own continuous improvement by updating my knowledge as science evolves; to carry out my practice in full freedom and independence of judgment, according to science and conscience, with dignity and decorum, in accordance with the ethical and deontological principles proper to veterinary medicine.
>
> (Federazione Nazionale Ordini Veterinari Italiani)

How can the respect of sentient beings and the promotion of public health and environmental protection be implemented in places of suffering like animal farms, which are also recognized as primary causes of environmental degradation?

4.5 Hands off the sanctuaries

At Cuori Liberi, the management of the wave of African swine fever had begun several months before that infamous September day, with the raising of the double fences in the pigs' area and the installation of electrified nets outside the shelter to prevent possible contact with wild boars. The sanctuary is nested in the Pavia's countryside, where dozens of pig farms are located. For years, the provinces of this area have been waging a battle with the wild boars to try to contain the virus of the ASF. In fact, wild boar population has been decimated by hunters. What happens periodically, however, is that the ASF virus arise within pig farms, the same farms that segregate the animals inside endless sheds with no possibility of exit nor any contact the world outside.

During the 2023 Summer, a new wave of African swine fever hit the Lombardy region, and in particular the provinces of Alessandria, Pavia, and Piacenza. In early August, at Zinasco, the owner of a pig farm and the associated veterinarian went under investigation by the Pavia Public Prosecutor on suspicion of omitting to report the first cases of suspicious deaths (ANSA Regione Lombardia, 29 agosto 2023). August is also the month in which manure from the farms is shed in the surrounding fields. As we previously explained, infected fluids, blood, and manure, when dispersed, contaminate the environment and can easily be transported by humans and farm machineries. Int1, in commenting on the situation of early August declared "We were in the middle of a fire, and we didn't know it".

In the 2023 Summer, more than 40,000 pigs have been culled in the Pavia provinces[10]. Among them there were the nine liberated pigs hosted at Cuori Liberi who were living their life, free from human logic of power.

On September 20, 2023, at dawn, the police and veterinarians of the Health Protection Agency of Pavia arrived at the sanctuary. The plan was to dismantle the garrison that activists from all over Italy had been maintaining for weeks at the Cuori Liberi in order to protect the nonhuman animals that lived there. On the 15th of September, authorities attempted for the first time to enter the sanctuary, but the strength of the resistance of the activists managed to block the intrusion.

Figure 4.6: The garrison outside the gates of the sanctuary Progetto Cuori Liberi (Ferretti, Essere Animali, 21 Settembre 2023)

[10] In Italy in 2024, the wave of African swine fever showed no signs of interruption or decline, on the contrary, it underwent a sharp increase. From the beginning of this year, almost 118 thousand pigs were killed to try to stop the virus which managed to infect 50 farms in the whole country (La Pira, 2024, September 17). The current epidemic, which took its first steps in January 2022, nowadays managed to reach eight Italian regions. In a situation that seems to be uncontrollable, what emerges is the complete failure of the biosecurity measures, of the health authorities' interventions, and of the massive culling activity, that have condemned an impressive number of nonhuman individuals to death. Above all, this situation has revealed that the real problem is inherent in the very system that is hit and in which this virus proliferates, namely the farming system.

Five days later, they arrived with the intention of completing their mission. That morning, the physical and psychological violence was brutal and extreme. Along the physical sings inflicted on the activists, who put their bodies between the attacker and the attacked, the police raged with threats, insults, and degrading sexist and speciesist comments.

Figure 4.7: The despair after the killing of the pigs at Cuori Liberi (Ferretti, Essere Animali, 21 Settembre 2023)

The violence exercised on the people and the execution of the nine pigs of Cuori Liberi represented a defeat from the point of view of the human, nonhuman, and civil rights. It also represented a defeat for the veterinary profession and for the medical research. Int2, in this regard, said:

> We knew from the beginning that, like in the farms, they would come here to kill them all. What we had asked was to manage and care for our animals, with our veterinarian. If they had contracted the virus, they would have died naturally, or through euthanasia, in conditions of severe suffering. If some would have survived, we would have made sure to contain them and secure them within special facilities. In case some individuals had survived we had made ourselves available to perform tests and take blood samples to understand why some had survived. If instead they had all died, at least they would have died free.

On the contrary, the trusted veterinarians of Cuori Liberi were not even allowed to enter and assist the animals during the process of euthanasia, conducted by the veterinarians of the Health Protection Agency. Agreeing with Int 2, Int5 highlighted how the pigs who have

survived the virus would have been a very important resource in order to study a disease for which there is still no recognized effective cure. As Int5 claimed, "It was a huge mistake not to try to understand why some pigs had managed to survive […] our oath is to heal, and not to kill. Killing represents the failure of our medical profession". It would have been essential to save those nine lives for antispeciesist reasons, for ethics, but even for scientific reasons, to understand what chances of recovery exist, since for now, the only protocol in case of ASF involves a general and unconditional culling. A case like Cuori Liberi had to be defended also to preserve a knowledge and a possible understanding of this disease.

ASF has revealed to be an economic emergency rather than a health emergency. Indeed, these deaths were meant to protect the commercial interests of an industry that is destructive in every possible way. The measures adopted so far have been useless in the attempt to contain the ASF virus. Int5 claimed that "none of what was done, was done to safeguard the health of the animals. On the contrary the goal was to try to protect the business that kills thousands and thousands of lives". Policies remain anchored to an ideology of domination and oppression that does not want to waste time in finding alternative solutions but prefers to perpetuate a system of suffering and death.

The events of that 20th September have left a painful indelible mark of the memories of all the people who everyday fight to defend the rights of nonhuman animals. Soon the aguish turned into rage and the will to take to the streets and make one's voice heard, to march and shout in the face of the institutions "Hands off the sanctuaries". From that day, a new awareness and need were born the need to fight to ensure that what happened to Bartolomeo, Carolina, Crusca, Crosta, Dorothy, Mercoledì, Pumba, Spino, and Ursula, will not happen again. The violence inflicted on the people who were protecting the sanctuary and the death of the nine pigs of Cuori Liberi have not repressed the will to fight and resist. Suffering and sorrow soon gave way to anger and a desire for justice. On October 7, several thousand people from all over Italy participated to the national demonstration promoted by the Rete dei Santuari to call for the recognition of sanctuaries as distinct places from farms, also in case of health emergencies.

As emerged from the literature and from the interviews, sanctuaries are places of total liberation where the purpose of saving lives goes beyond any distinction of species. The participants desire to take part in the sanctuary movement derives mainly from: 1) the mission to dismantle the speciesism that persists in human practices of rescue and care, which most of the time are reserved to what we consider as companion animals; 3) the desire to

contribute in helping nonhuman individuals who managed to survive the systems of production and death; 2) the willingness to know the animals in their own terms, far from situations of exploitation and abuse.

In sanctuaries, interspecies relationships are neither forced nor required. Instead, they are first and foremost based on respect for the hosted individuals who can decide whether to interact or not with the caregivers, volunteers, or visitors. If relationships emerge naturally, they are the result of the non-human's will to interact. At the same time relationships may have an important role because, as nonhuman animals are social individuals, these can contribute to their general wellbeing. Furthermore, acquiring a relationship of trust can help to carry out care practices and treatments for animals that need them.

Exploring the concept of health and wellbeing in the context of the sanctuary, it emerged that care is not simply a matter of achieving a good physical status. Care undoubtedly means providing means of survival, a shelter, and medical treatment, but care also means give to the animals the possibility to regain their freedom, their confidence, sociality, and provide a safe environment of exchange and stimuli. Care in sanctuaries is not unidirectional. Having the possibility to actively help animals and eventually enter in closer contact with them can generate remarkable healing phenomena in humans.

Without forgetting that the mission of the sanctuaries is to manage the distortions of a system that must be overcome as soon as possible, I believe that these places can provide the example that a different and peaceful coexistence with other species is not only possible, but also beneficial for both humans and nonhumans.

Conclusion

The recent increase of alarming diseases outbreaks involving both human and nonhuman animals demonstrates the urgent need for a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and holistic approach to health. The One Initiative was born in the early 2000s to satisfy this need. The aim of this policy framework, which resulted from the joint efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Health Organization, is to simultaneously protect and promote human, nonhuman, and environmental health. However, One Health seems far from achieving its unifying goals. In the first chapter of my dissertation I have presented a brief overview of the One Health Initiative (OHI), highlighting the premises, the major historical steps, and the recent developments in relation to infectious diseases. Later, the limitations of this vision have been presented, arguing on the negligence in taking a stand against the systematic abuse of nonhuman animals in factory farms. The lure of this unitary vision hides paradoxes and inconsistencies, especially in its anthropocentric, capitalistic, and utilitarian consideration of nonhuman lives. While the initiative should be an opportunity to question traditional ways in which we relate with the nonhuman world, One Health is never employed to take a strong public position against the use and abuse of nonhuman animals within the whole Animal-Industrial Complex. I have illustrated how animal farming generates externalities that are completely in opposition to the goals declared by One Health. In this chapter, factory farms, defined also as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOS), have been denounced as legitimized places of sufferance and abuse, where animals are forced to live a life of confinement, overcrowding, and filthiness, and where their health, conceived as mere fitness of the productive body, is often supported by the massive use of drugs and antibiotics. Moreover, CAFOs have been further problematized as leading contributors to the detriment consequences for ecosystems and human health. For this reason, I have argued the need for One Health to embrace a more-than-human approach to health and an ethical consideration upon the (mis)treatment of nonhuman animals.

The second chapter further demonstrates why the current intentions and practices to protect nonhuman health are nowhere near the stated intentions of the OHI. In failing to

stand against the productive industrial system that exploit and profit from animal bodies, One Health overlooks the connection between intensive farming and the growing development and spread of infectious diseases. Indeed, as the American Veterinary Medical Association stated, "Our increasing interdependence with animals and their products may well be the single most critical risk factor to our health and well-being with regard to infectious diseases" (King at al., 2008, 261).

After an overview on the African swine fever (ASF) disease, on its ways of transmission, spread and control measures, the practice of mass culling has been openly criticized. Culling, namely the control policy used to prevent the spread of a disease through mass killing, is the only biosecurity measure implied in case of ASF outbreaks. This mass killing is legitimized because it is considered as the only possible solution to protect the health of the animals who have not been yet in contact with the virus. This practice, however, has proven ineffective in controlling the spread of the virus, violent in its implementation, devoid of any ethical consideration, and based on a mere economic calculation of costs and benefits. Analyzing the way in which the epidemic of African swine fever has been managed by the Italian political and health authorities has allowed me to show how the biosecurity measures put in place to control this emergency are simply based on economic parameters. Indeed, even if the virus does not infect humans and has a limited range of hosts, namely domestic pigs and wild boars, it represents a serious concern for the meat markets, the government, and the lobbyists. I therefore argue that the wave of African swine fever was feared and managed as an economic emergency rather than a health one.

This restricted vision, which considers animals as mere replaceable units rather than sentient beings, beyond having violently killed tens of thousands of nonhuman individuals, led to the death sentence of the nine liberated pigs who were living at the Progetto Cuori Liberi sanctuary. This dissertation criticizes this decision, considering it as lacking any scientific logic or ethical and moral consideration. I have dedicated the third chapter of this work to the exploration of the world of farmed animal sanctuaries and of their mission to dismantle traditional hierarchies of power between human and nonhuman beings. These places have been presented as places of rescue and care, ethically and politically opposed to the industrial farm system. They display and alternative narrative about nonhuman animals, proposing a different way of relating with them and demonstrating a commitment to assure them an existence free from exploitation. I believe that the subversive political act of deeming animals worthy of care, which stands in the opposite direction to the careful calculus of

zootechnics, challenges the still too limited anthropocentric approach of the One Health Initiative.

The concepts of health, wellbeing and care have been analyzed, referring to the 2020 Five Domains Model by Professor David Mellor and Dr. Cam Reid, and highlighting the need to consider health as the result of the combinations of a good physical and mental status. This consideration of health and wellbeing results particularly important to critically reflect on the concept of animal welfare, often associated to farms. In those facilities no psychological or social dimension is taken into consideration. Health is associated to a physical fitness which should be functional to produce meat and animal products.

Later, the limits and challenges of farmed animal sanctuaries that have been highlighted by some scholars have been discussed in this chapter. One important limitation for nonhuman animals in sanctuaries concerns the fact of being enclosed within fences, and this may reinforce the assumption about where farm animals belong. While recognizing the limitations and the possible contradictions of sanctuaries, I believe that it is fundamental to remember that the purpose of these places is to provide a temporary solution for the victims of this distorted system. These places demonstrate that care, beyond the expensive medical treatments, also means donate liberty, confidence, sociality. Sanctuaries are not the ultimate step, rather they are point of departure in our journey of moral repair.

Finally, the Italian context in relation to the sanctuary movement has been presented, underlining the fundamental role of the *Rete dei Santuari di Animali liberi*, a network of sanctuaries which combine and coordinate shared missions and projects. This network plays a key role in supporting Italian sanctuaries in legal and political battles. In particular, it played a pivotal role when the culling ordinance emanated by the Health Protection Agency of Pavia was addressed to Cuori Liberi. The fourth chapter of my dissertation is dedicated to the empirical study I have conducted with some involved caregivers, volunteers, and a veterinary of the Progetto Cuori Liberi sanctuary. Through a series of in-depth interviews, I had the opportunity to explore the spaces, relationships, and interspecies practices of care, and to understand the challenges they had to confront in the face of the ASF wave. Through a discussion guide divided into four section and composed of twelve questions I have focused on the participants' experience at the sanctuary, the interspecies relationship they establish with nonhumans, the management of health and care, and the perception/narrative of the events that took place before and after the arrival of the ASF. Two important aspects that emerged from the five respondents who participated in this study are the following: first,

that interactions and relationships with humans are not requested nor expected from the animals, but they may naturally emerge if they want to (stressing the importance of animal consent); second the practices of care generate mutually positive effect on both humans and nonhumans. In this regard, caregivers and volunteers revealed how working at the sanctuary and knowing they are helping nonhuman animals generate feelings of peace, comfort, and fulfillment in them. These conversations also allowed me to critically reflect on some important concepts such as speciesism, disability, oldness, freedom, and death. What unanimously emerged from all the conversations is the absolute centrality of the physical and mental wellbeing of the animals who enter the sanctuary. When nonhumans enter a sanctuary, they are given a promise, that is, the promise of a life far from the anthropocentric and capitalistic manipulation of their existence. Here their personalities are valued and celebrated in their uniqueness. Having the opportunity to visit these places, or even just listen to the stories of caregivers and volunteers, helps to sympathize with the nonhuman individuals, to understand their past struggles and the victories they have achieved. This awareness inevitably leads to a different consideration of animal life. It therefore becomes clear that they deserve to grow old, to be cared for, to manage their own time and to die as free individuals.

Before concluding this last chapter, I have concentrated upon the ideologies and the current debate concerning the traditional veterinary practice, problematizing the notions of welfare science and veterinary ethics. I sustain that the entrenched speciesism which is present in the field of veterinary medicine does not align with the ultimate purpose of the medical practice, nor with the objectives proposed by the One Health Initiative. Moreover, referring to the mass culling which took place in several pig farms in Lombardy and to the killing of the nine pigs of Cuori Liberi, I argue how these biosecurity measures and the way they are performed stand in contrast with the veterinary oath to care for and respect animals as sentient beings.

The killing of the nine pigs of Cuori Liberi and the violent blows inflected on the activists who were trying to protect them represent a brute act of oppression for both humans and nonhumans. The resistance did not stop that day, but rather generated a new awareness in an increasingly large segment of society that now decide to oppose itself to the systematic exploitation of thousands of nonhuman animal bodies.

The recent news reports on the culling of 118,000 pigs since the beginning of 2024 demonstrate how the policies and measures implemented in Italy have been completely

inefficient in controlling the virus and safeguarding the lives of the animals. These recent events represent a proof of the fact that the real problem in is inherent in the very system that this virus is destroying, namely the farming system.

In a time in which we witness violence and conflicts daily, giving value to Life and to every form of life has an even greater and deeper meaning. This work aims to demonstrate how the unifying and holistic vision of One Health is incredibly necessary but at the same time extremely far from its fulfillment. The imperative mission of an initiative that aims to universally protect health must first and foremost restore the value of every single life as it is unique, unrepeatable, and morally worthy.

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