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## **'Animals First: The influence of practices of care within an animal sanctuary'**

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**Universiteit  
Leiden**

**MSc Visual Ethnography – CADS Master Programme**

**Thesis**



**'Animals First: The influence of practices of care within an animal sanctuary'**

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**Supervised by Federico de Musso**

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## **Abstract**

This research, an ethnographic account combined with an audiovisual output, focuses on practices of care within Dierenthuis, an animal sanctuary. This animal sanctuary takes in animals who, for any reason, do not fit into our society anymore. I conducted fieldwork at this sanctuary for two months. My methods included participant observation, qualitative interviewing, and filming for the audiovisual output. The written part of this thesis will focus shortly on the methodology of doing visual ethnography, but furthermore, will be a theoretical, anthropological argument, without clear references to the audiovisual output. The main research question is how the practices of care form a link between human-animal relationships and animal welfare within the sanctuary. In answering this research question, I focused on how practices of care influence the relationships between the sanctuary workers and the animals, the standard of animal welfare within the sanctuary, and the public role of the sanctuary. Through analysing my findings, with the help of the theoretical framework, I conclude that practices of care form a link between human-animal relationships and animal welfare, as practices of care make animal welfare centralized within these relationships. Simultaneously, the standard of animal welfare is formed by human-animal relationships, as the workers choose to recognize and meet the animals' objective and subjective needs. This also includes balancing the public role of the sanctuary with practices of care, but always prioritizing the well-being of the animals.

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## **Introduction**

### **The animal sanctuary movement**

The animal sanctuary movement is growing fast. This movement represents an important response against human violence, abuse, and overall exploitation of non-human animals, hereafter called “animals” (Donaldson, Kymlicka 2015: 50). Over the last few decades, animal sanctuaries all over the world have saved animals from various contexts in which they are often exploited, harmed or killed by human actions. There are different types of animal sanctuaries, which cater to the needs of different kinds of animals. For example, there are sanctuaries for farmed animals, exotic animals, and companion animals such as cats and dogs. Systematic human violence against animals on a large scale makes sanctuaries necessary (Abrell 2017: 2). The practices of care, carried out by sanctuary workers, create spaces in which care-based relationships between humans and animals are constructed. These relationships are often focused on the animals’ well-being, within a world that often uses animals for human benefit. Thus, animal sanctuaries often stand in contrast to conventional human-animal relationships (Abrell 2017: 3).

### **Personal interest in the field**

My interest in animal sanctuaries lies in the daily workings of such places. What motivates the sanctuary workers? What kind of dynamic exists between animals and humans? How are concepts such as care and animal welfare defined? How does an animal sanctuary situate itself within a society where animals are often used for human benefit? All my life, I have felt a strong connection with animals and a sense of injustice to the cruelty humans often inflict on them. My fascination for this topic is also caused by a deeper conviction that animals should have just as many rights as humans on this planet. In my opinion, a human does not have any more right to live on this planet than an ant. Still, humans subject animals to domestication, entertainment, exploitation, and harm for their own needs. I see this conviction reflected in some literature on animal ethics. For example, Gruen states that despite differences or similarities between humans and animals, humans cannot justify violating the well-being of animals (Gruen 2015: 14). Pierce and Bekoff argue that even though humans seem to prioritize freedom above all else, they systematically deny animals their freedom by subjecting them to human needs and wants (Pierce, Bekoff 2022: 229). As a human, I am aware that I also participate in patterns, behaviours, and overall in a society that affirms this anthropocentric perspective. The point of this thesis is not to tackle this view. However, my conviction against this view has inspired me to research animal sanctuaries, as I see them as spaces in which conventional human-animal relationships are challenged (Abrell 2017: 3). I want to understand how these spaces within themselves work. Littlejohn argues that questioning one’s ontological assumptions and

reflections enables humans to perceive and relate to non-human beings in a different manner (Littlejohn 2020: 38). With this research, by showing an ethnographic account of an animal sanctuary and the daily practices of care that happen there, I hope to achieve what Littlejohn states here.

### **Field site**

My field site consisted of Dierenthuis, a sanctuary for domesticated animals, mostly cats and dogs. They take in animals that, for any reason, do not fit into our society anymore. All the animals that live at Dierenthuis have some sort of history. Some of them were abused or neglected, some of them are sick or have a disability, some of them come from warzones, and some of them come from family situations where they did not fit. The animals that live at Dierenthuis stay there for the rest of their lives and do not get relocated. The sanctuary consists of 3,5 hectares of land. Cats and dogs live (mostly) separately for their safety. They live in groups and have rooms where they can walk freely. The rooms are all decorated in a cozy, homey style with beds, cushions, and sofas strewn around. The animals are not in cages (unless for medical reasons) and have all-time access to the outside. There is a huge field on which the dogs get walks in groups three times a day. The workers consist mostly of volunteers and the work itself consists mostly of practices of care, like cleaning, providing fresh water, feeding, paying attention to the animals, giving medicine, and medical care. The mission of the sanctuary is to give these animals the best life possible in a clean, safe environment in good and healthy conditions.

### **Research Question**

I was very curious to research the influence of practices of care on human-animal relationships, the standard of animal welfare, and on the overall workings of the sanctuary. Therefore, my research question is: How do the practices of care form a link between human-animal relationships and animal welfare, within the sanctuary? To research this, I divided this research into three sub-questions. The first sub-question is: How do practices of care form the relationships between the workers and the animals? The second sub-question is: How do practices of care define the standard of animal welfare within the sanctuary? And the third sub-question is: How do practices of care and the public role of the sanctuary mutually affect each other?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The most important concepts of the research to define are care, animal sanctuaries, animal welfare, domestication of animals, and animal disability.

### **Animal Sanctuaries**

Animal sanctuaries can be defined as enclosed spaces, established by humans to provide permanent housing and care for animals that have been rescued from various forms of harm caused by human actions (Abrell 2019: 569). Systematic human violence against animals makes sanctuary work necessary. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, there are many different types of sanctuaries, like sanctuaries for companion animals (Abrell 2017: 2). Animal sanctuaries are defined by the daily practices of care carried out by human caregivers, and the human-animal relationships between the caregivers and the animals in their care. Therefore, they challenge conventional animal industries and ideas about the treatment of animals in our society (Abrell 2019: 571) (Meijer 2021: 38). Most animal sanctuaries aim to provide permanent homes to rescued animals, respecting their individuality and allowing them to express species-typical behaviour while minimizing human control. However, minimizing human control can stand in contrast with the daily practices of care, as a degree of human control is often necessary to ensure the safety of the animals, or because the animals in question are dependent on human management. Animal sanctuaries constantly have to balance animals' freedom against their safety and well-being (Abrell 2017: 3) (Gruen 2011: 159) (Abrell 2019: 571). Some scholars argue that animal sanctuaries can be seen as political spaces that challenge hierarchical divisions between humans and animals (Meijer 2021: 38) (Taylor et al 2023: 222). In this perspective, animals can be seen as ambassadors, raising awareness about animal cruelty through public interaction. However, this model of a public role of animal sanctuaries is criticized by some scholars, forcing animals into a role that is unethical and unmatched by the common mission of animal sanctuaries (Abrell 2019: 574) (Emmerman 2014: 224) (Scotton 2017:100). This is also criticized because it could make humans believe that sanctuaries are the end of animal cruelty, without having to question the structural human violence that is done to animals outside animal sanctuaries (Taylor et al 2023: 220).

### **Care**

Since animal sanctuaries are defined by daily practices of care, it is also important to define care as a concept. Abrell defines care as practices that tend to the needs of the being that receives the care. Care within sanctuaries is influenced by understanding and meeting the subjective and objective needs of animals. This understanding is formed by ideas about who animals are, what they need, and



how they deserve to be treated (Abrell 2016: 217). Thelen defines care in a broader, anthropological way, as an open-ended process, which can result in a positive experience and stable relationships. However, it can also result in domination (Thelen 2021: 5). It expresses the inequality between the giver and the receiver, while also shaping this inequality (12). Abrell defines three main types of care within sanctuaries, namely the treatment and care of injured and sick animals, the objective mundanities of care like the hygienic needs of animals, and caring for the animals' subjective well-being. Unlike many animal industries, sanctuaries look at the subjective needs of animals, such as socialization (Abrell 2016: 237). A very important distinction between care in animal sanctuaries and care in other animal industries is that care in animal sanctuaries is shaped by caring for the well-being of the animal for the benefit of the animal, not the benefit of humans (Abrell 2016: 238). However, sanctuary animals have to accept certain sacrifices, like limitations of their freedom or medical agency, to ensure their well-being (Abrell 2016: 218) (Abrell 2019: 571). Nonetheless, sanctuary animals are often provided with some degree of agency, in which they can co-shape their care (Abrell 2016: 226). For this research, care is an important concept as it is through practices of care that human-animal relationships and animal welfare are formed and defined within the sanctuary. The concept of care allowed me to observe, analyse and make sense of the daily workings of the animal sanctuary.

### **Animal welfare**

Animal welfare is a crucial concept to consider alongside the definition of care within animal sanctuaries (Abrell 2016: 218). Animal welfare is a contested concept within the research field. Sandoe and Simonsen state that different assumptions about animal welfare can lead to different interpretations. These assumptions can be divided into analogies and homologies. Analogies are reflections and thoughts on animal welfare, which focus on the subjective experiences of animals, such as pleasure. Homologies are reflections of animals' objective experiences that relate to parameters such as life duration or hygiene (Sandoe, Simonsen 1992: 257). Another important, possible definition of animal welfare is called the Five Freedoms. This definition of animal welfare originated in the early 1960s (Pierce, Bekoff 2022: 234). The five freedoms state that all animals under human care should have freedom from hunger, thirst, discomfort, pain, fear, and distress and freedom to express species-typical behaviour. The Five Freedoms were widely seen as a huge step forward for animal advocacy. However, Pierce and Bekoff disagree. The Five Freedoms became a shorthand for the ethical treatment of animals, but they also became the typical end to any conversation about the wants and needs of animals (235). Pierce and Bekoff argue that real freedom

for animals, free from human control and dependency, is not often acknowledged because it would mean an enormous change in the way humans treat and relate to animals (236). Scholars see freedom for animals as the ultimate animal welfare that humans could provide and that the domestication and incarceration of animals, in all its forms and contexts, should cease to exist (237). Animal welfare in animal sanctuaries involves caring for animals in varying degrees of captivity, due to safety concerns or dependency on humans. Animal welfare in animal sanctuaries is often focused on improving the conditions of the animals, minimizing their suffering, and aiming to provide a safe, healthy, and peaceful life while minimizing the negative impact of captivity and human control over their lives. However, sanctuary workers have to balance animals' freedom with human control, to ensure their well-being and safety (Abrell 2019: 571) (Gruen 2011: 133-134). Jones suggests that, ideally, sanctuary work would be considered unethical. Given the current world and societal circumstances, sanctuary workers strive to maximize the animals' freedom, naturalness, and well-being (Jones 2014: 96). The concept of animal welfare is important for this research, as the mission of the sanctuary is interwoven with providing the animals with a standard of animal welfare, which is facilitated through practices of care and relationships between humans and animals. The concept of animal welfare allows me to research what role this plays in the sanctuary and how this is facilitated.

### **Animal Disability**

When talking about the concept of animal welfare and care in animal sanctuaries, animal disability needs to be discussed as well. Within the definition of animal welfare and care within Dierenthuis, animal disability always had to be considered as there were many animals with disabilities there. When talking about disabled animals, Carr includes all animals with physical or mental restrictions in comparison to able-bodied members of their species. This definition aligns with disability in the context of humans. However, Carr prefers a more social model of disability. This model argues that beings with a disability are not disabled by their impairments but by barriers faced in society, that disable them. Thus, disability is more defined as an experience-based identity (Carr 2022: 3). He argues that even though humans view an animal with missing limbs as disabled, this is not necessarily the reality the animal lives in (6). Physically disabled domesticated animals can miss a limb (or more), be blind or deaf, be paralyzed, or be incontinent (Birke, Gruen 2022: 42). Another important aspect of animal disability at Dierenthuis, were the wheelchairs for the dogs with missing hind legs. These were custom-made and enabled some of the dogs with missing hind legs to be more mobile when going for walks on the field. This reminded me of Haraway's "cyborg manifesto", in which she explores the relationships between living beings and machines. She calls cyborgs creatures that are animals and

machines at the same time. She calls the relationship between living beings and machines one that has been reproduced and re-imagined, as the boundary between both has shifted (Haraway 1991: 150). I find this an interesting take to relate to the dogs with wheelchairs, as their mobility with the wheelchair also has shifted the definition of mobility for the animals with disabilities. Within my research the concept of animal disability allows me to research a specific aspect of animal welfare, looking at the subjective needs of animals with impairments.

### **Domesticated Animals**

The concepts described above are applied to domesticated animals since Dierenthuis is a sanctuary for domesticated animals. This is important because the needs of domesticated animals differ from wild animals. Gruen states that humans have physically and genetically altered these animals to suit human needs and wants (Gruen 2011: 2). Beatson argues that human society has forced certain species into domestication and captivity (Beatson 2011: 27). Taking on the responsibility of caring for domesticated animals is a part of human ownership over animals. Domesticated animals are fully dependent for their welfare and fate on the goodwill of their human owners. This goodwill often lacks, as animals have been systematically subjected to cruelty (42). In animal industries, welfare is not as important as economic interests. Animals are often seen as products, but not as individuals (Kemmerer 2011: 75). Aerni states that raising and using animals has been a part of human society for thousands of years. Liberating domesticated animals so they can be free from human management, as Pierce and Bekoff have argued, is misleading, according to Aerni. These animals have become dependent on humans and could not fare in the wild, thus humans carry the responsibility of care (Aerni 2021: 5) (Pierce, Bekoff 2022: 237).

When defining the concept of domesticated animals, human-animal relationships are important to define as well. As mentioned before, definitions of animal welfare and care within sanctuaries are dependent on what kind of animals live there. Therefore, human-animal relationships within animal sanctuaries can also differ in definition. In the case of my research, the animals are domesticated cats and dogs. These human-animal relationships involve direct or indirect contact between a human and an animal for a longer period (Beatson 2011: 27 & 38). Haraway argues in her research that patterns of care and responsibility can tie animals and people together (Haraway 2016: 89). Ouellette-Dube states that good multispecies relationships are based on relations of good care, recognizing and meeting the needs of animals (Ouellette-Dube 2023: 35-39).

Some scholars argue that conventional human-animal relationships, which are often property-based, are being challenged by human-animal relationships in animal sanctuaries. Sanctuary

workers often create care-based, ethical bonds with the animals, in which the objective and subjective needs of the animals are centralized (Abrell 2016: 35) (Taylor et al 2023: 218-222). Balancing freedom and human control becomes essential, considering the degree of domestication of the animals (Abrell 2016: 244-248) (Meijer 2021: 43) (Abrell 2016: 82) (Donaldson, Kymlicka 2015: 57).

Domesticated animals and human-animal relationships are important concepts within this research. Domestication shapes the understanding of care, animal welfare, and human-animal relationships, as the needs of domesticated animals differ from those of wild animals. Exploring human-animal relationships allows for an examination of how care practices influence these relationships and their connection to animal welfare.

Based on the discussion in the theoretical framework, the research will delve into sanctuary care practices and how they impact human-animal relationships, animal welfare, and the public role of the sanctuary, to better understand how the concepts are related to my findings in the field.

## **Relevance**

Regarding the literature research I have done, before my fieldwork research, there seems to exist an ethnographic gap in the research on animal sanctuaries. The sheltering and protection of companion animals have stimulated many research projects that investigate animals, people, and organizations. However, this research often lacked an integrated understanding of the policies, processes, and functioning of these organizations (Koralesky et al 2023: 1). An institutional ethnographic approach, discovering and observing how everyday life and work are shaped within sanctuaries, would be a contribution to the existing research (Koralesky et al 2023: 8) (Koralesky et al 2022: 9). Thus, I believe that my research topic and approach, a qualitative, visual ethnographic approach to the workings and daily practices of an animal sanctuary would complement the research field. There are many ethnographic accounts of sanctuaries with wild animals (Abrell 2016) (Erickson 2017) but mine will be on domesticated, companion animals such as cats and dogs. According to Mullin, human-animal relationships have gained increasingly more attention and interest from anthropologists. This could be linked to crossing boundaries between humans and animals, between culture and nature. In non-Western societies, for example, nature is not predominantly opposed to culture or society. Boundaries between humans and animals seem to be fluid within this perspective, in which animals are thought of as capable of personhood (Mullin 1999: 202).

## **Methodology**

During my research, I employed different methodologies. Regarding ethnographic methodologies within research on human-animal relationships, Hamilton and Taylor argue that ethnographers face challenges in gaining direct access to the private world of both human and animal participants. Nonetheless, ethnographers can observe and monitor the effects of practices on humans and animals. It is particularly important to perceive animals as subjects and central to the interaction. Hamilton and Taylor argue that the subtlety and the qualitative approach of ethnographic research, allow ethnographers to treat animals with more importance in their research. By adopting this approach, the assumption that humans are superior to other species can be destabilized (Hamilton, Taylor 2012: 49). I tried to implement this view in my research and methodology. I perceived the sanctuary as an inter-species community, where animals and humans contribute to its functioning. I am aware, that I cannot speak for the animals or make assumptions for them. Hamilton and Taylor argue that it is difficult to advocate for animals about their relationships with humans. Hamilton and Taylor engaged with this problem in their research by allowing their human participants to make claims about the animals. The participants had a unique understanding of individual animals (Hamilton, Taylor 2012: 46). I also do not claim to be an animal expert, but I have chosen to let myself be guided in this by the sanctuary workers who know a lot more about the animals than I do. Erickson calls the lack of knowledge of animals' subjective experiences an example of epistemic humility. However, this has not stopped researchers to carry out objective animal research that diminishes animal subjectivity. Thus, this lack of knowledge should not prevent researching the subjective experiences in relationships between humans and animals but rather encourage it with alternative views on animal subjectivity (Erickson 2017: 13). I hope to have achieved this, through my methodologies.

## **Social Research Methods**

The methods I used within the research are participant observation and qualitative interviews in the form of unstructured interviews (Bryman 2016: 423) (Bryman 2016: 466-468). During my time in the field, I noticed that a mixture between participant observation and interviewing worked very well, especially when filming and working with the participants. I would basically "hang out" in the room with the participants while they worked, either helping them with their tasks or filming them. During this time, if I felt it was a good moment, I would ask the participants questions or just have a chat with them. I noticed that this method helped a lot with letting the participants get used to me and building trust. I think this method later allowed me to interview the participants, without it being too

intimidating for them.

Through participant observation, I learned many things about routines and rules that were present in the sanctuary. These were quite objective aspects of the workings of the sanctuary. For example, by observing, I learned the routine for new animals arriving in the sanctuary, or about the relationships between the workers and the animals. By doing interviews, I learned a lot about the subjective experiences of the workers. I got access to a whole range of personal experiences, opinions, feelings, and views.

### **Visual Methodologies**

The audiovisual methods I used were a combination of the “fly on the wall” method and observational cinema with a bit of my participation. I am not present in the film, but I talk in some shots, reacting to certain things I heard or saw while the camera was recording. I think this enhances the descriptiveness of the sequences. Suhr and Willerslev argue that, in observational cinema, the camera can act as a physical extension of the cameraperson’s body, providing access to their engagement with the depicted world (Suhr, Willerslev 2013: 8). This aligns with Carta’s argument that observational documentaries generate meaning and knowledge through the filmmaker’s participation (Carta 2015: 4). I hope to have achieved this. Additionally, I often just let the camera roll without saying anything, simply filming situations or events that occurred.

Suhr and Willerslev state that recognizing the camera’s limits lacks in ethnographic filmmaking (Suhr, Willerslev 2012: 282). The use of montage can overcome these limitations, according to them (283). In my film, I utilized montage to create the narrative structure of the film. I tried to implement a bit of participatory visual anthropology, by letting my participants sometimes direct me (Pink 2005: 101). They would do this by pointing at something occurring with the animals and encouraging me to film it. This was very minimal participatory visual anthropology, but it still felt important to let me be guided by my participants sometimes.

Regarding films that have inspired me, I would like my film to be more observational than *The Biggest Little Farm* (2018). This film is not an ethnographic documentary, but it did inspire me in my approach to filmmaking. This film is a quite commercial documentary, but I found it very joyful to watch, as there are many endearing, quirky, and funny moments between the humans and the animals. I tried to incorporate joy in my film as well, as I experienced a lot of joy during my time in the field. However, I wanted my film to be more personal than for example *Descending with Angels* (2013) or *Divorce: Iranian Style* (1998). These films were very observational, with limited interference or talking from the maker, and gave up close accounts of the situation that was filmed. I wanted my visual output to be more reflective of my journey in the field.

## **Positionality**

Regarding my positionality, I had to build up the relationship with my participants over time. There is a big difference between the beginning and the end of the fieldwork in the relationship I had with them. I always tried to be respectful in my role as an outsider and researcher. However, helping the workers with their tasks and also my involvement and interest in their work, made them include me eventually. I feel like I learned the most during the fieldwork in the last month because my presence at the sanctuary felt more natural and included. Regarding my positionality with the animals, this was more of a challenge. Obviously, I could not explain anything to the animals about why I was there and what I was doing. However, the owner of the sanctuary and I conducted a plan of action for this. During the first weeks, I helped out a lot with the cleaning, which means getting close to the animals as well. After some time, I was allowed to bring my camera out and see how the animals reacted. If I saw that an animal suddenly became very still or scared, I would put the camera away again. I repeated this process many times and after the first weeks, most of the animals that were already present in the sanctuary while I was there, got used to me and my camera.

Pink argues that a reflexive approach recognizes the influence of the subjectivity of the researcher within the production of ethnographic knowledge (Pink 2021: 45-48). I was very aware that this was a very personal experience for me. This will have influenced my research. However, Pink argues that the subjectivity of the researcher should be engaged as a central aspect of ethnographic knowledge (Pink 2021: 45).

## **Ethical considerations**

During my fieldwork at the sanctuary, I did not experience many ethical challenges. I implemented the AAA code of ethics and Marion and Crowder's guide to visual research. The goal of my research was very clearly communicated to my participants and we developed open communication, in which they could always let me know if they were uncomfortable with something. At the beginning of the fieldwork, during participant observation, filming, or interviewing, I asked many times if they were feeling comfortable with me asking them questions, being there, or filming them. Later on, we built enough rapport that they would let me know if they felt uncomfortable with something.

However, some ethical consideration I had before going into the field, was the researching and filming of animals. As mentioned before, the only permission I could get from the animals to film them, was through their caregivers. I could not ask them directly, only observing their behavior and estimating if they were okay with me being in their space, observing or filming them. Before my

research, I looked into some academic research on animal ethics in filming and I conducted my own code of ensuring animal ethics in my filmmaking. Randy Malamud's discussions shed light on the human gaze and animal ethics in filmmaking (Malamud 2012: 70). He argues that the American Humane Association's approval seal, which states "no animals were harmed in the making of this movie", does not guarantee the animals' willingness to participate or the absence of mental distress (71). Furthermore, he mentions the issue of objectifying animals in film, reducing their existence to mere objects in relation to humans (74-75). Thus, the ethical considerations of including animals in a film go beyond merely avoiding physical harm. Benefit also needs to be considered when talking about animal ethics in research and filmmaking. How can animals possibly benefit from being filmed and researched? Simply not harming the animals seems to be the minimum. How do we conduct an ethically acceptable balance of interest between the researcher and the animal, if this is even possible? It is certainly something I wanted to stay wary of. In some academic research, it is stated that animals can benefit indirectly from being filmed. Documentaries about animal welfare, for example, can help raise awareness and sensitize people to animal welfare issues, such as animal cruelty (Pollo et al 2009: 1360). Thus, when looking at academic research on animal ethics in filmmaking and researching animals, I wanted to stay very reflexive of my position towards the sanctuary animals. I wanted to respect the animals I filmed and researched. I kept my distance from the animals, filming and observing from a distance, unless the animals approached me themselves. Still, if I or one of the sanctuary workers sensed any sign of stress in the animal, I left the room or put my camera away. Within my research, I followed the sanctuary's guidelines. For example, I did not approach an animal too closely by myself or force interactions with them. I let them come to me if they wanted to and interacted with them if they asked for attention. As I am making this research and film partially to hopefully inspire people to think about animal welfare, I am hoping that both will be beneficial for animals and that I succeeded in treating the animals in the film and research as subjects, not objects for the human gaze as Malamud states.

### **Descriptions of field notes**

During my fieldwork, I went to the sanctuary twice a week, always on Wednesday and Thursday. I did this to make sure that the same volunteers were there when I came, to build rapport and trust. My days there would consist of helping the volunteers, writing field notes, observing, interviewing, and filming. With the help of my observations and interviews, I will present my findings and answer the sub-questions.



## Findings

### **Answering sub-question 1: How do practices of care construct the relationships between the workers and the animals?**

During my time at Dierenthuis, I observed the construction of relationships between the workers and the animals, which were shaped by practices of care. One of the first things I learned about was the strict rules for the workers when it comes to practices of care. These rules are in place to uphold the mission of the sanctuary, to provide the animals there with the best life possible (under the circumstances) and a comfortable, peaceful, and safe home. Some of the rules are, for example, never forcing animals to interact with you (unless in cases of medical care) and making sure that the animals always have a clean living space. All the rules are implemented to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of the animals.

The mission of the sanctuary is influenced by the view that, within the sanctuary, animals and their well-being always come first. This view shapes the relationships between the workers and the animals. When I asked one of the volunteers during an interview, what the role was of humans in this place, she said: “The humans that are present here, their only role is to take care of the animals.” The practices of care are influenced by this. For example, workers are instructed to always make time for the animals. During an interview with the owner, we talked about this.

“When a dog is doing something wrong, you cannot correct him while hoovering. Turn off that thing, go to the dog and calm him down, correct him, or speak your mind. [...] An animal is not something for in-between, it is serious work.”

Another volunteer that I interviewed said the following.

“When I am done with my work for the day, I like to stay a bit longer just to sit with the cats and really connect with them on a deeper level. This way you can also tell if they are doing well.”

Spending time with the animals is also very important because these are all domesticated animals. Some of them lived on the street before coming to the sanctuary, but others are used to human affection and attention and this has become part of their subjective needs. The animals in the sanctuary are completely dependent on the workers to have their objective and subjective needs met. Thus, the volunteers are instructed to pay attention to the animals and if an animal comes up to them, asking for attention or affection, they are supposed to put down their work and focus on the animal.

The practices of care can be classified as direct or indirect. Indirect care of the animals

includes preparing food or cleaning and often fulfills the objective needs of the animals, to ensure their physical well-being. Direct practices of care include direct interactions with the animals, such as playing with them or taking the time to build trust, and can fulfill the subjective needs of animals, to ensure their emotional well-being. These direct practices mostly shape the relationships between the workers and the animals, but the indirect practices of care also create a bond. The sanctuary workers often spoke about how they found it very important that the sanctuary is clean for the animals so that they could be comfortable there. These practices underline the dependency of the animals on the workers. Additionally, direct practices of care are sometimes carried out to ensure the physical well-being of the animals, such as medical care. Indirect practices of care, such as allowing the animals to form and manage relationships between themselves, can also ensure the emotional well-being of the animals.

When asking the sanctuary workers about creating a relationship with the animals through caring for them, they said it is very important to take time to build trust. Some animals have severe trust issues or are scared of humans due to their past. Building trust with these animals takes time, respect, and patience. This also relates to one of the rules at the sanctuary, namely that sanctuary workers can never force interaction with the animals unless it is necessary for medical care. The rule is to let the animals come to you if and when they want it. When they do, you can interact with them through affection or playing. When I was walking the dogs with one of the sanctuary workers she said the following about this:

“I just look at the dog and see if they want to be pet or get attention. If they come up to me, I always pet them. But we never force ourselves on the animals. Some of the animals do not like to be petted or are not used to it, so then we do not do it. Could you imagine if someone would keep rubbing on your head? You probably would not like it either, and it is the same for animals. Some do not like it, others do.”

We also talked about building trust with the scared animals.

“One of the dogs here, when he came in was not to be touched at all and would not come close to me. And now I notice that he is testing the waters a bit, coming a bit closer, sometimes sniffing my hand. When I notice, that an animal maybe wants attention but is a bit scared, I just stay calm and let them come to me. If they come close to me, I might try to pet them carefully and see how they react.”

Some of the scared animals do come out of their shell a bit and others do not at all. There are some dogs and cats that do not want to be petted, even though they have been in the sanctuary for years. The sanctuary workers respect the boundaries of the animals and build a relationship according to

the pace of the animal. This is a crucial part of caring for the animals. Here, it is once again important that the view of the sanctuary is that the humans are there for the animals and not the other way around. The animals are provided with enough space and respect by the workers to manage their own relationships.

One of the sanctuary's views is that the animals that live there should be able to just be animals, free from societal pressure or control. They should be seen as individuals with their own needs, not as things that should be subjected to the will of humans. There are rules that they have to follow, to keep the peace in the groups in which they live. Sometimes they are forced to undergo medical procedures to enhance their health. Thus, there is a degree of human control present, but they are not getting trained to behave in a certain way that fits the will of humans. I noticed that the workers approach this, by trying to think from the perspective of the animal.

"Here, it is very important to think from the perspective of the animal. For example, when you go into one of the dog rooms and they bark at you, it can be useful to think about how you would react if a stranger would come into your room. So thinking from the perspective of the animal is always good and once you do that, you can better understand why an animal does certain things."

Trying to think from the perspective of the animal to better understand them, instead of subjecting them to the will of humans, is a crucial part of caring for them.

Animal abuse and death were also frequent topics of discussion between me and the workers, and how they dealt with that personally. They tried to create emotional distance from these stories because they needed to be present mentally to help the animals. I also asked the sanctuary workers how they dealt with it when an animal, particularly one they are close to, passes away. One of the workers said this.

"Of course, it is very difficult when you know an animal very well and they pass away and you lose them. But I do live with the thought that the animals come here to die eventually. Because if they were healthy, they would not be here. And that in their last lives we can give them some love and attention. [...] But as long as they are still here, I will be there for them."

Thus, the workers try to create distance from their own emotions to be able to care for and be there for the animals.

When analyzing these experiences at the sanctuary, it can be said that the practices of care described here, form relationships between the workers and the animals in which the animals are completely dependent on humans, but at the same time are centralized within these relationships. The objective and subjective needs of the animals are the focus of these relationships, to ensure their physical and emotional well-being. The practices of care within the sanctuary, such as having to

follow certain rules to ensure the well-being of the animals, making time for the animals to give them attention, taking the time to build trust, respecting their boundaries, and giving them enough space and agency to manage their relationships with humans, are all catered to the objective and subjective needs of the animals. These practices of care are carried out by the workers and thus form the foundation for care-based relationships between them and the animals. A degree of human control is present within these relationships, but even this is done to ensure the well-being of the animals.

This analysis can be linked to the literature and the concepts in the theoretical framework. Ouellette-Dube stated that good multispecies relations have to have relations of good care, in which the needs of an individual are recognized and met, for them to flourish (Ouellette-Dube 2023: 35). Relating this to the analysis of human-animal relationships at Dierenthuis, it can be said that the care within these relationships indeed meets and recognizes the needs of the individual animal, and therefore enabling them to flourish by being able to be an animal in a safe, clean space.

Some scholars argue that human-animal relationships within sanctuaries challenge conventional human-animal relationships in animal industries, as the relationships within sanctuaries are often defined by practices of care in which the objective and subjective needs of the animals are centralized, with no economic interest or monetary gain for humans. The animals are seen as subjects, rather than objects (Taylor et al 2023: 218-222) (Abrell 2017: 3-5) (Abrell 2019: 571) (Abrell 2016: 28). This is also reflected in my analysis of the relationships between the workers and the animals, as the animals are seen as individuals with own characters, whose physical and emotional wellbeing is centralized and the main incentive for the workers to care for them.

The degree of human control and animals' dependency on humans in sanctuaries is also discussed in this literature. At Dierenthuis, where all animals are domesticated, workers consider it their responsibility to provide care. This is reflected in Taylor's fieldwork experience, where she also mentions sanctuary workers who felt that these animals were owed a duty of care by the staff (Taylor 2007: 67). However, human control is present at Dierenthuis, to ensure safety and peace for the animals. Despite captivity and human control, sanctuary animals often can influence the conditions of their care and engagement with humans (Abrell 2016: 244-248) (Meijer 2021: 43) (Abrell 2016: 82). Recognizing animals as sentient beings with agency are advocated by Carr (Carr 2022: 1). This is also reflected in what I have seen in the sanctuary. Animals, even though they were sometimes forced to undergo certain practices of care, were never forced to have prolonged contact with humans. The animals are given as much agency and freedom in managing their relationships as the workers can make possible for them. Donaldson and Kymlicka's argument reflects this. They call to explore if animals can be given more control over their relationships within sanctuaries. When domesticated animals are given enough space, they have the freedom to manage their own relationships (Donaldson, Kymlicka 2015: 57).

Regarding the approach of the workers to try to understand animals from their perspective, Gruen argues that developing empathy and awareness for the way animals experience things, is crucial for humans to understand them (Gruen 2011: 38). The sanctuary approaches this by acknowledging that animals react differently to things than humans and trying to understand things from their perspective.

Thus, practices of care within the sanctuary are catered to the animals' needs. These practices are carried out by the workers and therefore form the foundation of care-based relationships between them and the animals. The animals' objective and subjective needs are centralized in these relationships to ensure their physical and emotional well-being, while the animals are also completely dependent on the sanctuary workers. The sanctuary workers see the animals as individuals and try to understand them from their perspectives. There is a degree of human control present within these relationships, to ensure the well-being of the animals.

### **Answering sub-question 2: How do practices of care define the standard of animal welfare within the sanctuary?**

As mentioned before, the sanctuary's mission is to provide the animals with a safe, clean, and calm forever home. One of the volunteers said the following about this:

"Animal welfare is our number one priority, that's what we work for. We want them to be happy, and healthy and to give them a life worthy of living. We just try to care for them in the best way we possibly can. [...] Here they get the help and care they deserve and they never have to leave this place again."

The sanctuary workers try to give the animals the best life possible, through practices of care. These practices of care result in a certain standard of animal welfare within the sanctuary. For example, practices of care include cleaning, feeding, and giving fresh water, which are carried out multiple times during the day. This is done to ensure that the animals have a clean and comfortable living space and that they are well-fed and watered. This is a standard of animal welfare within the sanctuary, that is defined by these practices of care.

As mentioned before, the sanctuary wants the animals to be as free from societal pressure and human expectations as possible, but there are rules that the animals have to follow. For example, cats and dogs live mostly separately and usually do not have access to each other's living spaces. Thus, there are limits to their freedom. However, all these rules and practices of care are in place to

best care for the animals, and to keep them safe, comfortable, and healthy in a peaceful environment. One of the volunteers said the following about this:

“They have freedom and space, but also rules. These are needed for them and us so that everything stays clear, calm, and peaceful. But other than that, they can do whatever they want, they are free to be themselves.”

The sanctuary tries to keep the animals as free as possible, under the circumstances of domestication, peace, safety, and health. For example, there are no cages (unless for medical cases). The cats and dogs live together in groups in big, comfortable rooms. They have constant access to the outside. There is as much freedom as responsibly can be. Freedom is tied together with the well-being of animals within the sanctuary, as the workers want the animals to be free from societal or human pressure. However, some practices of care problematize this view, as a degree of human control is necessary to ensure the well-being of the animals, such as separating cats and dogs or forcing them to undergo medical procedures. The workers constantly have to balance their freedom and their health or safety against each other, which are both important aspects of animal welfare within the sanctuary.

As mentioned before, all these practices of care make the animals dependent. However, these animals are domesticated and already dependent on human management. Thus, the captivity aspect of the sanctuary is not as present as it would be in a wild animal sanctuary. Since the animals at Dierenthuis are all domesticated, animal welfare is also defined through having social and affectionate relationships. Some animals need human interaction, as they are conditioned from their past to have human attention. Not giving that to them would deteriorate their well-being. Other animals do not want any human interaction at all, and forcing that upon them would deteriorate their well-being. Other animals need some time to trust humans, so the workers must take this time, patience, and respect to build trust and relationships with the animals. Therefore, paying attention to and meeting the subjective needs of each individual animal is important when it comes to the standard of animal welfare. It is something that the workers pay a lot of attention to and try their best in.

Medical health is another big part of the standard of animal welfare. As mentioned above, the workers only want the best for the animals. This sometimes also means compromising their agency and forcing them to undergo medical procedures for which they cannot give their permission. Many of the animals are sick, old, or have a disability. One of the sanctuary’s most important views is that an animal cannot suffer. During an interview with the owner, she said:

“This is one thing we all agree on, an animal cannot suffer here. We cannot live with that.[...] We want to get rid of that as soon as possible.”

When an animal is sick or has pain, the sanctuary immediately does everything to help. A vet visits the sanctuary weekly to carry out more difficult medical procedures, like amputations or other surgeries. The absence of pain or other forms of suffering is a big part of what constitutes the standard of animal welfare. Their view on animal welfare is that animals should be able to live their lives in the sanctuary as healthy and happy as possible. Suffering or pain problematizes this view. So, through practices of care, in this case, medical care, it is made sure that the standard of animal welfare is met. However, imposing on the animals’ medical agency also problematizes care, as it imposes on the view of the sanctuary that the animals should live as free as possible from human control. As mentioned before, a dilemma is present here when balancing their health against their freedom and agency. Death or euthanasia are also important considerations. The sanctuary’s view on euthanasia is that it is the last resort. The workers will always look for other possibilities. However, as mentioned above, the workers do not want animals to suffer or have pain. Only when there is no more chance of recovery, the sanctuary decides to end the life of an animal, to not prolong the suffering. This is always decided with the expert opinion of the vet. If the sanctuary and the vet see the slightest chance for recovery for an animal, however, they will take it.

Animal disability is another big part of the animal welfare standards at Dierenthuis. Many of the animals at Dierenthuis are either blind, deaf, have neurological problems, are missing limbs, or have other impairments. When I first witnessed the number of animals with a disability, I noticed that I pitied them. I talked a lot about this with the workers. One of the volunteers said the following:

“We might think that it’s pitiful for those animals, but animals are not like humans. They do not pity themselves or see themselves as disabled. They just accept the circumstances and try to survive. These animals are not to be pitied, because they are not sad. They are happy as they are.”

Indeed, it is a human projection to think that an animal with a disability is sad. As mentioned before, the workers always try to understand animals from the animals’ perspective. The workers might think animal disability is sad, but these animals do not perceive themselves like that. Workers assess the animals’ well-being by considering their perspectives and whether they can lead fulfilling lives despite disabilities. From spending time with the disabled animals, I quickly saw how happy and capable they were. I do not think I ever saw dogs running as fast as the dogs that were in wheelchairs. For many of these animals, another animal institution could mean the end of their life. As mentioned before, Dierenthuis takes in animals that do not fit into our society anymore. For animals that are sick, abused, disabled, old, or have behavioral problems, there is no other place in society for them. This

sanctuary provides these animals with a forever home and tries everything they can to give them the best life possible there. This view also contributes to the standard of animal welfare of the place. One of the volunteers said the following about this:

“This is a place where they can just be animals, their forever home. [...] For many animals here, it would otherwise be the end of their story. I think that here they get the best care possible because there are only people working here that want the best for them.”

When analyzing these experiences, it can be said that the practices of care within the sanctuary define the standard of animal welfare because the practices of care are all carried out with the mission to give the animals the best lives possible within the sanctuary. All the work that is done, is done for the benefit of the animals. Animals, that for any reason do not fit into our society anymore, are given life here. Animal welfare here is defined as giving the animals the space and place to just be an animal for the rest of their lives, without any societal expectations and in good conditions. The workers facilitate this mission and define it, through practices of care. There is a dilemma present when balancing the animals' freedom against their well-being, as some practices of care impose on their agency and freedom, such as medical procedures or not allowing them access everywhere.

Relating this analysis to the literature and the concepts in the theoretical framework, Gruen and Abrell both discussed the balance between freedom and human control in sanctuaries (Abrell 2017: 3)(Gruen 2011: 133-134). Pierce and Bekoff argue that freedom for animals from humans is the highest level of animal welfare that can be achieved (Pierce, Bekoff 2022: 237). Gruen argues that animals respond differently to being held in captivity. Domesticated animals, like cats and dogs, can have rich, happy lives in captivity if they are well-fed, have companionship, exercise, and have their interests satisfied (Gruen 2011: 133-134). Abrell reflects this by saying that sanctuary workers share a common goal of providing animals with the best lives possible, while in captivity (Abrell 2016: 33). Jones states that two primary things make captivity in the context of sanctuary ethical. First, is the constant observation of the animals' behaviour throughout their whole time in the sanctuary, which can ensure the animals feel as free as possible. Second, is the intentionality of the sanctuary workers. Jones argues that, ideally, sanctuary work would be unethical. Given the current world and societal circumstances, sanctuary workers try to enable animals to live as free from humans as possible (Jones 2014: 96). Abrell and Gruen reflect this by stating that sanctuary workers make decisions on care as ethically as possible, within the context of a world where they would face harm or inability to survive on their own (Gruen 2011: 134) (Abrell 2019: 572). Abrell also emphasizes the role of animals in co-shaping their welfare standards (Abrell 2016: 226). These arguments can all be related to my experience of animal welfare in the sanctuary. The animals are domesticated and could not fare in the wild and thus, need to live in a degree of captivity and human control to ensure their well-being.



However, within the sanctuary, they are given as much freedom as possible, and close attention is paid to their objective and subjective needs. The objective and subjective needs can be related to Sandoe's and Simonson's argument about homologies and analogies when measuring animal welfare (Sandoe, Simonson 1992: 257). The workers take both types of measures into account when trying to give the animals the best life possible.

Additionally, Carr's argument on animal disability is reflected in the workers' approach, as they try to understand the animal's perspective and focus on possibilities rather than problems, to give them a chance at a happy life (Carr 2022).

Thus, the practices of care within the sanctuary define the standard of animal welfare, by prioritizing the animals' subjective and objective needs to ensure their emotional and physical well-being. Animal welfare here is defined as giving the animals the space and place to just be an animal for the rest of their lives, without any societal expectations and in good conditions. The workers facilitate this mission and define it, through practices of care.

### **Answering sub-question 3: How do practices of care and the public role of the sanctuary mutually affect each other?**

Dierenthuis gets a lot of attention from the public, either through (social) media, visitors' days, or general interest in their work. The practices of care at Dierenthuis are interwoven with its public role. The sanctuary could be seen as a political place, as they advocate for animal rights, through their work and care. The workers share stories of the animals with the public, how they are doing, and what kind of process they are making. They allow visitors during the Spring and Summer to get an impression of the sanctuary and the work that is done. In their communication to the public, by sharing the practices of care, the sanctuary also wants to raise awareness of the cruelty many of the animals faced. They try to show that sick, disabled, and old animals can still live a happy, fulfilling life. They want people to see that these kinds of places exist for animals. The sanctuary hopes that their way of working and handling animals inspires people to handle animals differently or to challenge conventional human-animal relationships in animal industries.

However, they also need to be careful in their communication with the outside world. The owner shared with me that they often sugarcoat the stories of the animals because the public would not be able to handle the facts. They tried a few times to put out the true stories, but every time they would get negative reactions. Through analyzing this particular fact, it can be said that there is a disbalance here. An animal gets abused by (almost always) a human. A sanctuary like Dierenthuis will take the animal in, where the sanctuary workers try to care for the animal and undo the damage that is done to the animal. Subsequently, the sanctuary workers try to communicate this story to the

public to raise awareness of animal abuse and motivate people to do better. In reaction to this, the public gets angry or upset by being confronted with these stories, with human actions. It puts the sanctuary in a rather difficult, contradictory place, having to balance their communication so the human public does not get too upset, while also dealing with the consequences of human actions against animals. When talking about this with the owner, she said the following:

“The stories we communicate to the public are very sugarcoated because people cannot handle these raw stories of animal abuse. We have tried to communicate the stories in a bit less sugarcoated way and immediately got a lot of negative reactions and criticism. People were pulling their donations even. People do not want to be confronted with animal suffering, they only want to hear the happy part, when an animal gets to recover here.”

The dependency of the sanctuary on humans makes this situation even more difficult, as the sanctuary cannot exist without donations from the public. They are also dependent on humans to rescue animals, as they often get submissions from other people to take in certain animals. The owner said the following about this:

“A lot of our time actually goes to humans, while you are working for the benefit of the animals. You want to give all your time and energy to helping the animals, but even in an animal sanctuary, humans play a crucial role. You’re always stuck in that balance. [...] We need to keep good relationships with humans, to rescue animals, and to be able to help them here.”

Thus, in the sanctuary, practices of care for the animals need to be balanced with the public role. Without assuming a public role, the sanctuary cannot carry out the practices of care. But without the practices of care, the sanctuary would not have the public role that it has now, with getting donations and people bringing animals to the sanctuary.

The sanctuary tries to balance the public role with the practices of care by having visitors’ hours. For 2 hours, every Saturday throughout the Spring and Summer, a maximum of 10 people is allowed to get a tour through the sanctuary. Apart from this, the sanctuary is closed to the public. This is for the benefit of the animals, to reduce stress. It upholds the mission of the sanctuary, to let the animals live as free as possible from societal pressure and human control. Thus, visits from other humans than the sanctuary workers are limited, to not exploit the animals for human benefit. However, many animals are used to human affection and seem to enjoy a bit of extra attention during the visitors’ days. Animals that do not want to interact with visitors are never forced to. For example, the sanctuary workers make sure that the scared animals are left alone by the visitors. The visitors are also instructed beforehand on how to act towards the animals, like not forcing the animals to interact with them, not hugging them around the neck or picking them up, and in general being respectful of

the animals' agency. The visitors' days are meant for the public to get a look inside the sanctuary, for the animals to get a bit of extra attention, to raise awareness of animal cruelty, and to bring in donations. The visitors' days' are meant for the benefit of the animals and are carried out in a way that is non-exploitative for the animals. Thus, the sanctuary is dependent on humans to exist and be able to rescue animals, but they try to prioritize the benefit of the animal within this dependency.

The sanctuary hopes that their way of working inspires people to handle animals differently and to raise awareness of the injustice and cruelty that is often done to animals. Their ultimate hope is that a place like this sanctuary will not be needed in the future. However, under the circumstances, they are happy that these animals have someplace to live peacefully and safely. The workers do not want the sanctuary to be a sad place, even though sad things happen. They want to show people that these animals, even after going through horrible things, can still have a very happy life, while also informing them about the cruelty that is done against animals, as humans are most often responsible for it. One of the volunteers said the following about this:

"We want to inspire people to do better themselves and for them to be aware that these things happen daily to animals. The sanctuary needs to be portrayed as positive so that people want to get involved with us or help us, through donations or bringing animals to us. We do not want to upset people. Therefore, the sanctuary cannot be portrayed as a sad place, even if it is sad, but the outlook needs to be positive. When people see how happy the dogs in wheelchairs are, running across the field, everyone finds that amazing to see."

Thus, in their dependency on humans, the sanctuary tries to convey a positive image of the place and the work that is done, to get donations and to have animals be brought in. Meanwhile, the sanctuary cannot carry out the work without the support and help of the public. When analyzing this, it can be said that practices of care and the public role of the sanctuary are mutually dependent on each other and affect each other. The sanctuary is dependent on the public to be able to facilitate the practices of care, by getting donations and making sure that people know to bring animals to them. Practices of care cannot be carried out if there is no money and no animals to care for. At the same time, the public role of the sanctuary is dependent on the practices of care, as they create a certain position of the animal sanctuary in its public role, that makes people want to donate to support the work that is being done or bring animals to the sanctuary because they know these animals will be well cared for. The sanctuary also needs its public role to advocate against animal cruelty and to operate as a political place. There is a balance in the sanctuary of needing humans, and needing the public to facilitate the practices of care, but at the same time, wanting to stay focused on the animals and not sacrificing the animals' agency for the benefit of the public, such as forcing contact between the animals and visitors or having too many visits that make the animals stressed. Thus, balancing their

dependency on humans with the animal's well-being could also be seen as a practice of care.

When relating this analysis to the literature and the concepts in the theoretical framework, Abrell argues that many sanctuaries see their animals as ambassadors, who can educate the public about animal abuse and exploitation, often involving forced interactions with visitors (Abrell 2019: 574). Emmerman argues that sanctuaries with this visitor model, subject animals to the public gaze, in a way that resembles other models of animal entertainment, like zoos (Emmerman 2014: 224). These descriptions of sanctuaries do not match what I experienced at Dierenthuis. The animals there can be seen as ambassadors for animal advocacy, but they are not exploited. Their stories are shared with the public, but their welfare is not compromised for a public spectacle or forced interactions, which makes Dierenthuis different from other models of animal entertainment. The animals still come first, even in their dependency on humans. Scotton argues for a different approach to sanctuary visitors, namely long-term residency programs with different participants to raise awareness of animal cruelty (Scotton 2017: 100). I do see his point here on why this would be beneficial, but this is reasoned from the perspective of the visitors. From my experiences in the field, I believe that these kinds of plans should be considered from the perspective of the animals and how they benefit from this. I see this approach reflected in Dierenthuis, as they get many requests from the public for different events and workshops. They always consider these requests from the perspective and benefit of the animals.

Regarding the balance between having to be careful in what they communicate to the public while dealing with the daily consequences of human violence against animals, some scholars argue that humans often avoid the reality of animal cruelty. They prefer to hear feel-good stories about sanctuaries without critically questioning the structural human violence that is done to animals and the role humans play in threatening animal well-being (Taylor et al 2023: 220).

Sanctuaries can serve as political spaces to inspire people to treat animals better and raise awareness about animal cruelty. Meijer argues that sanctuaries can contribute to the development of new forms of knowledge production, by challenging conventional human-animal hierarchies and considering animals as beings with subjective needs (Meijer 2021: 38). Other scholars, who reflect this argument, argue that caring for other species with no monetary gain seems radical in a world that reduces animals to objects, to be used for human benefit (Taylor et al 2023: 222). Sanctuary work can be seen as pushing the boundaries of human-animal divisions, through practices of care (226). Abrell argues that animal sanctuaries provide animals with zones of exception where animals can be protected to some extent from the world outside (Abrell 2016: 264). I see this reflected in Dierenthuis as a political place. By using its public role, the sanctuary raises awareness of animal cruelty and hopefully inspires people to think and do better. As mentioned before, the sanctuary workers' ultimate hope is that a place like Dierenthuis is not needed in society. Scholars argue that

sanctuaries can never provide complete restitution for animal cruelty, and they should be seen as part of the work of moral repair (Emmerman 2014: 215) (Abrell 2017: 3). Saving animals is a process that will never be completed as long as animals need human care (Abrell 2016: 337). Gruen also states that there may be no completely ethical way to rectify the wrong of humans against animals (Gruen 2011: 162).

Thus, the public role and practices of care are dependent on each other and mutually affect each other. The sanctuary cannot carry out practices of care without public support and involvement. The public role of the sanctuary, including raising awareness and inspiring people to do better, is dependent on the practices of care as the foundation for this public role.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, practices of care form a crucial link between human-animal relationships and animal welfare. Practices of care are fundamental in forming relationships between the sanctuary workers and the animals. As the objective and subjective needs of animals are the focus of these relationships, the animals are centralized in these relationships and completely dependent on their human caregivers. Practices of care (direct or indirect) within the sanctuary, such as following certain rules, enforcing certain rules for the animals, taking time for the animals to build trust and give them attention, respecting their boundaries, and giving them as much space and agency as possible to manage their own relationships with humans, are all carried out through the main perspective of the sanctuary: animals and their well-being always come first. These practices of care are carried out by the workers and thus form the foundation for care-based relationships between them and the animals, in which the animals are fully dependent and centralized. The workers see the animals as individuals and try to think from their perspective, to better understand them. They want to provide the animals with the best life possible, in a comfortable, peaceful, and safe environment, in which they are free from societal expectations and human pressure. A degree of human control is present within these relationships, but this is also done to ensure the well-being of the animals.

Practices of care within the sanctuary define the standard of animal welfare, as all practices are carried out for the animals' benefit, with the mission to give the animals the best life possible within the sanctuary. Animal welfare here is defined as giving the animals the space and place to just be an animal for the rest of their lives, without any societal expectations and in good, healthy conditions. The workers facilitate and define this standard, through practices of care, such as cleaning, having social relationships with the animals or enabling social relationships between the animals, or medical care. There is a dilemma present when balancing the animals' freedom against

their well-being, as some practices of care impose on their agency and freedom, such as medical procedures, not allowing them access everywhere, or holding them in captivity to some degree. However, this balance between freedom and control also needs to be placed within the reality of animal domestication and animals' dependency on humans. The overarching practice of care that defines animal welfare within the sanctuary, is recognizing and meeting the objective and subjective needs of each of the sanctuary animals, whether that is making a custom wheelchair for a dog with missing hind legs, taking the time to build a relationship and trust with a scared animal or making sure the rooms are clean.

Furthermore, practices of care and the public role of the sanctuary are intertwined. The sanctuary is dependent on its public role, to be able to facilitate the practices of care, by getting donations and making sure that people know that they can bring abused, old or sick animals to the sanctuary. Practices of care cannot be carried out if there is no money and no animals to care for. Raising awareness of animal cruelty and inspiring people to think and do better is also important in this public role. Simultaneously, the public role of the animal sanctuary is dependent on the practices of care, as these create a certain image of the sanctuary, as a place where animals that do not fit into our society anymore, can live out the rest of their lives in a safe, clean and peaceful environment with good care. By communicating the practices of care to the public, people want to donate money to support the work or bring animals to the sanctuary, because they will be well cared for. The sanctuary is dependent on humans and always needs to balance this with wanting to stay focused on the animals and not sacrificing their agency or well-being, for the benefit of the public. This in itself is another practice of care. The sanctuary can also be seen as a political place. Through carrying out the practices of care, they challenge conventional human-animal hierarchies.

Practices of care form a link between human-animal relationships and animal welfare, as practices of care make the human-animal relationships focused on animal welfare. The well-being and the needs of the animals are centralized within these relationships. Simultaneously, the standard of animal welfare is also defined and facilitated by human-animal relationships because the workers recognize and meet the animals' objective and subjective needs, to ensure their well-being. This includes balancing the public role of the sanctuary with practices of care, but always prioritizing the animals' well-being, which is also a practice of care. Thus, the link between the relationships and animal welfare is formed through practices of care, carried out by the workers. Practices of care tie everything together.

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