Maria Helena Saari

ANIMALS AS STAKEHOLDERS IN EDUCATION

TOWARDS AN EDUCATIONAL REFORM FOR INTERSPECIES SUSTAINABILITY
MARIA HELENA SAARI

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Towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability

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Abstract

Our current path towards deepening ecological crises is increasingly recognised, yet education has been slow to respond to the need to address the root causes driving us further down this path of unsustainability and destruction, namely hierarchical anthropocentrism. This study explores how we might move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability, grounded in the understanding that a just multispecies coexistence and sustainable futures require disrupting violence against other animals and attending to the creation of spaces of peace (within and beyond education). The overarching aim of this study is to explore through a multi-angle approach the occlusions and openings for attending to the ways in which (educational) violence(s) are (re)produced in formal education and how we might understand animals as stakeholders in education, sustainability and in our multispecies communities, and thus move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability. This overarching aim is elaborated by a set of sub questions and objectives. The first objective is to examine the ways in which human-animal relations are socially constructed. The second objective is to assess how animals are addressed in (and affected by) educational policies related to sustainability, consumption and curriculum. The third objective is to explore the openings offered by animal-inclusive educational frameworks and how they might propel us forward in educating for interspecies sustainability. These objectives are explored by using cows and the dairy industry as a case example, given the stronghold the dairy industry continues to have in the (Finnish) education system. Finally, the fourth objective is to inquire how humane educators are facilitating the implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies. Overall, this study seeks to explore how, with effective alliances, we might move beyond the current impasse of a politics of unsustainability, which is inherently a multidimensional, interdisciplinary, intergenerational and interspecies endeavour.

Keywords: educational violence, animals, effective alliances, interspecies sustainability, stakeholder
Dedicated to all mothers and their children:
May you be free and flourish in peace.
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Lisbon, October 2021

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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>animal-industrial complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>critical animal studies</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>critical discourse analysis</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>critical policy analysis</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations</td>
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<td>HAS</td>
<td>human-animal studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPCC</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>sustainable development</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>sustainable development goal</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wide Fund for Nature</td>
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### Tiivistelmä

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1 Introduction

Urgent calls have been made for teaching and learning to “live responsibly and respectfully on a damaged Earth” (Common Worlds Collective, 2020, p. 7), yet a “curious silence about animals” in education remains (Oakley et al., 2010, p. 97). Educational reforms that adequately attend to the ecological crises we face have been widely called for, most recently (and vocally) by young people and children in the Fridays for Future movement, yet little progress has been made. The root causes and foundations of our current path of unsustainability, namely hierarchical anthropocentrism, remains deeply rooted in educational policy and practice. This study serves as an introductory proposal for an educational reform for interspecies sustainability and an invitation for “effective alliances” (George, 2019) to further develop and ultimately implement educational reforms that open up spaces for “multispecies flourishing” (Russell & Spannring, 2019). Thus, the overarching aim of this study is to explore how we could move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability where animals too are understood as (educational) stakeholders. If we can be seen to be waging a suicidal war on nature (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021, p. 4) and at “war against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015), how might we begin to open pathways through the “anthropocentric infrastructure of education” (Pedersen, 2021) and create (educational) “spaces of peace” (Wadiwel, 2015), where animal perspectives are included and respected?

In seeking to explore these questions, this study focuses on lives of (some) of the animals1 who are often overlooked, yet whose lived realities are profoundly affected by education: “farmed animals”2 and more specifically cows. They are bred into this world only to experience a life of violence, confinement, mutilation, and death through their commodification in the dairy (=meat) industry. By foregrounding cows, this study seeks to further highlight the role educational institutions play in the animal-industrial complex (AIC) and explores how an

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1 “Animal” can be a problematic world in itself, as it encompasses millions of species and beings and is criticised for reproducing a human/animal binary and hierarchy (DeMello, 2012, p. 16). “Nonhumans” or “nonhuman animals” is widely used, however, although “nonhumans” can be seen as an attempt to signify that humans too are animals, it has been criticised for grouping “millions of species together by an absence; as if they were missing something” (deWaal, 2016, pp. 27–28). Despite its limitations and it too grouping countless species together, “animals” and “other animals” are used interchangeably in this study.

2 As in other studies, “farmed” is used instead of “farm animals” to indicate “that it is something being done to them, that counters the claim that farming is what other animals exist for” (Canavan, 2017, p. 36).
interspecies sustainability framework, where animals are understood “as stakeholders in their own right” (Bergmann, 2019, p. 21), could better guide educational policy and practice for a more just and peaceable multispecies co-existence, which can be seen as fundamental for any true possibilities for building just sustainable futures.

1.1 Sustainable futures for whom?

It has been noted that recounting the ecological crises we face has “become a cliché” yet is still considered compelling and necessary by some (Pedersen, 2021; Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1137). In addition, it could be seen as a tired “cliché” to speak of “sustainable futures” and “sustainability” given these terms seem to be exhausted of any effective meaning. Yet this study begins and is framed by both of these “clichés”: recounting the predicament we find ourselves in, as well as seeking to explore what, if any, possibilities there are for just interspecies sustainable futures. Thus, this study begins by setting the scene of our current path towards “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019). According to the most recent Living Planet Report (World Wide Fund for Nature [WWF], 2020, p. 4), “nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in millions of years.” The Living Planet Index shows that populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish have drastically fallen by an average of 68% between 1970 and 2016, 85% of wetlands have already been lost and 75% of ice-free land has been “significantly altered” (WWF, 2020, p. 6). Industrial animal agriculture is a significant driving force behind human-induced climate change, contributing to an alarming rate of environmental destruction, greenhouse gas emissions, species extinction, biodiversity loss, pollution, water usage, and spread of zoonotic diseases.

An estimated 70% of the world’s freshwater is used for agriculture (particularly animal agriculture) and a third of all land is used to “raise animals” (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 2). Animal agriculture is thus seen as “the single biggest driver of biodiversity loss” (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 74). Aptly summarizing the warnings found in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, Hannan (2020) states how a global temperature rise that exceeds 1.5 degrees would lead to “the complete eradication of coral reefs, uncontrollable wildfires, deadly heat waves, permanent droughts and disastrous floods” and wars as a result of water and food shortages. The dairy (=meat) industry is considered a key driver of the climate crises, ecological degradation and high greenhouse gas emissions, and milk production is said to contribute “20% of total emissions, increasing by almost 40%
during the last three decades” (Bórawski et al. 2020, p. 11). Questions have been raised as to whether animal products ought to have a place at the table as we seek to mitigate the climate crises, and a growing number of studies would suggest they should not (e.g., Poore & Nemecek, 2019). It has been argued that an “international business has been created to address symptoms of the problem,” instead of the problem itself (Higgins, 2015, p. 4) and as a result the climate change regime is seen to have “failed miserably” (Abate, 2019, p. 11). Climate change agreements and sustainable development (SD) agendas have failed to stop destructive practices and address what is considered the root cause of the problems: (hierarchical) anthropocentrism (Abate, 2019; Higgins, 2015). Hierarchical anthropocentrism is the belief that humans are “separate and superior to all other living and non-living things” (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins 2016, p. 13) and is seen as inefficient in efforts to build a sustainable future (Kopnina et al., 2018; Washington et al., 2017). Hierarchical anthropocentrism that underpins dominant human-animal relations can be seen to justify hostile, violent, and deadly consequences for animals, but the Covid-19 pandemic has made it increasingly evident how our hostility against animals “becomes a war against ourselves,” a war in which we can all be seen to lose (Arcari, 2020b, p. 8).

It would appear that we are lost in a “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011), framed by neoliberal interests and “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari, 2020a) and where the challenges we face in “avoiding a ghastly future” have been underestimated (Bradshaw et al., 2021, p. 1), while “meeting internationally agreed goals has generally been poor” (Díaz et al., 2019, p. 4). One of the serious failures of current dominant sustainability and SD narratives can be seen to be the “continuation of activities known to be seriously harming,” including the continued normalization and endorsement of meat (and dairy) consumption (Arcari, 2017, p. 69). Worryingly, despite increased awareness about environmental and animal protection since the 1970s, the destruction of nature and exploitation of animals continues to rise, and animals are exploited in ever-growing numbers. Industrial animal agriculture, including the dairy industry, is also fraught with social justice issues related to working conditions in these industries, contested health claims of animal-based foods, including how the continued promotion of cow milk consumption is exemplary of dietary racism (e.g., Cohen, 2017; Deckha, 2018; Montford, 2020; Repka, 2019). The United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 demands “sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food” (UN, 2015, p. 4), yet despite increasing information about the health risks associated with the consumption of animal-derived products, including the carcinogenic nature of red and processed
meats (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2015), consumption of animal-derived foods continues to grow.

Despite the key role industrial animal agriculture plays in the climate crises, environmental destruction and systemic violence against animals, the UN, European Union (EU), as well as governments, schools and even some environmental and animal protection organizations continue to perpetuate unsustainable and ethically fraught food practices. Schools and schoolchildren play a particular role in maintaining the global dairy industry, as children are framed as “future consumers” under the rubric of school milk schemes. What makes the reluctance to challenge the “animal economy” (Emel & Wolch, 1998, p. 2; see also Pedersen, 2010b, p. 690) that is central to current food systems further disturbing is that the UN has recognized how “pandemics such as the COVID-19 outbreak are a predictable and predicted outcome of how people source and grow food, trade and consume animals, and alter environments” (The Animals’ Manifesto, 2020, p. 9). In the context of sustainable futures, it is conducive to examine the conceptual tools and frameworks that currently guide institutional practices and conceptions of environmental citizenship and community and whether they may be leading us astray.

SD has become a guiding principle in efforts to create sustainable futures in the wake of worsening ecological crises and is seen to have the potential to “become a general principle of customary law,” given its widespread referencing on an international level (Abate, 2019, p. 175). However, it has been argued that more than “intergovernmental agendas and tired models of sustainable development” are needed (Malone, 2018, p. 59) and SD and its instrumental framing of other animals and nature as mere resources has been extensively criticized (e.g., Bergmann 2019, 2021; Kopnina, 2020; Policarpo et al., 2018). Scholars have argued for a reconceptualization of sustainability, one that would include “interspecies ethics as an integral part of social justice” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, pp. 112–113). A reconceptualization of sustainability through an interspecies lens is urgent, given how violence against other animals can be further intensified and justified through the “greening of the factory farm” (Clark, 2012). A framework of interspecies sustainability, which “by definition and declared focus includes the concerns and interests of animals, their protection and their flourishing” (Bergmann, 2019, p. 3), could serve as a guiding principle as we seek pathways forward to multispecies flourishing (and planetary survival). Given the central role SD and “sustainability” have in shaping educational discourse and practices in Finland, including their inclusion in the Finnish National Curriculum, the
transformation of these conceptual tools would inevitably impact educational practices, which would be a welcome change, as on our current path it would appear that we are on a path of sustainable futures for no one.

Each year, an estimated 80 billion land animals are slaughtered for food and the numbers are expected to keep growing. In addition, “hundreds of billions of aquatic animals” are killed each year (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 73). These numbers are unfathomable and can be difficult to grasp. It is important to note that animals are not only “factory farmed” for food, as in the case of pigs, chickens, cows, sheep, ducks, and fish, they are also “factory farmed” on an excessive scale for their fur, to be sold as “pets,” and to be used as laboratory animals. In addition, other animals are used, killed and persecuted in a multitude of ways, including for human “entertainment” or eradicated as “pests.” The systemic violence underlying our predominantly hostile relations with other animals has been described as a war, constituted and operated by different levels of violence: inter-subjective, institutional and epistemic violence (Wadiwel, 2015). Understanding the different forms of violence can help us recognize “our treatment of animals within a society-wide context” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 31), as the different forms of violence “are deeply embedded into almost every conceivable facet of human organization, life and knowledge” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 277). Education and schooling play a significant role in the normalization and (re)production of violence against animals (Pedersen, 2019b). The continued rationalization of “animals as material resource” (Arcari, 2017, p. 82) is central to the root problems found in dominant sustainability narratives, and is also emblematic of our self-proclaimed sovereign dominion over animals (Wadiwel, 2015). To imagine and create peaceable relations with animals, rethinking of political strategies (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 292) and education are required.

1.2 Rethinking education and sustainability

Children and young people across the globe continue to demand climate action, accountability, and the implementation of climate curriculums in schools. The climate crises have been found to be of high concern to youth, with increased attention being paid to ecoanxiety (Pihkala, 2019, 2020). In addition, some children and young people have taken legal action against governments, for example in Portugal and Colombia (Abate, 2019, p. 47). Yet it appears that education continues “for the most part as if there no planetary emergency” (Orr, 2004), even though the climate crises do not exist in a vacuum outside children’s lives. The mobilization of youth around the globe demanding climate action and curriculum reform can be
seen as another sign that so far efforts of “greening schools” (Selby, 2000, p. 88) have been insufficient. Current dominant trends in “greening schools” in Finland are influenced and guided by SD narratives put forth by the UN Agenda 2030 (UN, 2015) and SD is referenced as a core foundational framework of the Finnish National Core Curriculum. As a result, SD continues to be recited “mantra-like” across education (Selby & Kagawa, 2010), which is a cause for concern given the widespread critique of SD and its underlying values (e.g., Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Huckle & Wals, 2015; Kopnina, 2017, 2020; Malone & Truong 2017; Pedersen, 2015, 2019; Policarpo et al., 2018). The “definitional haziness” of SD is seen as problematic (Selby & Kagawa, 2010) and has allowed the animal industries to “co-opt” the term (Bergmann 2019, 2021). It appears that the “mantra-like” recital of SD and sustainability have become the empty rhetoric of “thoughts and prayers” that do little to change the root cause of the crises we face. What practices are framed as sustainable and at whose expense? The paradox created by educational policy and practice founded on anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability and neoliberal agendas of SD could be seen as drivers for rising ecoanxiety, as we continue to be taken down a path of unsustainability (and violence).

The dire state of the planet and ecological crises we face has led to questions whether children even have a right to a future anymore (Nurmi, 2020). In the publication “Children’s rights and the future of the planet” by the Ombudsman for Children in Finland serious concerns have rightly been raised about the necessity for education, as well as other societal actors, to work together with young people to find ways to tackle the storms of the future (Ombudsman for Children, 2021, p. 23). The Ombudsman has thus called for children and young people’s right to active participation in society to be taken more seriously. Active environmental citizenship is seen as a collective intergenerational endeavor (Haanpää & af Ursin, 2020, p. 97), yet so far children have widely been marginalized and not considered as environmental stakeholders and actors in their own right (Barrat-Hacking et al., 2007; Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles & Rousell, 2019; Policarpo et al., 2018). This study echoes the need to take the active participation of children and young people seriously as stakeholders in their own right and adds the need for animals to be positioned and understood as stakeholders in their own right too: in their own lives, in our communities and societal institutions (including education), as well as in conceptions of sustainable futures. Both children and animals in this study are thus seen to have a right to “a life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018).

Animals in (environmental) education have traditionally been either “problematically figured as passive recipients of human action” (Lloro-Bidart &
Banschbach, 2019, p. 2) or have been ignored as a result of anthropocentric frameworks (Kahn & Humes, 2009). While there has been an increase in animal-focused education research, it has been recognized that not everyone appears “committed to improving the material conditions of other animals” (Russell & Spannering, 2019, p. 1137). What makes this further problematic is that while animal-focused education research advances, dominant approaches to environmental and sustainability education, it also appears to largely continue to overlook animals and the need to transform oppressive human-animal relations. Given that environmental and sustainability education are largely seen to fall short in their “business-as-usual” approach (e.g., Jickling & Wals, 2012; Kopnina, 2020) and fail to adequately to tackle “runaway climate change” (Selby & Kagawa, 2010), debate over the future directions of environmental education and sustainability education continue. It would appear pertinent for (environmental) education to take “the animal question” seriously, as future directions of the field (and education in general) require (un)learning (hierarchical) anthropocentrism (Lupinacci, 2019) and for education to be reflective of, and attendant to, our multispecies communities and all their members. Consequently, some education scholars have questioned whether models of sustainability and SD are able to incorporate the new kinds of thinking that are needed to effectively address the complex challenges we face, questioning whether we are able to “re-imagine new ways of ‘doing’ education and not repeat the same old practices” (Malone & Truong, 2017, p. 8). This necessitates understanding the ways in which schools “create, support, and sustain human centered learning experiences that contribute to the development of anthropocentric thinking” (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016, p. 13). If education stems from “*educ*”, meaning “to draw forth” or to bring out (Orr, 2004), what is being drawn forth by dominant modes of education? Might it be that in its current form, education may indeed be bringing forth ways of becoming “more effective vandals of the earth” (Orr, 2004)?

Dominant understandings of environmental and sustainability education continue to largely overlook the connections between education and the AIC and in some instances can be seen to risk falling into the trap of promoting exploitative human-animal relations in the name of sustainability education (e.g., Wolff, Vuorenpiää & Sjöblom, 2018). Failure to see the bigger picture and connections to

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3 The field of environmental education is very broad and consists of numerous approaches frameworks, including (but not limited to) climate change education, sustainability education, education for sustainable development, and outdoor education. Here, “environmental education” is used as an umbrella term for this broad field.
the AIC exemplifies how mainstream sustainability narratives have been successful in obfuscating animals as true stakeholders in the environmental crises (and in their own lives), elucidating the need for critical animal-focused approaches to be incorporated into the broader field of (environmental) education. It has been rightly argued that disrupting and challenging the narratives, norms and structures that “legitimize the human domination of nonhuman nature” is vital for addressing environmental issues (Bell & Russell, 2000, pp. 190–191).

It has now been widely recognized that mainstream education largely normalizes the instrumental use of animals, reproduces anthropocentric values and neglects animal issues (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016; Pedersen, 2010; Rice & Rud, 2016; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Spannring 2017; Weil, 2004). In fact, Weil (2014, p. 232) suggests that education in its current state is “outmoded for today’s world” and warns how current paths of education are likely to perpetuate “and perhaps escalate suffering and exploitation.” Educational transformation thus needs to focus on the ways in which education shapes “human attitudes and behavior towards” animals (Dolby, 2015, p. 2), given that violent human-animal relations are central to the predicament we find ourselves in. Education scholars have highlighted the numerous ways in which education could better attend to building just and peaceable co-existence with other animals, including highlighting the importance of ecological values and animal protection in teacher training (e.g., Gómez Galán, 2012, 2010, 2005), (un)learning anthropocentrism (Lupinacci, 2019) and the need to find ways to learn with, from and for animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016). More attention continues to be paid to how intersectional approaches can help build more compassionate and socially just human-animal relationships (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Russell, 2019; Weil, 2016) and several promising educational frameworks and teaching strategies have been proposed. In addition, the need to transform school food practices and challenge the role of the AIC in schools has been highlighted (Gunnarsson-Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Pedersen, 2019b; Rice, 2013, 2018; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Saari, 2020).

Taking (school) food seriously

Despite what has been called an “animal turn” in education research, much of education research has been criticized for maintaining an anthropocentric position, overlooking the AIC in education, and thus impeding “the fundamental transformation needed to support multispecies flourishing” (Russell & Spannring,
Pedersen (2019a, p. 6) sheds light on the “history of violence toward animals” in education and highlights how previous theorizations of the AIC have largely overlooked the role of the educational sector in the AIC (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 21). Education is not exempt from the systemic commodification of animals but constitutes an important sector of society where the instrumental use of animals and taken-for-granted narratives of “animals-for-us” (Pedersen, 2019a) are further legitimized and reproduced. It has been identified that there is “a culture of silence around spaces of food production” in research (Gillespie, 2018, p. 28) and there are similar findings about educational spaces, where educators have been found to silence themselves and conform to self-censorship regarding food production (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). This is reflective of a wider sociocultural landscape of a hegemonic “meat culture” (Potts, 2017; see also Aaltola, 2020; Arcari, 2020a; Fitzgerald & Taylor, 2014).

Education scholars have highlighted how school food practices are “one of the least critiqued aspects of compulsory schooling” (Rowe & Rocha, 2015, p. 483) and have called for educational research to take school food seriously (Weaver-Hightower, 2011). Scholars have argued for an understanding of “school lunch as an educational phenomenon” (Rice & Rud, 2018, p. 2) and numerous scholars have echoed this call (e.g., Gunnarsson-Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Repka, 2019; Rice, 2013, 2018; Rice & Rud, 2018; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Saari, 2020; Saari & Gómez-Galán, 2019). However, so far little progress has been made to challenge the foundational role of animal-based foods in schools and in fact their presence continues to be maintained and strengthened through heavily subsidized initiatives such as school milk schemes. In education, the lives of children and other animals are “entangled” in numerous ways and school milk schemes are exemplary of the power relations in which both children and other animals are embedded in, and highlight the socio-political factors that directly affect and create some of the conditions in which child-animal relations are formed. Under the rubric of school milk schemes, both children and animals are commodified: human children are commodified as an economic investment and are positioned as future consumers (Griffin, 2005) under the guise of care and concern for their health, while cows are commodified and exploited for their milk and bodies. Given the strong presence of milk in schools, cows and the dairy industry are used here as a case example to illustrate some of the connections between schooling and the AIC.
Let’s talk about “milk”

Milk has largely become synonymous with cow’s milk, a concept that the dairy industry works hard to maintain and indeed has already been successful in framing the human consumption of cow breastmilk as a “normal, natural, and necessary” (Joy, 2020). However, cow’s milk has not always been a dietary staple, despite its central, yet controversial role, in contemporary westernized diets. Portraying cow’s milk as “nature’s perfect food” has become a widespread cliché, one which is reproduced in schools where cow’s milk is heavily marketed and subsidized. Yet, cow’s milk has been criticized for embodying a “Eurocentric conception of nutrition that is not compatible with the global norm” (Repka, 2019, p. 104) and research shows that only an estimated 25 percent of the global population, mainly in northern Europe and North America exhibit tolerance of lactose (Desaulniers, 2015, p. 11). Whereas cow’s milk is omnipresent in westernized diets, the history of milk demonstrates this has not always been the case, and the now taken-for-granted position of cow’s milk as a dietary staple is in fact a modern phenomenon, as before it was consumed in negligible amounts (Nimmo, 2010, p. xi). The narratives of cow’s milk as natural and necessary for humans has “developed unevenly” and “despite the compulsory feel of milk today, its history is just as often about suspicion,” as for centuries milk was seen as disgusting and dangerous (Valenze, 2011). Cow’s milk was associated with the transmission of infections and was considered a “major public health issue” until technological advances allowed the sterilization and pasteurization of milk (Gaard, 2013, p. 596). In Finland, the development of the dairy industry was a result of increased state support and developments of the industrial revolution (Kaarlenkaski, 2019).

Discussion and debate over the historical and contemporary position of cow’s milk is one enveloped in debate over contested health claims, animal rights and welfare, colonialism, dietary racism, capitalism, and the gendered violence and sexual abuse inherent in dairy industry practices (e.g., Cohen, 2017; Desaulniers, 2015; Gaard, 2013; Gillespie, 2018; Linné & Pedersen, 2017; Montford, 2020; Nimmo, 2010; Otomo, 2014; Repka, 2019; Stănescu, 2018; Valenze, 2011). As Nimmo (2010, p. xi) points out, many of the “problems surrounding milk consumption have been managed or overcome so effectively that drinking milk is now more generally difficult to problematize than eating meat: milk has been ‘purified’ to a very high degree.” Studies illustrate how cow’s milk is often “weighed down with ‘cultural baggage’” (Valenze, 2011) and controversy over the natural or necessary place of cow’s milk in human diets and official nutritional
Canada’s latest nutritional guidelines caused a stir by removing “dairy,” as well as “meat” as a standalone categories (Government of Canada, 2021), signaling that shifts away from the explicit promotion of animal-derived products are possible. Nutritional guidelines and nutrition education directly affect the lives of animals and are deeply entangled in “political and economic agendas” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 16), as nutritional guidelines are created through “a highly politicized process that is deeply entangled with industry interests, lobbying, and complex political negotiations” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 15). The consumption of cow’s milk has decreased across the EU (Bórawski et al., 2020) and a similar trend is taking place in other countries, such as the United States and Canada (Montford, 2020). The dairy industry therefore relies on creating new markets for cow’s milk by creating new products and exporting “western dietary norms” to non-western markets, which are seen as “strategies of food imperialism” (Montford, 2020, p. 61). As a result, the cow is seen to have been (and continues to be) “integral to the colonial project” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 180; see also Cohen, 2017). However, while there is widespread critique over the consumption of animal milk, others are more skeptical about claims that consuming animal milk “is inherently problematic” (Milburn, 2018). This study adopts the dairy industry for the sake of argumentation and as an example of how the “animal economy” is embedded in formal education to explore the ways in which the proliferation of cow’s milk in westernized diets can be seen as problematic in education, for the animals themselves, and in light of its role in the climate crisis, contested health claims of cow milk consumption, and how the dairy industry commodifies children to maintain its economic growth.

It has been argued that cows can be seen as examples of lively commodities, as they are not only commodities themselves, “buyable and sellable as living capital,” but they also bring “new lively commodities into being, thus reproducing the commodity circuit” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 9). Animal-derived products have also been framed as “feminized protein” (Adams, 2016), as “animal protein is frequently a product of the female reproductive system, as is true of eggs and breast milk” and “many flesh products butchered for human consumption come from female bodies” as they are killed once their “productivity” declines (Wrenn, 2017, p. 210). The dairy industry, as animal agriculture as a whole does, relies on the commodification and exploitation of female reproductive systems and the very biological nature of motherhood which has also been framed as “reprocentrism” (Jones, 2017, p. 43), meaning the “obsessive and coercive focus on reproduction” which is central to capitalism. Other animals too are exploited for their milk (and for a multitude of
other reasons), but here the focus is on cows due to the prevalence of cow’s milk in (Finnish) schools and the scale and continued growth of the global dairy industry. In the EU, the dairy sector “is the second biggest agricultural sector” (Augére-Granier, 2018, p. 1). Standard industry practices, gendered violence and infanticide are effectively masked behind narratives that socially construct and position “the cow” as a “milk machine” and schools play a particular role in (re)producing these narratives through school milk schemes. School milk schemes are also a prime example of the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011) in which schools are embedded and to which animal exploitation is central.

If school food is considered an educational phenomenon (Rice & Rud, 2018), what then does the heavy presence of cow’s milk in schools teach us? When we think about our time at school and the animals we may have encountered or learned about, cows may not be our immediate response. Yet in many schools, particularly Finnish schools, cows are part of daily school life, namely through the presence of their mammary extracts, heavily subsidized and marketed to schoolchildren as a normal, necessary, and natural part of their diet and school lunch, necessary for healthy strong bones. In addition to their heavy presence in our diets, dairy products (as well as eggs) are often excluded from the same level of scrutiny as “meat”, exemplified by the Meatless Mondays initiative, which erroneously sends a message of distinction between forms of animal exploitation as “all animal products involve suffering; they all involve death; they all involve injustice” (Francione & Charlton, 2015, p. 75). The dairy industry cannot be separated from the meat industry (they are inherently the same) and consists of practices that cause extreme psychological and physical suffering to cows (Gillespie, 2018).

1.3 Towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability

Given the extent of the ecological crises we face and the violent reality underpinning our relations with other animals, education scholars have rightly called for a radical reconsideration and transformation of schooling (Lupinacci, 2020, p. 1). Central to exploring new ways of teaching and learning that take into account the intrinsic value of other animals requires broadening our understanding of “the commons” or our communities, shifting the focus away from an anthropocentric bias to an understanding of the interconnectedness of our lives with those of other animals. This entails a critical examination of “the stories we live by” (Stibbe, 2015, p. 183), which means a critical examination of the narratives and their underlying assumptions that currently guide educational policies and practices.
Whether current dominant narratives and frameworks appear upon critical examination to be inefficient, new narratives that could “work better in the conditions of the world we face” (Stibbe, 2014, p. 117) are required.

Education scholars have advocated for educational transformations, including calls for eodemocratic educational reforms, arguing that “all species, not just humans, need a voice in decision-making” (Mackie & Edmundson, 2013, p. 385). There is also a growing interest in finding ways of attending to animal interests in decision-making processes (Cochrane, 2018; Garner & O’Sullivan, 2016; Meijer 2019), as conventional anthropocentric notions of democracy are insufficient in attending to the well-being and interests of everybody affected by a decision-making and its consequent actions (Pedersen, 2010b). However, so far educational policies and decision-making have received limited attention in the broader project of bringing forth institutional practices that seek to foster multispecies flourishing. Education and its connections to the AIC is seen to create “profoundly unsafe realities for animals” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 8), and as a societal actor, education “is in itself political, affecting life conditions of both humans and animals” (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 1). The dominant ways in which animals are represented in educational practice is reflective of wider sociocultural understandings of animals, and the representation of animal interests cuts across different facets of education: representation in policy, educational materials, educational frameworks, pedagogy, and children’s media. However, how animals are addressed and affected by educational policies has not yet received much attention, apart from a few studies (Horsthemke 2020; Pedersen, 2010b; Policarpo et al., 2018). Educational practice and pedagogy have conversely received significant attention and ways in which we could learn with, from, and for animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420) in ways that attend to their subjectivity and right to a good life of their own have been developed.

This research project aligns itself with these calls and seeks to highlight the importance of educational policy, proposing an educational reform for interspecies sustainability. Re-examining and transforming education from the standpoint of interspecies justice and interspecies sustainability might inform us of the different paths available to us, ones where the interests of other animals are taken seriously. An educational reform for interspecies sustainability requires disrupting the “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) of formal education that (re)produces and legitimates epistemic, systemic and intersubjective violence against animals and fosters solutionary animal-inclusive pedagogies for a multispecies flourishing in our “multispecies commons,” where animals are
understood as stakeholders in their own right and a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). Multispecies flourishing and interspecies sustainability can be seen to require the creation of “spaces of peace,” as just sustainable futures begin “where exploitation ends” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 137). This is a multi-faceted (and given the current circumstances) an ambitious endeavor, requiring attention and action within and beyond education with and through “effective alliances” (George, 2019) to move forward. It is important to note that this study does not seek to propose another “new” pedagogical framework, but rather seeks pathways in how the various already-proposed frameworks could be implemented and integrated into formal education. Through a mapping of different pedagogical frameworks in Chapter 4, it will hopefully become clearer that it is no longer a question of how to teach and learn in new ways (numerous different frameworks have already been proposed), but rather how to implement them in more systemic ways, which inherently brings into question the difficulties in navigating the “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) of education.

A free-reign over animals and their representation is custom in educational settings, where the use of “the animal” as an instrumental teaching tool or object of study, as food, or as a “species representative” is prevalent. Often though the lived realities and intrinsic value of individual animals go overlooked and are often misrepresented in ways that simultaneously legitimize and obscure systemic violence against them (e.g., in the case of “farmed animals”). Since educational policy and practice both have direct and indirect implications on the lives of animals, they ought to be considered stakeholders in education and have their interests represented. Scholars have highlighted the need for “critical and creative policy alternatives,” to challenge the ongoing “politics of unsustainability,” arguing for greater attention to be paid on the “power structures surrounding knowledge and the policy context (Stratford & Wals, 2020, p. 1). The connections between education and the AIC and the central role of the AIC in the politics of unsustainability have so far received limited attention in education research beyond critique put forth by critical animal education scholars. This study reasons that attending to the ways in which animals are represented in education and the human-animal relations fostered by and through these representations are central to the urgently needed critical and creative policy alternatives.

In order to construct policy alternatives, it is necessary to evaluate the shortcomings of current educational policies related to animals and how they, in their current form, significantly contribute to the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011). Examining educational policy from a critical animal studies
(CAS) perspective sheds light on the oppressive power structures governing the (educational) policy landscape, which continue to legitimize the commodification of other animals and demonstrate “the disabling force of the knowledge hegemonies from which educational policy presently operates” (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 693). In light of the serious shortcomings in educational policy, Pedersen (2010b, p. 692) has rightly called for a “critical intervention into anthropocentric and exclusionary foundations of international educational policymaking,” a call which this study seeks to contribute to. Other education scholars too have called for more focus to be paid on “the political ecology of education” to shed light on the ways in which “power relations, political economic processes and their structural arrangements mediate education” (Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017, p. 213). The authors foreground the importance of recognizing how education has an “inherently political and fundamentally impact nature-society relations” (Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017, p. 213). Weaver-Hightower (2008, p. 154) has argued for viewing “policy contexts as ecologies” to account for the complexity inherent in policy and “the many interconnections that create, sustain, hold off, or destroy policy formation and implementation.” The benefits of a conceptualization of policy ecologies lies in moving away from fragmented approaches to broader understandings of collective strategizing, which could offer ways of strategizing “in a new, multifocal way,” by identifying multiple points of intervention in policy processes instead of “breaking a problem into manageable parts and fixing each part individually” (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 162).

From such a perspective, the possibilities of building effective alliances for strategizing against the multiple actors and practices that contribute to the politics of unsustainability and animal oppression can be identified. Educational policy in this study, for the sake of an initial mapping of a broad policy landscape, is divided into three general dimensions: sustainability, consumption and curriculum, which are seen as interconnected. Each of the policies, mandates, or regulations that fall within these general dimensions are themselves connected to wider webs of decision-making that affect the lives of other animals in profound ways. If educational policy (here focusing on a Finnish context) is broadly categorized as consisting of different dimensions related to sustainability, curriculum, and consumption, it may be helpful to recognize the ways in which specific animals are affected by and (mis)represented in educational policy and practice. Cows are a prime example of the ways in which animals can be (and indeed are) directly affected by educational policies and practices. The representation of animal interests in educational policy is a multi-faceted and requires intervention beyond
merely representation in curriculum or educational materials (although this is important), given that educational policy is connected to wider policy networks related to sustainability agendas, animal welfare legislation and neoliberal agendas such as school milk schemes. The different dimensions of educational policy are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3, while educational frameworks are explored in Chapter 4 and educational practice in Chapter 5. Representation and inclusion of animal standpoints (in education) is a broad (and challenging) question, because of the limitations of universalizing categorizations (“animal”), the multitude of social norms, values and narratives that are circulate though and which are embedded in education, as well as the broader socio-political landscape education is embedded in.

1.4 Research questions and methods

This study adopts a multi-angle (or multidimensional) approach, which refers to two things: the approach in research design; and in reference to some of the different dimensions that ought to be taken into consideration when approaching such an ambitious project of systemic transformations (see Figure 1). Since education is multifaceted and the issues at hand are complex and interconnected, a multi-angle approach helps to uncover some of the connections and illustrate how working towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability, goes beyond the role of teachers and educators or proposing new educational frameworks (albeit educational frameworks do play a significant role). A multi-angle approach has been chosen to grapple with the question of animals in education from interconnected dimensions of policy, pedagogy, and practice, and thus research design adopts a combination of different research methods: critical policy analysis (CPA; see Chapter 3), mapping of educational frameworks (see Chapter 4) and semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 5). *Policy* here refers to different dimensions of decision-making that affects pedagogical practices and school structures and school climate more broadly. *Pedagogy* naturally refers to the pedagogical frameworks required to teach and learn in new ways that foster multispecies flourishing. *Practice* here refers to the implementation of the new pedagogical frameworks that are required for an educational reform for interspecies sustainability, requiring education specialists of these “new” ways of teaching and learning and is more explicitly explored through interviews with humane education organizations. Since different interpretive practices make “the world visible in a
different way” they can thus shed light on and open up different questions about a subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 1).

Multi-angle, multidimensional, or multi-theoretical approaches continues to be increasingly adopted across education research, for example in the field of political ecology of education (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2015), research is informed by an intersectional lens (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Russell, 2019) and a variety of interdisciplinary (or “multi-theoretical”) scholarship (e.g., Rautio et al., forthcoming; Spannring, 2019; Young, 2019). It is becoming increasingly evident that interdisciplinary (or transdisciplinary) scholarship could offer more promising pathways forward. It is important to mention that this study arose from concerns over the ways in which animals are addressed in and affected by education and schooling, as well as the constraints within which educators work in formal education, which may limit opportunities to learn about animals in different ways. Arising from my experiences as an educator in early childhood education and how my own teaching practice was shaped and constrained by an “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021), in which welfare narratives of animals-for-us was the norm and difficult to diverge from, it became important for me to understand pedagogical openings for teaching and learning differently. To do this it became important to therefore explore the occlusions and openings posed by educational policies and structures, given that they can severely limit how alternative pedagogies may be integrated within formal education and the difficulties in “doing education” in different ways, in ways that do not (re)produce (educational) violence against other animals. As such, this study is inspired by an ongoing interest in creating more peaceable human-animal relations within (and beyond) educational settings. With this in mind, and although welfare frameworks and current state of education is critiqued, it is intended not as a critique against the practices of individual teachers, but rather through a more systemic lens with educators and students in mind, who are at the frontlines of what can be seen as challenging terrain.
The overarching aim of this research project is to explore how we could move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability where animals too are understood as (educational) stakeholders. This overarching aim is further elaborated by a set sub questions and objectives, outlined below. The three sub questions guiding this study are:

1. How are animals positioned in (and affected by) selected educational policies?
2. What pedagogical openings are there for education for interspecies sustainability and understanding animals as stakeholders?
3. How are animal-inclusive pedagogies being implemented?

The first objective is to examine how animals are positioned in (and consequently affected by) selected educational policies and the respective policy narratives they
are embedded in (or excluded from). A critical analysis of educational decision-making is important, as this establishes the guiding principles that frame institutional and teaching practices. The chapters explore whether the conceptual tools used to formulate these guiding principles are sufficient enough to create sustainable futures. The methodology used for the analysis is a framework derived from insights from different CPA frameworks (e.g., Diem. et al., 2019), critical discourse analysis (CDA; van Dijk, 1995, 2006), social narrative theory (Baker, 2006) and ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2014, 2015). Questions that arise from the analysis include how policy issues are framed, the wider context in which they are constructed, the effects of these policies, why and whom do these policies fail (Jie, 2016; Taylor, 1997). Three dimensions of educational policy are examined: sustainability (Agenda 2030; see UN, 2015), curriculum (Finnish National Core Curriculum) and consumption (European Commission School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme).

The second objective is to map out the opportunities for disrupting animals-for-us narratives and better including animal perspectives in education through animal-inclusive, or “animal-sensitive” (Spannring, 2019), educational frameworks. If an educational reform requires new ways of “doing” education (Malone & Truong, 2017, p. 8), it is important to explore what pedagogical frameworks and tools exist. The aim is to explore how these “alternative” frameworks could help to recognize animals as stakeholders in education, as beings with intrinsic value, agency, voice and a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et. al., 2018), and the strategies and conceptual tools they offer to help build a more just and sustainable co-existence with human and nonhuman inhabitants of our multispecies communities. Through a birds-eye view of the so-called “animal turn” in education, this study seeks to explore the opportunities offered by various pedagogical frameworks and whether there could be opportunities to unify what may currently appear as a slightly fragmented field, and how this could possibly be done under the rubric of interspecies sustainability.

The third and final objective is to explore, through semi-structured e-interviews, the role that humane education-oriented organizations are playing and could play in facilitating the development and implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies, thus advancing the understanding of other animals as stakeholders in education (and in sustainable futures) and contributing to a wider systemic change in education.
1.4.1 Scholarly and societal significance

The ways in which animals are (mis)represented in education have so far received limited attention outside the field of education research itself. More attention and collaboration within and beyond education research is warranted, as formal schooling can be seen to be a significant space where animal industries have gained an overly large foothold, of which school milk schemes are a pertinent example. This study contributes to the ongoing debate on the role education could and should play in addressing hierarchical anthropocentrism. The ways in which this thesis seeks to contribute to ongoing scholarly debate is threefold. Firstly, this study seeks to contribute to the growing field of critical animal education research and more specifically to the growing analysis of the political ecology of education by foregrounding cows and school (cow’s) milk schemes as a case example.

Secondly, by problematizing neoliberal anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability, this study aims to foreground the importance of reconceptualizing “sustainability” through an interspecies sustainability framework, which can be seen to be fundamental for possibilities to create “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020). Thirdly, given the calls for radical transformations in our societal fabric and the project of “undoing epistemic violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015), this study argues that greater attention ought to be paid to the ways in which education has serious implications for the lived realities of other animals, the role it plays in the AIC, as well as the key role it plays in the normalization of the human domination of animals. Thus, this study seeks to identify and highlight some of the “missed opportunities” where education might have been overlooked in the broader socio-political landscape and in essence, as well as some missed opportunities within education research to present a more unified front in challenging anthropocentric education. What then follows is that this study seeks to explore how we might bridge some of these missed opportunities in terms of collective strategizing through the notion and proposal of “effective alliances” (George, 2019). The findings are envisaged to be of interest to educators grappling with the “animal question” and how to work within and through the confines posed by the “anthropocentric infrastructure” of education (Pedersen, 2021) as well as those grappling with the question of the future of (environmental sustainability) education in search of pathways forward and beyond the constraints of the current impasse working with limited (and destructive) notions of “sustainability.”
1.4.2 Overview of chapters

This study is divided into six chapters, beginning with the theoretical foundations of the study, followed by an examination of animals in educational policies and frameworks, as well as an exploration of the experiences of humane education-oriented professionals. To conclude, the final chapter sets sights on future directions for working towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability. The exploitation of cows in the dairy industry is encompassed throughout as a case example.

Chapter 2 sets the scene for the consequent chapters by exploring the complex landscape of human-animal relations and the narrative dimensions that actively construct “the animal” in society (and in education), as this can shed light on some of the challenges of navigating diverse narratives and representations of animals in educational contexts. Theoretical foundations of CAS and the conceptual tools of (educational) violence (Pedersen, 2019b; Wadiwel, 2015), effective alliances (George, 2019), interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019) and understanding animals as stakeholders are presented. The shortcomings of animal welfare are explored, as well as how animals could more adequately be represented in education. There is also discussion of how their positioning as stakeholders in their own right as members of our communities, in education, as well as in sustainable futures.

Chapter 3 explores the challenges posed by current educational policies through three dimensions of educational policy: sustainability (Agenda 2030; see UN, 2015), curriculum (Finnish National Core Curriculum) and consumption (EU School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme), followed by an initial exploration of how educational policy could look through an interspecies sustainability framework. Chapter 4 adopts a birds-eye view mapping of some of the educational frameworks posited under the “animal turn” in education (research) and the long-standing and evolving field of humane education in efforts to seek pedagogical openings through various animal-inclusive pedagogies. The chapter explores how frameworks stemming from different foundations might converge on key principles and as such offer opportunities for broader alliance-building and a more unified front, in order to more systemically challenge hegemonic hierarchical anthropocentrism in education. Presenting a more consistent understanding of animals as stakeholders in their own right can lend to more credibility when moving towards building necessary alliances in the broader fields of environmental and sustainability education and education as a whole. A more coherent unified field
would help shed light on how animals and transforming human-animal relations are (and should be) central to (not separate from) the broader field of environmental and sustainability education, and are in fact a prerequisite for moving towards sustainable futures. This is where interspecies sustainability could serve as a broader unifying framework to work towards systemic transformations “needed to support multispecies flourishing” (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1140) and how critical animal-inclusive pedagogies may provide strong conceptual (pedagogical) tools and openings to pave the way towards such flourishing. The findings suggest that there already is a strong foundation for these pedagogies (albeit pedagogies that will, just like others, continue to be developed, reworked and refined) and hence the question may not so much be anymore about how to teach and learn differently in a multispecies world (as multiple promising frameworks have already been developed), but rather how we might implement and infuse these pedagogies more systematically within formal education.

Chapter 5 explores “lessons from the field,” referring to the experiences and practices of humane educators. Semi-structured interviews with nine humane education professionals were used with the aim of gaining an understanding of the experiences and strategies these practitioners use to bring animal perspectives into different educational settings. Exploring forms of educational intervention where change is created from outside formal schooling can shed light on the opportunities educators and others have and the types of partnerships that are already being built. This may in turn shed light on how transformations and reform do not operate in a linear fashion, instead a constant flux of different actions in different dimensions occur interchangeably and concurrently. Chapter 6 bridges the findings of prior chapters and asks how we could begin to move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability that fosters multispecies flourishing (and thus planetary survival).
2 Theoretical foundations: Setting the scene

This chapter sets the stage for this study by outlining the theoretical foundations for this study and outlines some of the main developments in human-animal studies (HAS), CAS, animal law and political theory and how these relate to understanding animals as stakeholders in education and sustainable futures. It begins by exploring the broader landscape of human-animal relations and the social construction of animals, and the narrative dimensions through which human-animal relations are constructed and upheld, followed by an examination of the connections between schooling and the AIC with a focus on the dairy industry and nutrition education. As this study is situated at the crossroads of education research, childhood studies, sustainability, and CAS, it is important to outline some of the main discussions in these different fields and how they intersect in this study before the actual research questions are explored in consequent chapters. This chapter introduces in more detail the framework of interspecies sustainability, as well as other key concepts that are used in this study to guide and frame analysis: (educational) violence, effective alliances, and stakeholders.

2.1 The complex landscape of human-relations

Western philosophical traditions have used a number of characteristics or markers in an attempt to draw a distinction between humans and other animals in an effort to mark humans as superior (Wise, 2000). Debate over which species ought to be considered ethical subjects who we owe a moral concern to continues to be a subject of debate that is often based on anthropocentric “guidelines” or “measurements,” which some argue fail to recognize animals’ diverse ways of being in the world and thus a “language of political extension” is seen to run the risk of remaining “humanocentric” (Cudworth, 2014, p. 25). In addition, what have often been considered solely “human traits,” including the use of language or tools, and self-consciousness are not unique to humans and “can be found in animals ranging from dolphins to pigeons” (Cassuto, 2007, p. 60). There is now growing recognition on the rich inner and social lives of other animals (e.g., Balcombe, 2007; Bekoff, 2007; deWaal, 2016; Safina, 2020), and that animals are sentient beings with intrinsic value, who have histories, “a past, a story, a biography” and who are “a unique somebody, not a disposable something” (Masson, 2004, p. x). However, despite a growing recognition of the rich inner and social lives of other animals, dominant conceptions of animals and consequent relations humans have with them
continue to be based on largely anthropocentric and speciesist values, characterized by systemic violence and oppression. In addition, the evaluation and measurement as to who matters and according to which “parameters” can be seen as a self-proclaimed human “sovereign dominion over other creatures” (Wadiwel 2015, p. 223). The different divisions that continue to be made, with ever emerging forms of “proof” that (some) animals are “like us” may appear to offer windows to a more empathic and peaceable co-existence between (some) humans and (some) animals in (some) settings. Although this might also be seen as problematic, given the ways in which it might be used as way to (re)produce “arbitrary hierarchies and distinctions between otherwise like entities” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 55).

Our lives are intertwined with those of other animals and the different relations we have with them can be complex and violent, while some are also loving and caring. Some animals we love and share our homes with, considering them family, while some animals are used for their labor. Some we idealize and worship. Others we vilify for their mere existence, considering them “pests,” while others we torment in the name of entertainment. Some we hunt for “trophy” or “fun,” while others we use for sport. We trade them, breed them, test on them, discard, kill or abandon them when they do not fit the “function” or “uses” set out for them. Our so-called “contact” with farmed animals is said to be the “closest contact” many have with an animal on a daily basis (DeMello, 2012, p. 11), yet these animals are often hidden, forgotten, overlooked or replaced by caricatures and representations and “contact” is with the “end product” they are made into. Violence under the guise of consumption, sport, research, and entertainment directly relates to the categorization of other animals according to their perceived utility or other relational position to humans. Animals can be eradicated as “pests,” mourned as “companion animals,” consumed as “food,” killed and discarded as an excess unprofitable by-product (e.g., male calves in the dairy industry, male chicks in the egg industry), tormented and killed for “entertainment,” or killed once their body is no longer of use to humans (e.g., animals used in research, “spent” cows in the dairy industry) or die as “collateral damage” such as wildlife whose habitats are destroyed for agricultural expansion or “bycatch” caught in fishing nets. Hostility towards other animals is also increasing as a result of habitat loss and as a consequence some animals increasingly inhabit the same areas as humans (often with violent consequences) and this hostility and disregard of other animals is evident in infrastructure and city planning. Not all relations between humans and other animals constitute violence and some animals do experience relations of care, companionship, love, affection, and are considered family members, friends, and
neighbors. Yet, as Wadiwel (2015, p. 55–56) aptly notes, even the relations that appear “peaceful and friendly” are located within unequal power dynamics entangled with industrialized breeding and killing (e.g., the breeding of animals for the pet trade and killing of “unwanted” animals abandoned in shelters) and “discipline, surveillance, containment and control,” as in the case of domestication and pet “ownership”. Given the complexity of human-animal relations, how might we begin to make sense of these relations?

2.1.1 The social construction of human-animal relations

The interdisciplinary field of HAS, also referred to as animal studies, seeks to explore “the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them,” with a central focus on “the ways in which animal lives intersect with human societies” (DeMello, 2012, p. 5). Prominent to HAS and CAS is exploring the ways in which animals and human-animal relations are socially constructed (Cole & Stewart, 2014; DeMello, 2012; Dunayer, 2001; Pedersen, 2010a; Stibbe, 2011). The social and cultural construction of animals can help us understand how we come to understand some animals as “food,” denying their subjectivity and right to life. Categorizations can make it easier to overlook the intrinsic value of animal lives, as individuals are turned “into generic species representatives” allowing them to be depersonalized (Dunayer, 2001, p. 6). The categorizations and representations of other animals can be understood in relation to narratives we tell about ourselves and others. The ways in which we understand animals and attribute meanings to them is “deeply contingent upon the symbolic roles or representations we ascribe to them” (Pedersen, 2010a, p. 10). Animals are categorized and labelled according to their perceived utility or location, and the same animal species can be considered a pet, pest, laboratory animal, food animal, wild animal, or invasive species. For example, a rabbit can be considered any of one these. A rabbit can be considered a pet who we share our home with, a laboratory animal or slaughtered for food, or a wild animal, pest or invasive species depending on where the rabbit happens to be born. The consequent treatment, and legal protection (if any) will depend on the categorization. The categorizations of animals are thus “politically charged in that they serve to benefit some (humans, some animals) at the expense of others (other animals)” (DeMello, 2012, p. 10) and could be seen as emblematic of human sovereignty over animals, where socially constructed categories to manage and evaluate animal life normalize and naturalize their instrumental use and serve as
tools for the “continuing domination of nonhuman life” to our benefit (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 55).

Education scholars have noted how the ways animals are represented change throughout the years of formal schooling (Dolby, 2015). In early childhood education animal representations in toys, literature, stories, and other children’s media are often used as tools to think with, and “animals themselves are not the primary focus of interest” (Pedersen, 2011, p. 13). Sentimentality is seen as a key driver in the use of animals in early childhood and primary school and their omnipresence is seen to have implicit message “that animals can be used for teaching and learning and that they can be objectified so that humans can learn from them” (Dolby, 2015, p. 9). This idea of animals as objects and tools for learning is said to solidify in middle and high school through activities such as dissection (Dolby, 2015; Pedersen, 2011). It has been argued that as children advance through schools and its “age-related organizational structure” the positioning of animals as “‘objects of enquiry’ escalates until ultimately they become raw materials in science classes” (Cole & Stewart, 2014, p. 70). The focus on instrumental knowledge about animals is seen to be a result of a historical division between natural and social sciences, which has affected the framing of animals in education. The so-called “curricular animal” is often a representation of a specific species with measurable physical traits and a generalized depiction of behavior and habitat, for example in biology, where animals become mere depersonalized “species representatives” (Dunayer, 2001; Rautio & Saari, 2020). The question of “what is an animal outside of culture” (DeMello, 2012, p. 12) raises the important notion that much of the way in which we come to understand our relations with other animals is through representations, narratives (or stories), and strategic use of linguistic mechanisms. Animal representations and narratives are omnipresent since early childhood and media aimed at children is particularly heaving with animals, where they are often mis- and dis-placed (Timmermann & Ostertag, 2011).

Beginning from children’s stories of Old MacDonald’s Farm we are inundated with narratives of cows as our “happy helpers,” our “friends” who “help” us make cheese and milk, resulting in a wide acceptance of cows existing as a “milk producing machine” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 163). Understanding that cows, like other animals, have “their own lives to lead,” is often ignored (King, 2017) and “the farm” becomes a naturalized and taken-for-granted location in human society. The social construction of cows as “farm animals” “milk makers” or “milk machines” is evident in the representations of cows in advertising, children’s books, and
educational materials, where “idyllic images of dairy cows in pastures and even cartoon depictions of happy, appeasing, docile animals” are abundant (Fitzgerald & Taylor, 2014, p. 171). Although educational policies are characterized by significant exclusions of animals, they are abundant in educational contexts; as representations in educational materials, as “species representatives” in textbooks, sometimes live animals are kept as “classroom pets,” and animal caricatures are even used to advertise the importance of drinking cow’s milk and good manners (Saari, 2020).

Often the lives of real living animals are overshadowed by the multiple representations we encounter. In fact, it has been noted in the case of “charismatic animals” on the verge of extinction that the abundance of animal representations we encounter in our culture overshadows the plight of these animals due to a “biased perception of their abundance” (Courchamp et al., 2018, p. 1). This free-for-all access and use of animals can have dangerous consequences for the animals themselves given how representations and narratives guide our attitudes towards them and relations with them. If calls for the representation of animal interests are to be taken seriously, the unmediated use of animal representations ought to be challenged and restricted, such as the ways in which animal interests are overlooked and misrepresented in the humane myth. For example, the myth of happy cows on Old MacDonald’s farm continues to be used in marketing campaigns, children’s media and nutrition education to perpetuate narratives of animals-for-us. Because socio-cultural constructions of other animals are so engrained in our societal fabric, it may be difficult for some to envision where cows (and other so-called farmed animals) “belong” in our societal makeup if not on “a farm.” The normalization and naturalization of the spaces that these animals are forcibly located within may can make it difficult to disrupt these taken-for-granted assumptions.

The important role language plays in the construction of human-animal relations and attitudes towards them has been highlighted by numerous scholars (e.g., DeMello, 2012; Dunayer, 2001; Stibbe, 2001, 2012). Linguistic mechanisms, including the naming of body parts and using separate vocabularies for human and animal behavior has been said to legitimate a human/animal dichotomy, for example a woman is pregnant and nurses, while a nonhuman mammal gestates and lactates (Dunayer, 2001, p. 4), obscuring understandings of motherhood and mother-child bonds of other animals. Language can also be seen to play an important role in socially constructing “the animal,” as different discourses are used to describe human and animal behavior (Dunayer, 2001). Children’s literature and media play an important role in reproducing these taken-for-granted assumptions,
for example in the case of cows and their portrayal as “milk makers” or “milk machines” who happily “give us” their milk and “help us” make cheese and butter. The smiling cartoon cows in children’s storybooks are similar to those who smile at us on the side of milk cartons and other advertising adorned with so-called “happy cows.” Children’s literature and media (Cole & Stewart, 2014; Koljonen, 2020; Timmerman & Ostertag, 2011), zoos and aquariums (e.g., Lloro-Bidart & Russell, 2017), museums (Pedersen, 2010c) and schools are all examples of spaces and mediums through which different narratives about other animals circulate in childhood.

However, as Pedersen (2010a, p. 10) rightly notes, despite the “relative stability, social representations and constructions may shift over time and place” and “commonsensical, taken-for-granted understandings of animals” can be challenged and transformed. How then do we begin to navigate the different narratives that circulate about other animals, which have profound effects on their lived realities? It has been argued that since “meaning is constructed culturally, it can be constructed differently” and our “foundational assumptions made explicit, interrupted and shifted if we learn how to think differently about our relationship to each other and the natural world” (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016, p. 14). Critically interrogating foundational assumptions can clarify how animals are “more than simply objects of human representation” and are rather “subjects in their own right who exercise agency” (Tipper, 2011, p. 147). Some scholars have rightly questioned “what constitutes a ‘good’ narrative of nonhuman others” (Spannring, 2017, p. 6), and it has been argued that narratives ought to make their subjectivity visible “in order to disrupt processes of othering, lead to a deeper understanding for and empathy with them” to foster more ethical human animal-relationships (Kuhl, 2011; Russell 2005 in Spannring 2007, p. 69). How might we begin to navigate the complex terrain of narrating animal experiences and in doing so could it help us create new stories-to-live-by?

The stories-we-live-by

Humans are said to be “storytelling animals” (Jones, McBeth & Shanahan, 2014) and it has been said that stories, or narratives, play an important role in helping us make sense of the world around us, as well as actively constructs this world. One way through which to try to make sense of the ways in which human-animal relations are socially constructed is through narrative analysis. Narratives exist in diverse forms, and they are not set in stone, but are subject to shift and change over
time. For education research and practice, a sociological understanding of the ways in which animals are socially constructed can shed light on the difficulties of navigating through, making sense of, and identifying how social constructions of other animals could be challenged and “re-storied.” Many narratives are also value-laden and particularly the construction of some animals as “food” or “edible” relies on a socially constituted entitlement (Arcari, 2020a, p. 332). This entitlement and the hierarchical anthropocentrism that underscores it, is central to the wide range of narratives about ourselves and other animals that flow through education and schooling.

Narratives are said to guide people’s behavior, assumptions, and beliefs “about the events in which they are embedded” and are open to a continuous flow of change, as we become exposed to the new experiences and new stories (Baker, 2006, p. 3). Narratives can normalize specific viewpoints and values through their repetition over time “so that they come to be perceived as self-evident, benign, uncontestable and non-controversial” (Baker, 2006, p. 11). Narratives are thus understood as “the stories we elaborate in order to make meaning of our lives” and they can “both guide and justify our actions” (Harding, 2013, p. 287). Narrative is used in a wide range of disciplines, including communication, psychology, translation and interpreting studies, political science, law, education, medicine, and history (Harding, 2013). Narratives, like language, are ways in which we come to make sense of, understand and interpret the world around us and our place in it, and actively construct it. It has been argued that narratives “affect the material ways in which humans interact with each other and other species, and they shape the power inequalities within these sets of relations” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 177). Education scholars too have raised the importance of narratives (Bell & Russell, 2000; Kuhl, 2011; Russell, 2005) and particularly animals-for-us narratives have rightly been problematized (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Pedersen, 2019b).

There is some overlap with narratives and what are referred to as stories in ecolinguistics, which are concerned with examining how different stories shape people’s lives and society stories, how they come to be “taken-for-granted ‘truths’” and the ways in which these stories or “truths” circulate “in educational, political, professional, medical legal and other institutional contexts,” as well as our everyday lives (Stibbe, 2015, p. 5). Ecolinguistics views stories as the cognitive structures that influence how one perceives and acts in the world and introduces the notion of stories-we-live-by, which “are stories in the minds of multiple people across a culture” (Stibbe, 2015, pp. 5–6). Ecolinguistics aims to explore different “texts” and the underlying assumptions, values, and the ways in which they
“encourage us to act” (Stibbe, 2015, p. 6). For example, stories that see nature as a mere resource “may be more likely to exploit it, or if economic growth is seen as the primary goal of politics then people’s wellbeing and the ecosystems which support life may be overlooked” (Stibbe, 2015, p. 6). Analysis is driven by a motivation to seek solutions to ecological challenges and is guided by an understanding that “we may have to explore and reconsider some of the fundamental stories that underlie our culture, including stories about who we are as humans” (Stibbe, 2015, p. 5). Ecolinguistics can be seen to overlap with some forms of social narrative theory and here the notion of narratives will be used.

Different typologies of narratives have been outlined, including by Baker (2006) and Harding (2013). A revised typology grounded on their work is presented here (see Figure 2). Baker (2006) and Harding (2013) have mapped out different types of narratives under two general categories: collective and individual narratives. Understanding the multifaceted nature of narratives that are constantly circulated and through which we actively construct our relations with others can shed light on the difficulties of disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions about human-animal relations. Because narratives operate on a variety of levels and within different spheres of society, conceptualizing different types of narratives might be helpful in shedding light on the opportunities and challenges of disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions about animals. In addition, narrative opens up questions as to “who may narrate and who may not” (Harding 2013, p. 303), how these narrator positions are shaped and to what effect, and ultimately how might the narratives of other animals be taken into consideration in ways that they too might shape the stories-we-live-by. Or in other words, how might animal voices be made more audible (Pedersen, 2010b) and how might we in turn learn to listen.
Fig. 2. A revised typology of narratives based on Baker (2006) and Harding (2013).

*Individual (or personal) narratives* are “stories we tell ourselves about our place in the world and our own personal history” and are connected to the collective narratives in which they are situated (Baker, 2006, pp. 28–29). In relation to animals, another conceptualization of individual narrative is needed, referring to *individual narratives of others*, which might help disrupt dominant conceptions of animals as merely species representatives, where they are seen and understood as individuals with their own interests, personalities, and feelings. While animals have their own histories, lives, and biographies, rarely do they enter into the ways in which we come to learn about them. It is important to acknowledge the uncertainty and limitations in our abilities to narrate “other animals’ worlds” (Tammi, Hohti & Rautio, 2020, p. 3) and the difficulties that arise when speaking *on behalf* of other animals (Meijer, 2019, p. 194). Despite these difficulties, narratives open possibilities for imagining the perspectives and experiences of animals (Kuhl, 2011, p. 112) and can provide possibilities to imagine what stories would animals tell us (if we were open to listening), and narrating animal experiences requires a certain amount of “empathic imagination” (Jones, 2017).

*Shared or collective narratives* take many forms. *Public (or societal) narratives* can be understood as “stories elaborated by and circulated among social and institutional formations larger than the individual” including educational
institutions and the media (Baker, 2006, p. 33). These narratives can affect ways in which particular practices and social relations are normalized and they have been said to legitimize domination and as such, “merit everyone’s concern” (Bell & Russell, 2000, p. 200). *Policy narratives* can be understood “as the general storylines that emerge and come to hold prominence in policy communities concerning particular phenomena” (Mintrom & O’Connor, 2020, p. 2). *Meta-narratives* are narratives “in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history,” as they are “the epic dramas of our time” (Somers & Gibson in Baker, 2006, p. 44). For example, climate change can be seen as an example of meta-narrative, as it cuts “across geographical and national boundaries and directly impacts the lives of every one of us” (Baker, 2006, p. 45). Different forms of collective narratives are open to interpretation and circulate in conflicting versions, and political and economic power is a “prime factor in determining the survival and circulation” of particular versions of collective narratives (Baker, 2006, p. 45).

As narratives that are reproduced over a period can become self-evident, benign, incontestable, and non-controversial (Baker, 2006, p. 11) it is vital to critically assess the narratives we are exposed to and in turn examine our roles in them. According to Baker (2006, p. 54), “narratives always project a chronological end that is also a moral end, a purpose, a forecast, an aspiration,” which is why narratives guide behavior and action. Sustainability and SD are public narratives that are widely circulated and the ways in which actors, issues, causes and remedial actions are framed, labelled or omitted influences our interpretation of events, as well as feed and intertwine with other narratives we are embedded in. How sustainability is framed in public and policy narratives can influence the collective ideas about what count as sustainable actions and who needs to be considered in sustainable futures. It is important to understand the cyclical nature of narratives and the ways in which they can be reinterpreted, re-storied, challenged and disrupted. Although there are several challenges in disrupting and re-storying dominant collective narratives, there is hope for alternative narratives that are introduced and crafted.

Exploring the social construction of human-animal relations sheds light on the ways in which the “destructive pattern of exploitation is sustained” and thus opens our understanding of “how it might be challenged and one day, ended” (Cole & Stewart, 2014, p. 5). To challenge and disrupt taken-for-granted *animals-for-us* narratives (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 7) requires crafting spaces for individual narratives of other animals. Individual narratives of cows can shed light on the inner and social lives of these individuals and mother-child relations, which are systemically
obscured in most collective narratives. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of all forms of representation, requiring one to be attentive and “deliberate as we strive to find ways to listen to the ‘voices of our animal neighbors and represent them respectfully,” acknowledging that “representations will always fall short of the actual animals themselves” (Kuhl, 2011, p. 119). Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the poverty of language itself, as translation into words implies that we risk prescribing unintended meanings and connotations that are inherent to language and meaning-making through language. Finding new stories-to-live-by is a project that includes (but is not limited to) critically assessing the interplay between narratives of sustainabilty, animals-for us, childhood, motherhood, and community, as well as critically acknowledging our role as “narrator” (such as my role as the “narrator” of this study, speaking “on behalf of” children and other animals), which constitutes in itself a challenging setup, yet where questions of accountability can serve as a benchmark for critically examining whether we are playing into and reinforcing the creation of violent realities, or seeking to undo them. Not only are narratives about animals central in children’s lives though children’s media and education, a broader understanding of child-animal relations has begun to be of increased interest in research, with a focus on the ways in which the lives of children and other animals are entangled.

2.1.2 From child-animal relations to multispecies childhoods

It has been argued that cultural and social categorizations affect the ways in which children learn to relate to other animals, to view them as other and categorize them according to their use, which reinforces the objectification of animals and notions of human superiority (Cole & Stewart, 2014). Representations and stories of other animals are abundant in media targeted at children, educational materials, toys, and clothing, and it is important to question what it is that children learn about other animals (and our relations with them) through these representations (Timmerman & Ostertag, 2011, p. 60; see also Cole & Stewart, 2014; Koljonen 2020; Tammi et al., 2020). It has been suggested that “children of all cultures are drawn to animals from a very young age,” forming attachments to them and that children do not separate human and animal worlds in ways that adults do (DeMello, 2012, p. 330). Some have argued that it is a result of westernized socialization processes (in which education plays a role) through which children learn to separate humans and animals (Bell & Russell, 1999; Timmerman & Ostertag, 2011, p. 62). Child-animal relations have often been viewed through a developmental or idealized lens (Tipper,
framed through notions of natural affinity (Melson, 2001), as well as developmental psychology examining what possible benefits children might have from their interactions with other animals (Tammi et al., 2020). As a result, there has been a tendency to romanticize children’s relations with (some) animals. However, scholars in the emerging field of “multispecies childhood studies” aptly note that the diverse relations children have with other animals are complex, sometimes violent and are embedded with difficult questions and moral dilemmas (Tammi et al., 2020; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018).

Framing the relationships between children and other animals “as one of harmony, purity, and innocence” is said to be a result of “casting children as instinctual, prerational, asocial, apolitical, and uncorrupted beings, and therefore aptly positioned alongside animals on the ‘nature’ side of the nature/culture divide” (Taylor, 2017, as cited in Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 2). It is important to acknowledge how children’s relations with other animals are multifaceted and many children may dismiss certain animals as “unwanted, and unvalued,” sometimes as a result of adult example (Rule & Zhbanova, 2012, p. 223). To challenge ideas of harmony, the Common Worlds Research Collective sees animals and children as co-inhabiting and inheriting messy and damaged “entangled common worlds” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018, pp. 2–3). In looking at ways in which children resist hegemonic narratives that normalize the instrumental use of animals, Policarpo et al. (2018) suggest that veganism could allude to “new understandings of social order” and exemplify “more sustainable ways of inhabiting a multispecies planet” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 206). They also highlight that despite the strong socialization that may leave children with “little room to choose freely how to relate to nonhuman animals,” there are children who do resist and develop alternatives (Policarpo et al., 2018, pp. 219–220). In addition, they rightly point out how children should not be perceived as “passive agents who assimilate as tabula rasae” dominant ideas and ways of relating to other animals (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 215).

It is pertinent to highlight how vegan students may encounter challenges of their own in terms of inclusion and access to healthy foods in schools, leading to initiatives to promote vegan inclusive education (Primary Vegucation Consultation, 2021). While transforming procurement and catering in schools may currently be challenging, it is important to note that there are already plant-based schools (e.g., the Sustainable Play School), who lead by example by opting out of practices that have been recognised as unsustainable and which are implicated in serious social justice issues for both humans and nonhumans. In addition, there are initiatives that aim to help public catering to switch to plant-based foods.
A shared “vulnerability” has increasingly been identified between the positioning of children and animals, yet this shared vulnerability should not be universalized or romanticized in attempts to make a case for their shared and entangled worlds. Others have noted how the construction of “the child” as “an underdeveloped, nascent human” can be seen to signify “an imaginative association of children with animals,” where “a peculiar symmetry between the animal and the children and their relation to (adult) humanity” can be seen (Faulkner, 2011, p. 74). Power asymmetries between child-animal and human-animal relations have been noted, where both children and animals are “separated from the status of (full) humanity” (Faulkner, 2011, p. 74) and children often appear to be “situated in their own micro worlds, waiting rooms or margins” and thus not yet considered full participants of society (Tammi, Höhti & Rautio, 2020, p. 1), but rather citizens-in-waiting, to be shaped and molded (through education), constantly “put on hold” and “expected to bloom”, once “coached (by adults) toward maturity, in order to complete their (full) human condition” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 205). Yet, while children may be citizens-in-waiting, animals are not “granted” this path towards “inclusion” and are destined to remain excluded and not viewed as members of our (multispecies) communities.

While it is clear that children’s participatory rights are largely excluded from decision-making processes (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 212), the effects vary greatly for children and other animals. Whereas a human child may be considered a citizen-in-waiting, other animals will largely remain under the oppressive side of these power relations. However, what they do indeed share is whether future generations of their kin will have opportunities for a life of their own, as for many children (present and future) the realities of the climate crises make their futures ever more uncertain. Children’s and other animals’ fates could be seen as shared, although to different effects. Not only is the socialization into human dominance and constructed hierarchies detrimental to animals, it is detrimental to any conceivable effort to build interspecies (or multispecies) sustainable futures. It is important to note that any kind of universalization runs the risk of depersonalizing and categorizing into “predetermined entities” (Cannella, 2001, p. 17), and speaking of “children” and “animals” here glosses over the multitude of beings and lives that fall under these categories as “child-animal” relations can include a multitude of relations. While recognizing the limitation of this universalizing language, “children” and “animals” (and nonhuman and human children) are used, since the focus of this study is more on educational systems and structures, their policies,
and frameworks, rather than specific personal relations between individual animals and individual children.

Pertinent to this study is the question about the space children and young people have to critically examine hegemonic narratives and possibly develop their own alternatives in the context of education and schooling. One of the reasons for avoiding so-called “difficult” topics in educational settings could be an attempt to protect children from information that is considered taboo or inappropriate to address in schools (Haynes & Murris, 2012). This is despite some studies demonstrating the openness and curiosity amongst children to grapple with “difficult” or complex questions that may not have clear-cut answers (Tammi et al., 2020). It has been argued that it is often adults who stand in the way of discussing “difficult” topics with children, as the thinking of adults is frequently too limited to communicate effectively with children (Jalongo, 2014b, xi) and teachers may not be accustomed to tackling moral dilemmas and difficult questions about our relations with other animals (Tammi et al., 2020).

Multispecies childhoods

Multispecies framings of childhood studies is a nascent field cutting across childhood studies, education research, posthumanism and (critical) HAS (Tammi et al., 2020). Multispecies perspectives in childhood studies aim to explore children’s’ own perspectives on their more-than-human relations, as well as examining the socio-cultural dimensions that affect the ways in which children learn about animals, how they learn to relate to them and what the effects of the relations are on other animals (Tammi et al., 2020). The importance of acknowledging the deficits of universalizing discourses on childhood have are increasingly recognized and childhood is increasingly being understood as a social and cultural phenomena affected, constructed and constrained by different socio-cultural, socio-economic, political and geographical issues and dominant narratives of child development (e.g., Cannella, 2005; Murris, 2016). A CAS perspective

Navigating the multifaceted nature of child-animal relations and the socio-cultural and socio-political landscape in which these relations are constructed (including in educational contexts) and to what effect is the focus of an elective undergraduate course “Multispecies childhoods research – Challenging anthropocentrism in education” [Monilajinen lapsustutkimus: Ihmiskeskeisyyden haastaminen kasvatuksessa] organised and taught by researchers in the AniMate-Multispecies Childhoods research group. This course serves as an example of one of the innovative ways in which teacher training (and higher education in general) could better attend to finding ways to live respectfully on a damaged Earth (Common Worlds Collective, 2020).
grounded on interspecies justice can further add to the foundational questions that explore the socio-cultural and socio-political constructs affecting the phenomena of childhood, by further interrogating the underlying power relations and anthropocentric social structures within which childhood can or cannot occur, asking who is allowed to have a childhood and whose childhoods (and other social and familial relations) are stolen and denied and why is it that we have a “right” to decide. This line of questioning further contributes to the field of multispecies childhood studies, by interrogating an interspecies right to childhood (and motherhood). Broadening understandings and narratives of childhood beyond an anthropocentric lens can help problematize the underlying power relations of dominant-human animal relations and who is denied a childhood and a “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). Animals are “a unique somebody, not a disposable something” and “have mothers and fathers, often siblings, friendships, a childhood, youth, maturity” and they “go through life cycles much the way humans do” (Masson, 2004, p. x). Yet in many cases these familial and social bonds, and even childhoods, are denied, such as for cows in the dairy industry.

In the dairy industry “non-females are apt to destruction soon after birth” through the infanticide of male calves to then be sold as “veal” (Wrenn, 2017, p. 207) This is because female bodies are “especially valued in the capitalist system, as it is the machine that creates a product (such as breast milk and eggs), but also maintains the system through reproduction (in producing offspring)” (Wrenn, 2017, p. 207). The disturbing practices that are normalized (and legal) in the dairy industry is one example of the many ways in which different animals are commodified and exploited, where boundaries between breasts and breastfeeding are obscured as a question of “who controls the circulation of whose milk in our economy, and how” (Otomo, 2014, p. 227). The right to bodily liberty has long been a legal debate and is inherently connected to the sexual exploitation of females (of mothers). This indicates that motherhood and childhood are inherently political issues, beyond species lines. If childhood is indeed understood as a socio-political issue (e.g., Rollo, 2016) and social construction, infanticide of nonhuman children (e.g., the slaughter male calves who are born to die, chicks shredded to death in the egg industry) warrants inclusion in childhood studies. The institutionalized exploitation of other animals is exemplary of why some scholars have clearly affiliated themselves with CAS, where scholarship is aligned with explicit efforts to effect social change and move beyond hierarchical anthropocentrism.
2.2 Critical animal studies

Critical animal studies (CAS) emerged as a scholar-activist project, seeking to differentiate itself from the broader field of HAS with a clear commitment to systematically challenging animal exploitation and striving for social change (Taylor & Twine, 2014). CAS has also been described as “the struggle for compassion and justice” (Gigliotti, 2015) and rejects dualistic and hierarchical thinking (Aaltola & Wahlberg, 2020, p. 10). CAS emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary, intersectional and “multi-movement approach for a total liberation field of study” (Nocella II et al., 2014, p. xxii). One of the core tenets of CAS is engaged theory, meaning theory and research that strive for social change and action (Taylor & Twine, 2014). With a focus on social change, CAS researchers aim “to contribute to the improvement of the situation of animals,” by taking into account the political context and consequences of research (Pedersen & Stănescu, 2014, pp. 263–264). The “critical” in CAS is said to “express the urgency of our times in the context of ecological crises” and “to denote a stance against an anthropocentric status quo in human–animal relations” that is embedded in “mainstream practices and social norms” (Taylor & Twine, 2014). CAS views animals as sentient beings with intrinsic value and moral and political worth (Aaltola & Wahlberg, 2020, p. 12).

In line with CAS, animals in this study are understood and positioned as sentient beings with intrinsic value and a right to a good life of their own and the “right not to be used as property” (Francione & Charlton, 2015, p. 106). With its roots in critical theory, animal rights, and ecofeminist theory, the CAS focus on social justice and liberation is not a new one, but nevertheless it is an important turning point within the broader field of HAS and a societal landscape that all too easily overlooks the systemic oppression of other animals. One of the central strengths of CAS is that it highlights hierarchical anthropocentrism within an intersectional framework of social justice “instead of leaving it as an afterthought” (Drew et al., 2019, p. 5) or overlooking it entirely. However, some have argued how “an intersectional matrix of oppressions” may in fact confuse discussions and analyses (Ko, 2019, p. 96) and a multidimensional analysis and understandings of the ways in which “oppressions manifest themselves at the root” are needed (Ko, 2019, p. 99).

CAS stems from various theories that are “based upon the seemingly simple, but profoundly radical, premise that nonhuman animals are subjects with agency, not objects to be used as humans see fit” and the field continues to be “expanded,
challenged, and enmeshed” (Nocella II et al., 2014, p. xix). The field continues to be advanced with important contributions from critical race theory (e.g., Kim, 2015; Ko, 2019; Ko & Ko, 2017), and disability studies (e.g., Taylor, 2017) which have further advanced understandings of “otherization” and “animalization” and its effects (e.g., Adams 2016; Kim, 2015; Ko, 2019; Russell & Semenko 2016; Taylor, 2017). Moving beyond dualisms, Kim (2015, p. 17) offering a conceptual lens of “taxonomies,” as concepts of species and race expressed not as dualisms (e.g., human/animal), but rather as a “complex hierarchical ordering of different animal kinds.” It has been noted how “artificial categories of animalization, just like those of racialization, sexualization, and other forms of objectification, serve to undermine most of us and enable only a few of us” (Trzak, 2019). CAS is an interdisciplinary research field in constant flux and a wide range of disciplines and research traditions contributing to a diverse exchange of knowledge, with CAS scholars themselves engaging in debate over the development and directions of the field (Aaltola & Wahlberg, 2020). Scholars from a wide range of disciplines contribute to CAS research⁶ and the growing number of international CAS networks are testament to both the necessity for CAS research, as well as the variety of research taking place.

Focus on education in CAS continues to grow and offers important contributions to the ways in which mainstream education could (and should) disentangle itself from its current position in the AIC and the ways in which violent and oppressive relations are normalized and (re)produced in educational contexts. Given the focus on cows and gendered violence in this study, it is important to note the role of ecofeminist theory in the history and continued development of CAS. Central to ecofeminist theorizing is analyzing “the economic, political, racial, gendered, and cultural underpinnings of systems of animal exploitation, commodification and cruelty” (Gruen, 2015, p. 30). There are however differences within ecofeminist theory (Lee, 2019) and it has been argued that some ecofeminist theories may in fact assume “the legitimacy of institutionalized exploitation” (Francione, 2008, p. 187). While acknowledging the compatibility of ecofeminist

⁶ This list is not exhaustive, but merely serves to illustrate some of the scope of interdisciplinary research that informs CAS research: education (e.g., Gunnarsson-Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; Nocella II et. al., 2019; Pedersen, 2010; Russell, 2019; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Spannring, 2017; Trzak, 2019), animal law (e.g., Deckha, 2012), sociology (Cole & Stewart, 2014; Nibert, 2002; Stănescu, 2017; Twine, 2012; Wahlberg, 2020; Wrenn, 2017), political theory (Meijer, 2019; Wadiwel, 2015), philosophy (Aaltola, 2020), critical race theory (Kim, 2015; Ko, 2019; Ko & Ko, 2017), disability studies (Taylor 2017), cultural studies (Potts 2017), comparative literature (Koljonen, 2020), communication and media studies (e.g., Almirón et. al., 2018; Giraud, 2019).
theory with the focus of cows and gendered violence, leans more so on CAS more broadly. In addition, theorizations of violence (Pedersen, 2019b; Wadiwel, 2015) and interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021) are used more specifically as they are seen to offer particularly useful conceptual tools to attend to the more comprehensive context of this study: animals in education and sustainable futures (of which cows serve as a case example).

**Critical animal studies and education research**

Critical education has aimed to challenge “existing social relations and power structures” and has included “substantive critiques of race, class, and gender relations,” seeking to offer “radical alternatives” (Apple, Wu, Gandin, 2009, p. 5). Critical animal studies scholars strive to broaden the anthropocentric framing of critical education (e.g., Bell & Russell, 2000; Corman, 2011; Nocella et al., 2019; Pedersen, 2010a) and there is a growing interest in understanding the ways in which human-animal relations matter educationally, with education understood as a multifaceted phenomenon where learning happens in both informal and formal contexts (Rice & Rud, 2016). Spannring (2017, p. 65) has aptly identified how anthropocentrism and speciesism “remain largely invisible even within critical pedagogy and environmental education,” as they are “deeply anchored in Western societies.” It is important to note how animals are embedded within a variety of educational contexts, including (but not limited to) vocational animal caretaker training and science education (Pedersen, 2010a, 2019b), contexts of “edutainment” of zoos and aquariums (e.g., Lloro-Bidart & Russell, 2017), higher education and affiliated research centers, and public education. In other contexts, explicit omission of “alternatives” continues to be the norm, for example the institutional biases and a “cult of animal protein” in nutrition studies is seen as a cause for concern (Campbell, 2020).

While different dimensions of education are important, this study focuses on formal education and references are also made to higher education, more precisely teacher training, given its importance regarding formal education. If teacher training excludes critical intersectional interspecies approaches to sustainability and animal ethics, it is unsurprising that formal schooling falls short in attending to human-animal relations. However, it is important to note that some teachers actively do seek out opportunities to include animal issues in their teaching but can face an uphill battle given the constraints of the school climate more broadly, educational policy and resources, as well as the boundaries between, home and
school. Educational resources, teacher training and school visitors are offered by different organizations and play an important role in advancing critical animal-focused pedagogies (explored further in Chapter 5).

The so-called “animal turn” in education research spans multiple fields, including posthumanism, CAS, and environmental education more broadly. Some CAS scholars have criticized posthumanist research for what is seen as an apolitical approach to human-animal relations and cautions how not “taking seriously the implications of human supremacy and the power of the animal industrial complex” could obstruct “the fundamental transformation needed to support multispecies flourishing” (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1140). Other CAS scholars have voiced concerns over the ways in which some emerging (posthumanist) education research glosses “over asymmetric human-animal power relations” and are skeptical about how they can contribute to forming “genuinely ethical relations” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, pp. 416–417). Rather than turning away or accepting the “speaking silences” in education (Gunnarsson-Dinker Pedersen, 2019, p. 54), CAS education scholars seek to find ways in which animal subjectivity can be foregrounded in teaching and learning, and identify and challenge hierarchical power relations and the role of the AIC in education. In other words, they seek to “deconstruct oppressive social norms in education, as well as convention pedagogical models that serve to uphold such norms” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 57). As this study focuses on cows, and education plays a significant role in the AIC, it is important to delve deeper into notion of the AIC and its connection to education.

The animal-industrial complex and education

The AIC, a term coined by Noske (1997) and further elaborated by Twine (2012), refers to the “system sustained and maintained by the economically and politically powerful animal agribusiness and its networks” (Gunnarsson-Dinker Pedersen, 2016, p. 422). It is thus used to refer to the various “socio-economic forces at work in the exploitation of animals” and refers to a range of “institutions, technologies, affects, and bodies of knowledge that are linked with and sustain animal industries” (Twine, 2012, as cited in Calarco, 2021, p. 9). The AIC is said to be sustained and shaped by our everyday practices (Arcari, 2020b, p. 8), as well as institutional practices (e.g., school milk schemes). Arcari (2020b, p. 7) aptly highlights how the AIC is “directly implicated in the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, with a myriad of animals being substantial victims of both.” Pedersen (2019b, p. 27) has
rightly argued for a modification of the concept of AIC “to account for the multifaceted, dynamic and productive function of education.” Others have drawn parallels between the AIC and the “educational industrial complex,” as these systems are seen to reinforce one another (Repka, 2019). Speciesist narratives abound in schools, which is seen to facilitate “the conditions of discrimination,” leading to “the possibility of the school to be considered a concentrated site of multiple, interrelated oppressions” (Repka, 2019, p. 100).

Educational institutions are seen to play a key role in contributing to the “cultural hegemony of animal products” (Fitzgerald & Taylor, 2014, p. 165), as schools are spaces where their consumption is not only the norm, but often heavily marketed and subsidized, and in the case of the dairy industry serves as a space where future customers can be secured by endorsing consumption habits of dairy (Griffin, 2005). Schools can thus be seen as an economic playground for animal agribusiness, where oppressive, unsustainable food systems are normalized through government subsidies, school lunch programmes and related educational activities (e.g., nutrition education and events promoting “school milk”). Given the strong presence and stake of animal agribusiness in education it is seen as the responsibility of educational institutions to expose these practices (Gunnarsson-Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 422). However, given the entanglements of educational institutions within a wider landscape of animal exploitation, unveiling, or challenging these practices within formal schooling has proven difficult. If the “material foundations of society to a great extent are literally built upon animal bodies” understanding and disrupting the educational dimensions of these material foundations (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 691) is of great importance. To better understand and locate the educational dimensions it is worth examining the societal-wide framing of human-animal relations and how (and why) these have been argued to reflect a persistent war against animals (Wadiwel, 2015).

### 2.2.1 Are we at war against animals?

Given the scale of violence and killing inherent in human-animal relations, it would appear fitting to argue that our relations with other animals “is combative or at least focused upon producing harm and death” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 5–6). In unpacking how we might understand our relations with animals as constituting a war, Wadiwel (2015, p. 16) suggests that war can be understood as “an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfil our will” and thus war can be recognized “as a phenomenon of mass or corporate organized violence that aims at total domination.” This
framing allows us to begin to comprehend “our instrumental relations with animals in the context of a wider, more systemic, violent relationality” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 17). The war against animals is said to comprise of “interconnected sites or hotspots of intense violence and death, which operate almost imperceptibly within everyday peaceable human relations” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 65). Welfare and anti-cruelty legislation are seen as explicit strategies for creating spaces where systemic violence is intensified through “continuously evolving techniques of violence” under the guise of “civil peaceability and the ‘rule of law’” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 186).

The combative and hostile nature of dominant human-animal relations are said to go “essentially unnoticed and unremarked” but ought to be understood as “taking place in the context of a recurrent and sustained human war against animals” (Calarco, 2015, p. x).

These guises of peaceability can also be seen to be maintained through linguistic mechanisms (e.g., “humane slaughter” or “unnecessary suffering”) and the associated welfarist animals-for-us narratives these linguistic mechanisms help to construct and maintain. Increased efforts of “greening of the factory farm” (Clark, 2012) can be seen to further violence against animals, as this violence is both justified and defended in the name of sustainability and SD, and such efforts have been used to drive animal bodies “to ever extreme heights” (Bergmann, 2021, p. 2).

In addition, educational policy can be seen to be an important part of this broader network of the “rule of law” that sustains and legitimizes violence against animals under the guise of peaceability.

According to Wadiwel (2015, p. 294) our war against animals “has been shaped by how humans view themselves, the institutions and political relationships humans maintain, and the stories humans tell about themselves and others.” Education and schooling can be seen to play a significant role in maintaining and justifying “hotspots of intense and violence” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 65), as well as maintaining the supposed “peaceability” of these relations maintaining their framing as a “normal, natural, necessary” (Joy, 2020) state of affairs. One example of the ways in which formal education is directly implicated in maintaining the hotspot of intense violence of the factory farm is through school milk schemes, aimed to help sustain the dairy industry by implicating children as “future consumers” and through the ways in which narratives and social constructions of cows as “milk-machines” for humans is reproduced through dominant “milk’s journey” narratives in nutrition (or food) education.

To better understand the ways in which violence manifests in human-animal relations, Wadiwel (2015, pp. 31–36) proposes three dimensions of violence
through which dominant human-animal relations are constituted and operated: *intersubjective, institutional* (or structural) and *epistemic violence* (see Figure 3). Understanding the different forms of violence can shed light on the ways in which animals are treated “within a society-wide context, where agency and action occur within intricate networks, and responsibility of violence is diffused, hidden and delegated” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 31). *Intersubjective violence* can be understood as individual acts of violence against animals, while *institutional violence* in turn is hidden “because our knowledge systems do not allow us to see this as violence” (Wadiwel 2015, pp. 33–35), but it occurs on an immense scale. According to Wadiwel (2015, pp. 33–34) institutional violence is made possible by *epistemic violence*, meaning the social construction or production of the “‘animal’ as an inferior entity and therefore susceptible to all guises of human utility.” These different forms of violence are said to “interact and move in a circular relation with each other” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 282).

**Fig. 3. Three dimensions of violence (Wadiwel, 2015).**

Others too have noted how conceptualizing violence in a broader sense can shed light on the ways in which violence “is sustained, reproduced and erased by structural mechanisms” such as law and capitalism and by social norms (such as histories, different cultural practices, and discourses, and “by frameworks of inequality” such as human exceptionalism (Gillespie, 2018, pp. 21–22). As a result, the normalization of “violence against certain lives and bodies” makes it possible for some violence not to be regarded as violence (Gillespie, 2018, p. 21). Wadiwel (2015) is not alone in framing human-animal relations as one of war or war-like. MacCormack (2013), focusing on education, argues that “pedagogy and the will to
know” can be seen as “acts of war that animals can neither win nor participate in” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 416). Education is seen to play a significant role in sustaining, normalizing, and reproducing different types of violence against animals and thus can be seen to constitute an important space through which a war against animals is waged and sustained.

Educational violence against animals can take many forms, as it can be “physical, visual, and discursive, and is often normalized, naturalized, and regarded as necessary for the development and dissemination of scientific knowledge” (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 1). The “forced presence” of animals in education, either as “scientific objects, dissection ‘specimen,’ species representatives in ecosystems” (Pedersen 2019, p. 1) or “milk machines” in nutrition education constitute ways in which schools contribute to the violence against animals. There are numerous ways in which students may be desensitized to violence against other animals in educational contexts, for example through dissection, veterinary education, and 4-H programmes (Pedersen 2019b), hatching and school farming programmes and farming simulation games (Cole & Stewart, 2014). Wadiwel’s (2015) different dimensions of violence offer further depth to understanding how educational violence can take many forms and how it is intrinsically connected to broader violence against animals. The conceptual tools offered by Wadiwel’s (2015) three types of violence and Pedersen’s (2019b) notion of educational violence complement each other and together offer a useful framework through which to explore the role education plays in wider networks of violence, as well interrogate the multifaceted nature of educational violence against other animals.

Veganism is proposed as a form of counter-conduct “in so far as it seeks to disrupt an institutional system” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 278) as opposed to “an obsessive focus on individual ethics” (290). Veganism has also been seen to offer a “compelling and coherent pathway to a more just and sustainable future” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 137). Veganism has been defined as “the philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude-as far as is possible and practicable-all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (The Vegan Society 2020) and others have argued for veganism as a mode of “left praxis” (Dickstein et. al., 2020). More broadly, Wadiwel (2015, p. 292) proposes truce as a strategy through which spaces might be opened “for the work towards equality as a practice to begin.” If the ultimate goal is to ameliorate or remove sources of violence against animals (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 294), which are ultimately “shaped by how humans view themselves, the institutions and political relationships humans maintain, and the stories humans tell about themselves and
others” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 294), the “radical reimagination” required extends beyond the political concepts used to shape politics, but also the foundational concepts used to shape and guide education (e.g., the concept of “sustainability”). Not only do policy frameworks make it difficult to challenge the stronghold of the animal agribusiness in education, so too do wider societal narratives, according to which the consumption of animals is normal, natural, and necessary (Joy, 2020). Carnism, a term coined by Joy (2020, p. 29), refers to an “invisible belief system” that underlies why “we eat animals without thinking about what we are doing and why.” According to Joy (2020, p. 29), meat eating is not seen as a choice like vegetarianism or veganism and is “based on a set of assumptions about animals, our world, and ourselves.” These assumptions shed light on the discrepancies between the shifting attitudes and public awareness of animal welfare (Kupsala, 2020) and the growing number of animals exploited in food systems. Overemphasizing individual actions as vehicles of fundamental change have been criticized (Jenkins & Twine, 2014; Wadiwel, 2015) and are seen “as only one element within a more deeply entrenched framework of power” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 30). Others have argued that individual and structural change are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Schlottmann & Sebo, 2019, p. 214).

Schools may not immediately be seen as “intense hotspots in the war against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 296), but they do however present a particularly important sector in the wider network of systemic violence and a particularly important institution through which epistemic violence against animals is normalized and maintained. Understanding educational violence and its real-world implications can also help redirect (at least some) focus on the structural issues and systems that need to be transformed in order for animals to be represented in education in ways that do not normalize and reproduce their exploitation but open up spaces for multispecies flourishing.

2.3 Animal law: Welfare and beyond

To better understand why schools being implicated in networks of intense hotspots of violence is problematic, it is helpful to take a closer look at why animal welfare can be seen as insufficient to help us move towards multispecies flourishing and more peaceable human-animal relations. In addition, understanding how animal interests might be included in decision-making processes could shed light on possible directions for educational decision-making, particularly following an interspecies sustainability framework.
2.3.1 Born to die

Animals have been declared *sentient beings* under Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (European Commission, n.d.). However, the extent to which a declaration of “sentient beings” has an impact on the lives of animals is contested, as the anthropocentric basis of welfare regulations legitimizes inflicting different forms of violence against animals. Welfare regulations only present *minimum* acceptable standards concerning the welfare of farmed animals (European Commission, n.d.) and in Finland too, animal protection legislation reflects the welfarist notions of *unnecessary suffering* that is inherently relational to the “needs” of humans (Wahlberg, 2018, p. 190). Welfare regulations have been criticized for their ineffectiveness, difficulties with regulation and oversight, and for focusing public attention on smaller details of the exploitation process, failing to address the moral questions regarding our use of animals (e.g., Francione, 2014; Francione & Charlton, 2015). In essence, animal interests, no matter how fundamental, “may be sacrificed in order to serve human interest, however trivial” (Francione, 2007, p. 221). In addition, animal welfare has been widely critiqued for its ineffectiveness, lack of regulation, and perpetuation of the belief that animals are resources for human use (e.g., Cassuto, 2007, 2014; Francione, 2004; Francione & Charlton, 2015; Peters, 2016).

Animal welfare is framed by the “Five Freedoms,” which include 1) freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition, 2) freedom from discomfort, 3) freedom from pain, injury and disease, 4) freedom to express normal behavior, 5) freedom from fear and distress” (European Commission, n.d.). All of these fail in light of standard industry practices. For example, cows exploited in the dairy industry are subjected to a number of practices that cause pain and suffering. Mother-child bonds are severed at birth or shortly after, causing psychological suffering for both. In addition, diseases such as mastitis are common, and it has been said that productivity is a central concern regarding “good welfare” (EU, 2017, p. 5). The bodies of female cows have been subjected to such manipulation and that “in the past forty years milk production per cow has more than doubled” (EU, 2017, p. 2). Welfare regulations related to the dairy industry are seen as “general and nonspecific” and it is well documented in different reports that cows suffer from “a range of serious health and welfare problems” (EU, 2017, p. 4).

Criticism over welfare reforms is closely tied to what is referred to as the humane myth or humane washing. The problematics of humane washing are aptly explained by Stucki (2020b, p. 124) who stated: “It is not just that humane labels
promise something which they factually do not deliver—it is that they envisage something that is actually impossible.” Others too have criticized “humane” standards, given that “the wellbeing of the living animal is excluded from the equation” as “farmed animals” are “meat” “from the moment they are born, they are not just raised for food; they are raised as food” and their so-called “welfare” and “humane treatment” “acquires legal relevance only inasmuch as it impacts the marketability of their dismembered bodies” (Cassuto, 2007, p. 12). Others have noted how animals in industrial animal agriculture remain in “a zone of indistinction between life and death” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 59). Referring to the dairy industry as “milk factories where animals are just machines that rapidly break down and are replaced” (Lymbery, 2014, p. 36) appears fitting for an industry where “the biological limits of lactating mothers are treated as inconvenient obstacles” (Mendelson 2010, p. 131 as cited in Potts, 2017, p. 10).

Despite a decline in the consumption of cow’s milk in the EU, the exploitation of cows has intensified and their “profitability” in increased “milk yields” per cow (Bórawski et al., 2020) means greater strain on the bodies of the animals who are viewed and treated as mere milk machines. After their bodies are no longer considered profitable enough, they are considered “spent” and thus discarded and slaughtered for “low-grade processed meats or companion animal food” (Montford, 2020, p. 58). The slaughter of “spent” cows is said to take place at around four years of age, while their natural lifespan is around 20 years (Hoffman & Valencak, 2020). Male calves are quite literally “born to die,” as many are killed shortly after birth. Female calves on the other hand often suffer the same fate as their mothers, a life of a constant cycle of forced impregnation, violence and technoscientific manipulation of their bodies. The lives of cows in the dairy industry is one of constant reproductive control and cycles of forced impregnation, birth and separation, as they are “forcefully impregnated using sperm collected from captive males” and “mother-child bonds are disrupted” when their offspring are taken away immediately or shortly after birth (Montford, 2020, p. 57). The psychological and emotional trauma suffered by both calf and mother by the forced separation after birth has been widely documented (e.g., Dulsaniers 2015, p. 81; Gillespie, 2018; Montford, 2020).

Specific forms of intersubjective violence against farmed animals (often horrific forms of insidious abuse) that are exposed by undercover investigations, are often used by the industry to obfuscate the violence of standard industry practices (which are not seen as violence) and frame these instances of intersubjective violence as isolated incidents. Exposing the violent reality of the
industry is made harder through legal efforts to criminalize undercover investigations, whistle-blowers and civilians, who can face large fines and jail sentences for filming or otherwise exposing industry practices, and instances of activism or active citizenship continue to be framed as ecoterrorism and extremism, propelled by the introduction of ag-gag laws (Gillespie, 2018; Potter, 2011). Troublingly, even though concern over the welfare and treatment of farmed animals has increased (Kupsala, 2020), industrial animal agriculture continues to have a privileged position in society where standardized violent practices are not scrutinized (as they are not considered violence) and the environmental, health and social justice concerns related to the industry are too easily overlooked, dismissed or appeased through perpetuations of the humane myth and greenwashing and their respective labelling and marketing schemes. In light of the shortcomings of the welfare paradigm, the field continues to work towards and propose alternative visions for animal law.

### 2.3.2 Future directions

It has been argued that since human-animal relations are largely “detrimental to animals” and therefore they are in a distinct need “of robust legal protections” from humans and society (Stucki, 2020a, p. 556). Animal law clinics, centers and courses are increasing, signaling the growing interest and importance of animal law and the search for more vigorous legal protection for animals. Advancements in animal law both as a field of research and practice are taking place, including global animal law (e.g., Peters, 2016), proposals for fundamental rights for animals (e.g., Stucki, 2020a; Wahlberg 2020) and new legal conceptualizations such as “beingness” (Deckha, 2020). Other developments have included the extension of fundamental rights of habeas corpus (bodily liberty) to captive great apes in Argentina and Colombia (Stucki, 2020a), with similar work being done by the Nonhuman Rights Project for captive elephants and chimpanzees (Nonhuman Rights Project, 2020). In Finland, The Finnish Animal Rights Law Society (2021) has proposed a framework for the Fundamental Rights for Animals, which states that “the interests and individual needs of animals must be taken into account in all private and public activities that have a significant impact on their living conditions or chances of survival.” Fundamental rights for animals are seen as having the possibility to “de-normalize (formerly) accepted social practices” (Stucki, 2020a, p. 558). Although there is a wide gap between the proposed fundamental rights and reality, it has been argued that the proposals put forth could “act as a continuous reminder and impulse
that stimulates social and legal change towards a more expansive implementation” (Stucki, 2020a, pp. 557–558).

While different legal theories and tactics are being adopted in efforts to improve the lives of animals in different contexts, some are seen to risk reinforcing a “personhood-property” binary of an already highly anthropocentric legal system (e.g., Cassuto, 2007; Deckha, 2012, 2020; Meijer, 2019), as well as reinforcing arbitrary hierarchies between humans and animals (Favre, 2020; Wadiwel, 2015). Some have highlighted the importance of building alliances and collaboration between different fields, for example by working at the cross-roads of environmental law (Abate, 2015, 2019; Tischler & Myers, 2015) and moving towards an ecological understanding of animal law (Favre 2020). Education could play a significant role in working towards the societal changes needed to transform hierarchical anthropocentrism, if what is needed is a value reform instead of further welfare reforms. Transformational opportunities lie in broadening the scope of what types of “policy” are included in the immediate realm of animal law, given the complex policy networks affecting and mediating both educational policy and practices that directly and indirectly affect the lives of the animals and the ways in which at least some of these intersect. Understanding the shortcomings of current welfare legislation sheds light on the need to move beyond welfare and “humane” and “green sustainable” narratives of animal use, which are also present in education in “food” or “nutrition” education. Despite the developments in animal law, educational policies have so far been largely overlooked in the field and could be seen as a blind spot within the wider field of animal-related policy and decision-making, given the role of the AIC in education. Therefore, educational decision-making could be seen as an important, yet still largely overlooked, part of the broader field of animal law.

If what is sought is a value reform leading to transformational changes in society instead of a vicious cycle of welfare reforms, greater attention ought to be paid to the field of education and the ways in which animals are (mis)represented and the ways in which education in (re)produces and legitimizes violent human-animal relations. In addition, what discussions in animal law signal is that education too must look beyond current welfare framings that maintain and normalize oppressive human-animal relations, although this is not an easy feat. There have already been some shifts moving beyond animal welfare and there is a growing interest in how animals and animal interests might be politically represented and better understood as members of our multispecies communities. Understanding these shifts in socio-political (and academic) discussions could help further signal
how formal education in its current state is indeed lagging behind and these discussions could be reflective of the directions in which education research and practice could (and ought to) be headed.

2.4 Representing animal interests: Opportunities and challenges

The limitations of animal welfare and the pitfalls of merely regulating animal use have been widely critiqued. It has been argued that the problem with our treatment or use of other animals is not merely an ethical question, but more so a political one (Cochrane, 2018; Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011; Garner & O’Sullivan, 2016; Meijer, 2019; Wadiwel, 2015), and the need has been recognized to “address the structural dimensions of our relations with other animals,” instead of solely focusing on individual responsibility (Meijer, 2019, p. 119). Others too have questioned how animals could become “politically audible” in human society (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 687). Two problematic issues have been identified in popular animal rights theories, the first being that working with human concepts and institutions run the risk of reinforcing anthropocentrism, and the current focus on the negative rights of other animals is also seen as a shortcoming (Meijer, 2019, p. 115–116). The political representation of animal interests denotes “the inclusion of animal interests in collective decision-making” (Garner & O’Sullivan, 2016, p. 1). Speaking on behalf of other animals is seen as a balancing act, simultaneously resisting “hierarchical anthropocentrism” while trying to “advance the interests of animals in ways that are not anthropomorphic and do not simply render human interests in the name of animals” (Wadiwel & Chen, 2019, p. 1). Acknowledging “our limited ability to enter the inner lives of others” (deWaal, 2016, p. 8), advancing animal interests can thus be seen as a balancing act between aiming to represent the interests of other animals in ways that are attentive to their subjectivity or seek to do them justice, while acknowledging the limitations and inherent power relations already present in this dynamic, bringing forward questions of accountability and responsibility. Particularly challenging in navigating are the questions of how we might move towards decision-making and societal practices that go beyond “the human sovereign prerogative right to decide” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 241). As Wadiwel (2015, p. 39) cautions us to be “wary of the stratification of rights, status and value between humans and nonhumans, and the way in which different rights might produce inequalities in opportunities and power, and hence reinscribe the essential right of human domination of animal life.” This caution is applicable not only to discussions of political representation of interests.
and how we might navigate the “political impasse,” but also how might navigate pedagogical strategies so as to not fall into the trap of reinforcing the human domination of animal life. Both of which appear to be challenging tasks.

There has been criticism over the portrayal of other animals as passive or voiceless, which overlooks their agency and acts of resistance and it has been argued how animals resist their captivity and exploitation in many different ways (e.g., Colling, 2020; Hribal, 2011; Lupinacci, 2019; Meijer, 2019; Wadiwel, 2015). It has been argued that accounts of animal resistance can help us see how “diverse species have agency, thinking skills and experience emotions” (Lupinacci, 2019, p. 84). Animals are not passive or voiceless, however the systems within which they are systematically exploited aim to constrain their resistance through tighter physical controls (e.g., use of cages and physical violence). In other words, efforts to include animals in “interspecies politics” is not about humans “‘giving’ other animals a voice, but rather of understanding and recognizing that they have been speaking to us all along” (Meijer, 2019, p. 240). Caution is reserved for falling back on “species-specific choices” animals make and Meijer (2019, p. 204) argues that animals “are in the best epistemic position to recognize dimensions of their own flourishing.” While “self-realization” is currently restricted (and in many cases outright denied), it is seen as the responsibility of humans “to take the first steps towards making democracy more inclusive” (Meijer, 2019, p. 204) and dismantle the constraints and oppressive relations that currently impede the flourishing of other animals. How then might we move towards a more inclusive understanding of our communities?

For animal interests to be considered a substantial political matter (beyond welfare) and understanding animals as part of our political community would require significant sociocultural transformations and a value reform (as opposed to the continuous cycle of welfare reforms). If animals are currently not even understood for the large part as subjects of their own lives and bodies (as having a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018), and even less as members of our communities (societies), where do we begin and what are some of the necessary transformations needed for a broader acknowledgement of our communities already being multispecies? Cochrane (2018) argues that since human rights shape and constrain politics (despite its limitations), so should animal rights, as animals are directly and indirectly affected by numerous policies and practices. As a result, it is seen that structural and institutional changes ought to consider animals as “members of our mixed multispecies political communities” (Cochrane, 2018, p. 18). Foregrounding the notion of interspecies justice, prioritizing “the
interests of individuals over their relational position” Cochrane (2018, p. 5) attempts to move away from the limitations of welfarist frameworks in which human interests override the interests of other animals. While the field of animal law continues to work towards the inclusion of animal interests in legal frameworks (to varying degrees of success), political theory takes on the ambitious task of envisioning how animal interests could be included in other spheres of society and institutions. However, it has been pointed out that we continue to be “confronted by a “political impasse,” with little evidence of structural reform capable of fundamentally changing our pattern of human exploitation and violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 29). It has been argued that we need a broadened understanding of “the public” (Snaza & Weaver, 2015) and of “the social” (Pedersen, 2021) and this is where education can either continue to impede or work towards broader societal changes that are necessary for multispecies flourishing.

Other proposals for the representation of “nonhuman interests” have taken a wider scope beyond individual animals, the most prominent of which, is the growing field of ecodemocracy and the rights-of-nature. Proponents of rights-of-nature focus on the “rights of natural communities, ecosystems, or other natural entities that are alive or sustain life, such as mountains or Mother Earth” (Chapron et al., 2019, p. 1). Instances where rights of nature have been defended through legal systems have thus far “not yielded impressive results,” for example the laws recognizing the rights of Mother Earth (Bolivia) have not slowed environmental degradation (Chapron et al., 2019, p. 2), yet are seen as promising directions forward. Proponents of ecodemocracy have argued that it is “the moral standing of nonhuman individuals as entities with interests” that supports their need for “political representation as stakeholders” (Gray et al., 2020, p. 168). They argue that that even with the imperfections of ecodemocratic theory, it would still “be a significant improvement over single-species democracy,” indicating a “healthy” development in our understandings of justice (Gray et al., 2020). An ecodemocratic framework raises questions over who or what entities “should be represented and under which conditions” and “who can speak for whom and on what terms” (Gray et al., 2020, p. 170).

Given our path towards what would appear to be “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019, p. 15), transforming single-species decision-making and conceptions of community appears urgent. To navigate the possible tensions between individual interests, wider ecological concerns and the conflicts of interests that may arise, raises “questions of strategy and power” (Celermajer et al., 2020, p. 15). To navigate tensions between multiple interests, proponents of multispecies justice...
highlight how coalition building will be necessary and finding ways to identify how protecting “multispecies systems and relations” will also benefit those who may not share all of the commitments that have been “at the heart of the multispecies turn” (Celermajer et al., 2020, p. 16). Multispecies justice rejects the idea of human exceptionalism, which considers humans as separate from, superior to, unique from or more important than other species (Srinivasan & Kasturirangang, 2016, as cited in Celermajer et al., 2020, p. 2) and aims to address some of the tensions that may arise between the focus on individuals in animal rights positions and wider environmental concerns over healthy environments and ecosystems. Balancing individual (human or animal) interests with wider ecological interests raises questions over “which species, which beings, which relationships and which interconnections are valued, and which are not, and who makes such a decision” (Celermajer et al., 2020, p. 14). How conflicting interests and tensions are to be solved or balanced remains an open question, however there are instances where wider concerns for healthy environments and ecosystems may converge with the rights of individual animals.

It has been recognized that since animals are central to ecosystems, “any comprehensive account of sustainability must consider the ethical relationship between humans, animals and nature” (Garner, 2015, p. 331). What the so-called “animal turn” in political theory (e.g., Cochrane, 2018; Meijer, 2019), proposals for fundamental rights for animals (Stucki, 2020a; Wahlberg, 2019), discussion of ecodemocracy, and the rights of nature (e.g., Gray et al., 2020; Kopnina et al., 2021) and multispecies justice (Celermajer et al., 2020) have in common is their aim to radically transform institutions and political processes by expanding the subject of justice and foregrounding the inclusion of nonhuman interests in collective decision-making, requiring radical transformations in the ways in which we understand our communities (politically and otherwise). Currently efforts to include animal interests in decision-making include animal justice parties and representation via human proxies, which are seen as at least a starting point when working within the constraints of anthropocentric institutions (Celermajer et al., 2020; Cochrane, 2018; Meijer, 2019). However, finding ways to move towards decision-making that is more inclusive of nonhuman beings, their needs and their habitats (Kopnina et al, 2021, p. 12) remains a subject of debate. Given that education too is another “anthropocentric institution” that poses constraints on how animals are positioned and understood in our societies more broadly, it is worrying that so far educational decision-making has been given limited attention in broader discussions of so-called “animal-inclusive” political reforms. It has been argued
that for animals to be politically present, “we need to create ripples in the exploited spaces” (Jones, 2000, as cited in Pedersen, 2010b, p. 688). If education is understood as a space where violence and exploitation are (re)produced and normalized, how could these different “ripples” in educational spaces look and how might “pedagogical ripples” be constrained by the foundations and structures of educational institutions? In other words, how are animal (interests) currently represented in education?

**Animal interests in (and beyond) education**

Education scholars have also highlighted the limitations of dominant (anthropocentric) understandings of democracy, which have failed to represent everybody affected by decision-making (Pedersen, 2010b). Given the anthropocentric underpinnings of educational policy, it is argued that educational policy “is involved in a particular form of species performativity by which not only subject positions, but subject repertoires are produced, and at the same time, severely restricted.” (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 692). Subject repertoires refer to “the range and scope of possibilities available for subjects to emerge, or indeed to become subjects in the first place” (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 692). Education scholars have questioned what a democracy means and who or what can participate in public debate or even be considered part of a public and acknowledge how animals are systematically excluded from taking part in any debate on how “they should be treated, viewed, positioned and represented” (Snaza & Weaver, 2015, p. 4). Pedersen (2010b, p. 687) uses the notion of *the voice* to highlight the problem of how both collective and individual voices of disadvantaged groups (human and nonhuman) are marginalized or completely silenced in education policymaking, questioning what a democracy could look like if it took into account the voices and experiences of other animals. It has been argued that dominant educational policies founded upon hierarchical anthropocentrism have severe consequences not only for what forms of knowing are enabled, but also in regarding “who is invited to participate in world-forming processes” (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 692). In her analysis of educational policies, Pedersen (2010b, p. 688) questions the suitability of conventional interpretations of democracy for attending to the well-being and interests of everybody affected by a decision or action, noting how current anthropocentric understandings of democracy make it difficult to take animal voices into account. What Pedersen (2010b, p. 688) thus envisions are democratic processes where animals “are politically present” echoing the visions of several
political theorists (Cochrane, 2018; Garner & O’Sullivan, 2016; Meijer, 2019; Wadiwel 2015).

In relation to educational decision-making, how might we ensure animal interests are represented or taken into consideration? The representation (or misrepresentation) of animals in education has profound effects on the lives of animals and educational policy involves numerous actors and can therefore be seen as multifaceted. A political ecology of education aims to foreground ways in which “power relations, political economic processes, and their structural arrangements mediate education” (Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017, p. 213) and shed light on the ways in which the “reciprocal relations” between education and the political actors that “sustain them financially and ideologically” (Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017, p. 216) and how this affects the ways in which our relations to nature are shaped. Despite criticism over what could be seen as utopian endeavors, the different approaches to political representation of nonhuman interests share a future-oriented vision that can help envisage what more inclusive and socially just multispecies communities and sustainable futures could look like, giving us “a clearer picture of where we want to head,” as well as map out “different feasible alternatives available to us” (Cochrane, 2018, p. 9).

It is clear that animals in education is a political issue. As Pedersen (2019b, p. 1) recognizes, education, “as a societal actor, is in itself political, affecting life conditions of both humans and animals” and animals in education are “routinely subjected to different forms of institutionalized violence.” Various educational policies can be seen to have serious implications on the lived realities of other animals, ranging from nutritional guidelines, school milk schemes, curriculum, and global sustainability policy frames. Nutritional guidelines and school milk schemes promote and normalize the consumption of animal-derived products and reinforce the idea that animals are resources for human use, contributing to their erasure and invisibility as beings with intrinsic value, rendering their existence as milk-machines or “meat from the moment they are born” (Cassuto, 2007, p. 8). In addition, different dimensions of curriculum affect the lives of animals in the ways in which it positions, represents, or excludes them and what (if any) agency is afforded to them. The curriculum can be seen as tool of epistemic violence (Wadiwel, 2015) and plays a key role in reproducing and normalizing educational violence (Pedersen, 2019b) against other animals. Animals are routinely misrepresented in education, where representations of animals replace and obscure and exclude the material realities of real animals. Overall, greater attention ought to be paid and action taken against the exclusion or misrepresentation of animals in
education to challenge the perpetuation of *animals-for-us* narratives. Central to questions regarding the representation of interests is the concept of *being a stakeholder*. The idea of a stakeholder has been used in educational research, but it requires clarification.

In education research there has been an increased interest in animals, which has become a new trendy topic, yet this newfound interest does not always translate to “making a difference to our animal kin” (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1137). While the basic notion of being a stakeholder may be clear, it still continues to be used superficially as animals are seemingly taken into consideration, yet this falls short by reproducing hierarchical anthropocentric and speciesist power relations and assumptions, where human interests trump those of other animals. This appears to be a concerning trend particularly in some posthumanist education research (Pedersen, 2019b). Therefore, it is important to clarify what it might mean for animals to be understood as stakeholders in education and how this might in turn shape education. A stakeholder is defined as “one who is involved in or affected by a course of action” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) and someone or someone having “the potential to be subject to unfair outcomes” (Gray & Curry, 2016, p. 32). Being a stakeholder is seen as “a basic democratic principle,” where “those affected by a policy or action should have a say in the decision-making process,” yet most decision-making processes “undemocratically exclude a wide range of the affected” (Celemajer et al., 2020, p. 12).

As animals are directly and indirectly affected by educational policies and practices, a reconsideration of who or what counts as a stakeholder is urgently needed. In the context of thoroughbred racing, Bergmann (2019, p. 21–22) found that the idea of the horses themselves being considered stakeholders in their own right seemed an alien concept to industry representatives. Given that the hierarchical anthropocentric power relations in which animals are embedded, what needs to be challenged and transformed is “the ontological status of animals for us” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 7). How then could we move towards an understanding of animals in education as stakeholders in their own right (Bergmann, 2019, p. 21) and forge educational spaces where animal subjectivity is respected and they are represented in ways that do not “ontologize animals as accessible for human use” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 6). Being a stakeholder also guides questions related to responsibility and accountability: that is, to whom (or to what) one is accountable to or responsible for. Currently, animal interests are largely omitted and thus considered unimportant, irrelevant, or relational to human interests (and thus often
expendable) and there is little constraint to the ways in which they can be used and (mis)represented in educational policy and practice.

If we agree that animal interests do matter, what then follows is identifying how their interests are misrepresented (or omitted) in educational contexts and the proposing ways in which their interests could better be taken into consideration and represented in at least less anthropocentric ways. However, not only can CAS and political theory inform educational research and practice, but as Chapter 4 demonstrates, some educational frameworks (and spaces) offer opportunities for imagining new ways of living respectfully in multispecies communities and one of the main challenges concerns how to implement these educational approaches in more systemic ways. For this to be possible, educational structures and guiding principles need to be transformed for schooling to better attend to their current role as vehicles and spaces for violence against animals. Therefore, it is important to offer alternative guiding principles, which could help address the deficiencies of existing guiding principles, namely SD and its underlying animal-for-us narratives.

2.5 Interspecies sustainability: Animals as stakeholders

Nearly forty years ago, the UN, identified how “though ignorance and indifference we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which our life and wellbeing depend” and that a point had already been reached “in history when we must shape our actions throughout the world” (UN, 1973, p. 3). Yet after all this time, and with further reports and declarations, little progress has been made to amalgamate this “irreversible harm,” on the contrary, this harm continues to escalate. Malone (2018, p. 253) has argued that it would be political naivety to envision SD will encompass “a just and equitable response to the geological crisis” and this is argued to be because current dominant narratives of sustainability are framed as “if humans were still alone on stage” (Latour, 2015, as cited in Malone, 2018, p. 254). It is fair to say humans have never been alone on the stage and who, human or nonhuman, are considered worthy is reserved for a very limited scope of actors. Dominant anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability, the neoliberal endless-growth agenda of SD and problematic positioning of both children and other animals in SDGs have been widely critiqued (e.g., Bergmann, 2021; Kopnina, 2020; Policarpo et al., 2018; Rupprecht et. al, 2020). The sustainability discourse has been criticized for its “definitional haziness” despite its “mantra-like” repetition within societal and policy narratives, as well as in education (Selby & Kagawa, 2010). The vagueness of sustainability as a concept has led some authors to
recognize that children and young people too have found the concept of sustainability meaningless (Cutter-Mackenzie & Rousell, 2019). SD as a “contemporary buzzword” is seen to have become “overworked,” as it is used extensively “without thinking of its real meaning and implications” (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 83).

It has been argued that foundational ecological thinking evident prior to the 1970s has been “watered down” by making “material demands of the human species the primary test of what should be done with the Earth” (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 93). The popularization of the concept of SD by the Brundtland Commission is said to have allowed for “advocates of economic growth … to hijack the concept of sustainable development for their purposes” as no precise criteria for sustainability had been formulated, leaving SD on “shaky ground” since its popularization (Worster 1993, as cited in Du Pisani, 2006, p. 93). It is precisely this definitional haziness and the use of sustainability to rationalize and justify further violence against other animals that make it urgent to not just challenge taken-for-granted anthropocentric narratives, but to propose and adopt coherent alternatives.

Different proposals have been made to include and recognize animals on SD agendas, including a proposal to add an 18th sustainable development goal (SDG) that would specifically include “the interest of the individual animal” and focus on “animal health, welfare and rights” (Visseren-Hamakers, 2020, p. 3). The addition of an additional SDG aims to broaden SD requirements, including transformations in human-animal relations (Visseren-Hamakers, 2020, p. 3). However, given the problematic nature of the SD agenda in and of itself, whether an additional SDG would suffice is questionable. To better attend to the “omnicidal times” (Pedersen, 2021) we face, we may fare better with a more comprehensive framework of interspecies sustainability.

Bergmann (2021, p. 1) aptly points out that “sustainability and animal protection is something of an oxymoron,” as farmed animals especially “are treated as vehicles to achieve sustainability rather than being agents who under a justice perspective should be beneficiaries of the sustainability transition.” Instead of moving away from conceptions of sustainability, Bergmann (2019, p. 4) argues that using the understood (or at least familiar) sustainability language can open up opportunities to examine the “current stunted discourse and critically reflect on mainstreamed sustainability concepts.” Frameworks that go beyond anthropocentric concerns have emerged, namely interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016) and multispecies sustainability (Rupprecht et al., 2020). Multispecies sustainability aims to broaden
the concept of sustainability to include “more-than-human wellbeing” in order to “support diverse life on earth” and foregrounds the interdependence between different species’ needs and wellbeing (Rupprecht et al., 2020, p. 2). The authors (2020, p. 1) argue that “true sustainability can only be achieved if the interdependent needs of all species of current and future generations are met.” Others too have proposed more-than-human reconceptualization of sustainability, including calls for new understandings that comprise of “the needs of all human and nonhuman sentient beings, and their earthly life support systems, and all forms of reducing social inequalities” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 221).

Inter/species sustainability has been used to explore different layers of engagement with animal protection (Bergmann, 2019) and to conceptualize necessary aspects of a sustainable campus (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016). Since anthropocentric framings of sustainability and SD have been used as further justification to intensify violence against other animals through the “greening of the factory farm” (Clark, 2012), an interspecies sustainability framework can help us examine and challenge the exploitation of animals in a “patriarchal capitalist system” (Wrenn, 2017, p. 224), by foregrounding how animals are not the cause of greenhouse gas emissions, but “human exploitation of them is” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 137). It has rightly been argued that “socially responsible sustainability begins where animal exploitation ends” and an interspecies sustainability framework, grounded on interspecies equity, “recognizes that animals too have a right to the social, material and ecological bases for flourishing lives, sustained over time” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, pp. 136–137).

Bergmann (2019, 2020) has proposed a compelling framework for interspecies sustainability. Explicitly foregrounding human-animal relations and the use of animals in sustainability, Bergmann (2019, p. 9) draws from ecofeminism, CAS and ecocentrism to formulate a cohesive framework that diverges from dominant (anthropocentric) conceptions of sustainability. According to Bergmann (2019, p. 9), the “representation and participation of animals are of great importance for an interspecies sustainability” and her framework aims to address “the multiple sustainability crises and to protect animals, end their exploitation and facilitate their flourishing” (2020, p. 1). The framework consists of eight “layers of engagement” with animal protection, which range from maintaining the status quo, to those striving for welfare reform and lastly two levels that aim for transformation
The different layers of engagement assess features that are required “to achieve conditions of interspecies sustainability,” which foreground the “flourishing of animal agency and justice, animal physiological and psychological integrity, animal cultures and knowledge systems, inter- and interspecies relationality, naturalness and ecocentrism” (Bergmann, 2021, p. 4). In other words, interspecies sustainability is founded within social, cultural and political realms and tackles “the root causes of animal exploitation” (Bergmann, 2019, p. 23). Bergmann (2019) offers a framework of sustainability that could help us envision pathways forward and the creation of spaces and conditions that foster multispecies flourishing and a just interspecies sustainable future.

While Bergman’s study focuses on the thoroughbred racing industry, the framework can be used to assess other industries and spaces where animals are used and can serve as a useful analytical tool for policy and research contexts (Bergmann, 2021, p. 5), as well as educational contexts. Even though education is directly embedded in the AIC, education as a significant societal institution has received limited attention outside education research and further attention ought to be paid to the ways in which education contributes to the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011) and how animal industries are central to it. Interspecies sustainability could offer possibilities for exploring “healthy policy ecologies for education” (Stratford & Wals, 2020, p. 1), where animal interests are taken seriously. It allows us to imagine what educational policy and practice could look like, offering possibilities to imagine where we could be headed.

In addition to foregrounding animals as stakeholders “in their own right” (Bergmann, 2018, p. 21), interspecies sustainability can help reframe our focus beyond negations and what is opposed to a more cohesive understanding of what it is we do want and thus shed light on where we could be headed. It can also serve as a useful guiding framework when navigating the complex terrain of how to move towards multispecies flourishing (Russell & Spannring, 2019), which requires attending to and disrupting the violence that is (re)produced in and through education. Therefore, it serves as a cohesive framework to identify and transform educational policy and practice to more adequately attend to the different ecological crises we face. Through an interspecies sustainability framework, we can critically examine the oppressive and violent systems in place and imagine and create just

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7 See Bergmann (2019) for a comprehensive presentation of the different Layers of Engagement with Animal Protection and a comprehensive analysis of the differences between interspecies sustainability and anthropocentric sustainability.

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and sustainable alternatives in education policy, pedagogy, and practice. In addition, by focusing on the conceptualization of violence under the wider framework of interspecies sustainability we can examine the ways in which education currently constitute spaces of different forms of violence (which play a role in our current path to unsustainability and “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019), and explore how they could be transformed to “spaces of truce” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 8), that foster just interspecies relations and coexistence in our schools, communities and societies. Interspecies sustainability could offer an avenue through which to navigate the current project of a “politics of unsustainability” that is seen to sustain the unsustainable and is thus “doomed to fail” (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 45). A framework of interspecies sustainability could thus offer promising guiding principles to help us better conceptualize where we want to be headed and the transformations needed to begin to pave our way towards more peaceable and just relations.

2.6 Building effective alliances

Although this study is inspired by and situated within the field of CAS, it is important to acknowledge the contributions, insights and some of the overlap between CAS and HAS scholarship and how the boundaries between these fields are not always clear-cut. Taylor & Twine (2014) have acknowledged the cross-pollination between these fields with scholars working across and beyond them and the difficulty to sometimes strictly identify a clear boundary. Particularly in relation to educational research and practice, working together across disciplinary boundaries and theoretical frameworks through constructive dialogue can help scholars and practitioners identify where aims and interests intersect, helping build a wider set of tools regarding educational frameworks and their implementation. Similar alliance building and cooperation have been called for between animal and environmental movements (e.g., Abate, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2019).

Animal advocacy in its multitude of forms can be seen as a balancing act of navigating different strategies for achieving long-term goals, while adopting appropriate tactics for short-term aims (Wadiwel & Chen, 2019, p. 2). The differing conceptions as to what is considered the long-term goal and what is an appropriate short-term tactic differs within and between advocates across societal sectors as well as academic disciplines. In addition, what constitutes “animal advocacy” is another question and one that perhaps requires a broadened lens.
Given the focus of this study (animals in schools and sustainable futures), an interspecies sustainability framing might help amalgamate and identify (at least some) intersecting interests in the current debate about how and where education ought to be headed. Dialogue and cooperation between and beyond education researchers representing different educational frameworks is necessary to build effective alliances and shift the dialogue in a more proactive direction. If we are to take seriously our own warning calls of impeding eco-annihilation (Abate, 2019), ecocide (Higgins, 2015) or omnicide (Celermajer, 2020), we would do well to embrace the critical (yet constructive) dialogue that is inadvertently going to arise when tackling such multifaceted issues. It has been argued that in order to rethink and transform oppressive value systems and practices it is necessary to accept “competing subjectivities even when in disagreement in order to strategize against” oppressive systems (Drew et al., 2019, p. 4) and thus become effective allies (George, 2019, p. 169). A compelling learning strategy put forth by George (2019, p. 169) proposes the practice of critical dialogue as a way of promoting and creating “positive relations among those who share a passion and sense of urgency for justice.” Critical thinking and “skepticism toward commonly accepted truisms” is seen to offer openings to help identify ways of building “alliances that pave the way to cooperative existence” (George, 2019, pp. 169–170). This pedagogical strategy lends itself as a helpful (and necessary) strategy for working towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability and is therefore used a guiding principle throughout this study. Alliance building can be seen as a process of “co-learning” in which dialogue can foster “empathic connection, understanding through inquiry and mutual respect” (Bohm, 1996, as cited in George, 2019, p. 174).

Through the progression of the chapters, it will hopefully become clearer that it is no longer a question of how to teach and learn in new ways (numerous different frameworks have already been proposed), but rather how to implement them in wider systemic ways. If what we are up against is indeed a machination that continues to grow (the AIC), effective alliances to create and implement “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020) are urgently needed. While promising developments have been made (e.g., the development of pedagogical frameworks, a greater sense of urgency for transformational change), they may appear too fragmented on their own, thus a more unified front might strengthen chances for the radical transformations that are needed both within and beyond education. George (2019, p. 173) highlights how understanding “the historical circumstances behind oppression” can help critique “social relations, institutions, traditions that create and maintain systems of privilege and oppression.” George (2019, p. 175)
proposes a practice of “co-learning, which is seen to offer possibilities for creating “a sense of shared responsibility for challenging oppressions and feeling of accomplishments when change is met” (178). George’s (2019, p. 180) pedagogical strategy and its foundational idea lends itself to wider application and could be helpful in connecting scholarly work with “the real lives of communities,” but also as a foundational idea to create effective alliances for a stronger front for educational reform. Similar ideas of working together with other movements have been put forwards by other education scholars too (e.g., Bell & Russell, 2000; Lupinacci, Happel-Parkins & Turner, 2019; Pedersen, 2004; Trzak, 2020) and calls have been made for “passionate but patient alliance-building” (Fraser & Taylor, 2019). Others too have argued for different tactics, and Kim (2015, p. 287) emphasizes that “the project before us is not an extensionist one … but rather a reconstructive one” that reimagines “humans, animals, and nature outside systems of domination.” To move towards a reconstructive project Kim (2015, pp. 19–20) proposes a “multi-optic vision” as a means to “move beyond the seductive simplicity of a single-optic storyline.”

What follows is to ask, how might we become effective allies for and with other animals and each other in order to build interspecies sustainable futures? Foregrounding interspecies justice and sustainability could help unify a promising (but perhaps slightly dispersed) field of animal-focused educational research and practice. It could also help foreground an understanding that animal issues and transforming oppressive and violent human-animal relations are central to (not separate from) environmental and sustainability education and transforming understandings of environmental citizenship to attend to living in multispecies communities. Effective alliances are also needed beyond education and a political ecology of education sheds light on the ways in which, for example, the field of animal law ought to pay more attention to decision-making related to education, given the profound effects education has on the lived realities of animals and the role education plays in the AIC. What connects these fields is a shared concern over (political) representation of animal interests, which requires interdisciplinary attention. Effective (interdisciplinary and cross-movement) alliances and partnerships are essential for the wide scale transformations and reforms needed, given the global scale and interconnectedness of the challenges we face. Stepping outside disciplinary (and theoretical) silos could help us see the forest from the trees and recognize important alliances that are necessary for systemic change and challenging and transforming the status quo, given the shared roots of the interconnected webs of systemic oppression and exploitative practices. That being
said, a clear alignment to challenge speciesism and hierarchical anthropocentrism is needed (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1140) in order to break the cycles of violence and work towards finding ways of peaceable co-existence on a damaged Earth (Common Worlds Collective, 2020).

2.7 Chapter summary and key concepts

This study seeks to explore whether an interspecies sustainability framework could lend itself to better guide educational policy and practice in working towards (interspecies) sustainable futures, where animals are understood and positioned as stakeholders, and are thus understood as having a right to “a life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). If we can be seen to be in a “war against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015), how are the different forms of violence against animals (re)produced in education and how might we begin to disrupt and undo them? In other words, how might we begin to create spaces of peace with animals within and through education, what are the occlusions and openings for creating more peaceable relations? These questions are explored using key concepts of stakeholders, interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016), (educational) violence (Pedersen, 2019b; Wadiwel, 2015) and effective alliances (George, 2019) as guiding principles to explore how we could move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability (see Figure 4).
Fig. 4. Key concepts.
3 Animals in educational policies: From resources to stakeholders

This chapter explores how animals are positioned in (and affected by) selected educational policies by examining three broad dimensions of educational policy: sustainability, curriculum, and consumption. While these are certainly not indicative of the educational policy landscape in its entirety and complexity, they serve as a foundational analysis of how different policy narratives create educational spaces that not only legitimize animals-for-us narratives, legitimizing and (re)producing (educational) violence against animals, but together create a paradoxical landscape which is reflective of the inconsistencies found in the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011). Educational policies can shed light on what schools teach because of the places they are, and the implicit lessons taught by the school climate and culture and its practices (Eisner, 1985). To conclude, this chapter begins to preliminarily map out how interspecies sustainability could offer an avenue through which to explore and work towards “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020) where animals are understood as stakeholders in their own right.

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 posited that stakeholders are those who are “involved in or affected by a course of action” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) and how a limited consideration of who is considered a stakeholder is insufficient in creating the necessary transformations for interspecies sustainability. While animals are certainly affected by educational decision-making, they are systemically excluded from having their interests taken into consideration. To better understand the ways in which their interests are excluded and the policy narratives in which they are nonetheless inherently embedded in, this chapter explores how animals are positioned in (and affected by) selected educational policies. Educational policies are understood here as a range of policy documents and recommendations that affect and guide educational practice, value frameworks and structures, including (but not limited to) global policies and recommendations that construct dominant narratives around sustainability and SD (e.g., Agenda 2030; see UN, 2015), national policies that mediate the content and scope of teaching and learning (curriculum), and policies related to school food practices (consumption). These policies do not exist in isolation and can be seen to affect one another. As animals are directly and
indirectly affected by these types of policies, they too ought to be considered stakeholders in light of what justice demands and to foster peaceable co-existence in our multispecies communities. However, educational policies have thus far received limited attention, constituting a “blind spot” in the wider socio-political landscape and even in the field of animal law. Animals in education is not merely a pedagogical issue, but a significant political issue that merits greater attention both within and beyond the field of education research, given that educational policies play a role in maintaining the cycles of violence against animals under the guise of peaceability (Wadiwel, 2015) and through which animal use is rationalized and sustained.

The urgent need to transform anthropocentric educational practices and frameworks has been widely recognized, but limited attention has been paid to the ways in which the structures and policies of formal education may limit the possibilities to challenge and transform prevalent anthropocentric values in schools. This is where a CPA informed by the animal turn in political theory and CAS could prove fruitful in advancing efforts for educational reforms for interspecies sustainability, where animals are understood as stakeholders and their interests are represented in less anthropocentric ways. Educational policies are embedded in a “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011) and the need for critical and creative policy alternatives for “healthy policy ecologies” has been recognized (Stratford & Wals, 2020). Schools are sites where numerous “interests” compete and thus teaching and learning can be restricted by vested interests in the system, particularly the “animal economy,” given the location of education in the AIC. This chapter examines how “healthy policy ecologies” for education could be built from a perspective of interspecies sustainability, where animals are understood and positioned as stakeholders in their own right (Bergmann, 2019, p. 21).

If, as was suggested in the previous chapters, we are to seek pathways out of the current “political impasse,” where thus far there appears to have been “little evidence of structural reform capable of fundamentally changing our pattern of human exploitation and violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 29), how might a critical interrogation of educational decision-making signal that moving towards a broadened understanding of “the public” (Snaza & Weaver, 2015) and of the “social” (Pedersen, 2021) is inherently connected to a broad landscape of decision-making, including education. Identifying how the representation of animals currently manifests in educational decision-making might take us one (small) step forward in finding pathways to structural reforms that disrupt violence against animals and open possibilities for a broadened understanding of
“community,” necessary for multispecies flourishing. In essence, the broader projects of finding new-stories-to-live-by (Stibbe, 2015) and seeking ways of disrupting and undoing (educational) violence against animals, as well as advancing the political representation of animal interests requires attending to the ways in which animals are affected by educational policymaking and how they are embedded in the respective policy narratives put forth.

It is important to examine both global and national policymaking, as the policies and recommendations from global actors influence national policies. Policies from global and national decision makers are analyzed, including the UN, European Commission, and the Finnish National Agency for Education. First, two wider policies are examined, the UN Agenda 2030 (see UN, 2015), as it plays an influential role in guiding narratives of sustainability (often understood as akin to SD). The Finnish National Core Curriculum is included, as it sets the “educational menu” of basic education in Finland. Thirdly, a more specific policy related to school food practices, the EU School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme is examined, as it serves as an example of how formal education is embedded in the AIC and the “entanglements” of children and animals in broader systems of commodification, violence, and unsustainability. While these are certainly not the only policies that merit analysis, they serve as examples of how educational policies ought to be taken into consideration in the fields of animal law and broader socio-political landscape. Educational policies can be seen to be intrinsically connected to the wider fields of animal law (e.g., animal welfare) and environmental politics. It has been argued that environmental politics is “ultimately, about socially framed norms and perceptions” (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 36), thus how environmental, and animal (protection) issues are socially framed and constructed can affect the ways in which they are addressed in educational policy, such as in the curriculum.

Policy narratives and their foundational assumptions may impede the introduction of different narratives and practices into formal education and the power relations manifested in these policies place both children and other animals in precarious positions, as both are universally categorized and have limited agency to affect their own lives. Formal education and schooling are not exempt from the systemic oppression of animals, instead they constitute an important sector of society where the exploitation of animals is legitimized and normalized, and anthropocentric and speciesist values are reproduced. Breaking this cycle requires a critical examination of the policy frameworks that guide institutional practices and set in place an “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) that creates particular occlusions in representing animal interests “differently” in formal
education. Before examining the different policies, followed by beginning to map out what education policy could like from an interspecies sustainability lens, it is important to begin with a closer examination of what a CPA entails.

3.2 Critical policy analysis

Policy has been described as the “authoritative allocation of values” and thus policy narratives are said to require questioning as to “whose values are validated in policy, and whose are not” (Ball, 1990, p. 3). Education policy involves projecting societal ideals and is inevitably a site of conflict for competing interests and power relations (Ball, 1990, p. 3). It is not only the inclusions in policy that are seen to matter, but rather the “discontinuities, compromises, omissions and exceptions” are crucial in policy analysis (Ball, 1990, p. 3). Policies are broadly understood as “any course of action (or inaction relating to the selection of goals, definition of values or the allocation of resources” (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 71). In essence, policies are seen to be about exercising political power “and the language that is used to legitimate that process” (Olssen et al., 2004, pp. 71–72). Policies do not exist in isolation and the interconnected nature of policies is important to consider in order to understand the complex web of actors who play a role in governing social practices. The nascent field of political ecology of education (Lloro-Bidart, 2015; Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017) aims to highlight the “layered ways” in which “knowledge is produced in educational spaces” and how different educational contexts (formal and informal) are “all influenced by political processes operating within, between, and across various scales” (Lloro-Bidart, 2015, p. 141). Understanding the political ecology of education becomes increasingly important in light of the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011) in which education is embedded, and which can be seen to have destructive effects on animals and children.

Policies can be seen as official discourses that legitimize specific narratives, and are considered authoritative and trustworthy, compiled by what are deemed as credible sources (van Dijk, 2001, p. 357). SD is a narrative that has gained widespread acceptance, despite ongoing critique. Policies construct particular meanings under “the notion of universal public interest” (Taylor, 1997, p. 26), yet who is deemed as belonging to the “public,” who defines these interests and at whose expense requires critical examination. Policy theorists suggest that although policies establish the frameworks under which societies are supposed to function, they often have no single reading, and vagueness in policy goals, over-generalization, and lack of clear definitions contribute to possible differing
outcomes, and policies are often in a constant cycle of reinterpretation (Taylor, 1997, p. 15).

Narratives are seen to play an important role in shaping the “processes, outcomes, implementation, and designs of public policy” (Jones, McBeth & Shanahan, 2014, p. 1) and policy narratives and the assumptions and beliefs they carry may overtime become widely accepted, becoming “less obvious and an accepted invisible part of our daily lives” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 117). Policies and laws have historically been used to legitimize inequalities, the oppression and discrimination of those deemed as “other” (Baker, 2006) and although a narrative can circulate in different versions, “over time, different versions of a narrative may become more or less valued and may achieve more or less currency through various processes of reinforcement and contestation” (Baker, 2006, p. 20). Animals-for-us is one such narrative, legitimized and reinforced through different policies and associated collective narratives, with established currency and thus difficult to challenge.

While CPA in education is said to be driven by “an ethical obligation” to understand, challenge and engage with debate over “what schools should do and whom do they serve” and is guided by striving for “human flourishing” (Apple, 2019, p. 277), this study draws from a CAS frame and expands this to a more holistic understanding of multispecies flourishing.

The ways in which we explain and interpret policies at different points in time are interconnected with “the structuring realities of class, race, gender” and policies do not only mirror these structuring realities, but “perform certain functions of legitimation by establishing political consensus” (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 71). Species too can be seen as a significant classificatory mechanism used to structure and hierarchically classify entities. In addition, adult/child hierarchical relations are another structuring reality that can legitimize and normalize the exclusion of children and young people from decision-making processes. Due to these “structuring realities,” both children and animals can be seen to be excluded from decision-making and are subject to power relations that render both inferior. As discussed in Chapter 2, critical education scholars have found that education creates “profoundly unsafe realities for animals” (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 8) and calls to include animal perspectives in education are inherently connected to the broader calls that have been made for the political representation of animal interests. Restructuring the current state of single-species politics and finding ways to represent animal interests in decision-making extends to educational contexts (and educational policymaking), and this study seeks to begin to map out some of the
dimensions within a complex education policy landscape; dimensions that are of particular interest and importance for discussions of interspecies sustainability.

Educational policy in this study is divided into three general dimensions: sustainability, consumption, and curriculum, which are seen as interconnected. These are not the only relevant dimensions, but for the purpose of this study these have been chosen to shed light on the interplay between different policy narratives and how they each help shape school climate and “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) of formal education. It is by shedding light on the interconnectedness, inconsistencies and controversies within different educational policymaking that we can illuminate how the school culture and climate in Finnish education reflects one of normalized violence against animals, contributing to the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011), which not only fails animals, but children and young people as well, because these policies play a significant role in maintaining our current path of unsustainability and violence.

In relation to Finnish education policy, Mykrä (2021) has mapped out the extensive network of actors involved in the formulation and implementation of policies and decision-making in the Finnish educational system. Given the complexity of decision-making at play, it is beyond the scope of this study to map out each dimension of this extensive network. Rather, this study aims to explore three general dimensions of educational policymaking by addressing the (mis)representation (or explicit omission) of animals in these policy narratives. What is of particular interests is how the definitional haziness of key concepts (sustainability and SD) trickle through different dimensions of educational decision-making and thus establish shaky grown from which to begin to navigate sustainability in education. This study proposes that interspecies sustainability could be a promising way to reconceptualize key conceptual tools that are used to guide decision-making processes and frame institutional practices.

A policy analysis can take many forms and two main strands have been identified as analysis for policy and analysis of policy. An analysis for policy focuses on making recommendations, advocating for specific policies or providing decision makers with information for the revision or formulation of policies (Gordon et al., 1977, p. 27 in Olssen et al., 2004, p. 72). An analysis of policy on the other hand focuses on the effects policies may have on various groups, and involves an analysis of the content and ideologies, values, and assumptions, as well as whether the policy achieves its goals (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 72). By understanding the possible limitations of policies, alternatives can be formulated, which require an analysis of “who might be impacted by policy, who will benefit
from policy change, and who might be disadvantaged by policy change” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 44). Critical approaches to education policy analysis are concerned with the discrepancies between “policy rhetoric and practiced reality,” as well as the origins, development of policy, how power, knowledge and resources are distributed, the connections between policy and wider effects on inequality and privilege (Diem et al., 2019, p. 6). A variety of critical perspectives have been used in CPA, exploring the policies and their “policy contexts, policy communities, and policy impact” (Diem et al., 2019, p. 7). It has been argued that “understanding policy differently might ultimately lead to better policy” (Ulmer in Diem et al., 2019, p. 7).

CPA can be seen to echo similar concerns as seen in other theoretical traditions interested in understanding language and discourse, including CDA and ecolinguistics (e.g., van Dijk, 1995, 2006; Stibbe, 2015), narrative and framing (e.g., Baker, 2006; Entman, 1993) and different discussions on how to (critically) analyze (educational) policy (Diem. et al., 2019; Jie, 2016, Olssen et al., 2004; Taylor, 1997) and narrative policy analysis (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2016; Jones, McBeth & Shanahan, 2014). These different methodological approaches have some overlap in their approaches and analytical tools, although they may be named differently. Inspired by the discussions found in different discourse and policy analysis literature, this study approaches policy analysis from a CAS perspective, where animals are understood as stakeholders in their own right and thus as having a right to “a life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018).

CPA is generally concerned with how policy issues are framed, the wider context in which they are constructed, as well as the effects of these policies, asking why and who these policies fail (Jie, 2016; Olssen et al., 2014; Taylor, 1997). In addition, a narrative policy framework emphasizes the social construction of a policy “reality,” highlighting how socially constructed concepts can result in significant variations to what the world means (Jones, McBeth & Shanahan, 2014, p. 4) and as a result, how it might be interpreted. Echoing trends in the CPA literature, it is worth mentioning how CDA also examines how power relations are manifested and enacted through discourse, for example by setting the agenda, through censorship or limiting access to discourse, examining how inequalities might be reproduced, legitimized, and represented and enacted through language use (van Dijk, 1995). CDA differentiates between active and passive access to discourse, where those in power have privileged access and control the most important and influential discourses of society (van Dijk, 1995). For example, this refers to policies, curricula, nutritional guidelines, laws, and media access, which
are seen to serve as a basis for and reinforcing mechanism for dominant societal practices. Children and other animals are systematically excluded from public debate and rely on intermediaries or proxies to represent them and their interests, raising the question of how might we ensure animals and their interests are represented in (educational) decision-making?

CDA has been used to research racist discourse (e.g., van Dijk, 1995; Teo, 2000), and feminist CDA has focused on how hierarchically gendered social roles are upheld through discourse (e.g., Lazar, 2007). CDA has also been used to better understand the social construction of human-animal relations, our perceptions and consequent treatment of other animals (Stibbe 2001, 2012). It has also been used to understand how discourse might affect human perceptions about killing animals, enforcing the idea of the human “right” to kill as well as ameliorating negative feelings about killing animals (Jepson, 2008), as well discourses of slaughter and death (Ollila, 2020). CPA has also been used in various contexts, for example to examine how disability is constructed, and it has been used in conjunction with critical race theory to examine school integration, as well as to critique how educational policy has affected different communities (Diem et al., 2019). Narrative policy analysis is increasingly being used to explore policy and documents related to climate change (e.g., Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2016; Jones, 2014).

Drawing inspiration from diverse modes of CPA and the overlapping fields of CDA and ecolinguistics, key features are gathered here within a framework for CPA, which has four stages: concern and action for an issue, analysis of wider context, analysis of content, and analysis of effects. The starting point for analysis stems from a concern for an issue and aspiring to take action to address and remedy the issue. The importance of this underlying motivation has been highlighted by critical policy theorists, arguing that the focus should not only be on what is happening and why, but ought to be “concerned with doing something about it” (Taylor, 1997, p. 23). Concern and action for an issue aim to identify, expose, and transform unrecognized forms of power and power relations (van Dijk, 1995; Olssen et al., 2004, p. 39). In other words, it aims to address, challenge, and transform how policies structure and legitimize certain constructions of realities and social positionings (Olssen et al., 2004) and aims to understand conflicting narratives about an issue and the ways in which policy narratives are framed and how they influence personal and societal action (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2016).

Analysis of the wider context in which decision-making takes place has also been highlighted. Policy theorists suggest that CPA ought to take into account the wider sociocultural context in which the policies are constructed, the various levels
in which policy development takes place and the power relations involved (Jie, 2016; Olssen et al., 2004; Rata, 2014; Taylor, 1997). The analysis of the wider context can include an examination of the historical context, how policy issues are constructed, and how something gets put on the agenda and how sometimes policies may reproduce (or worsen) the “problems” they claim to seek to remedy (Taylor, 1997, p. 280). The importance of policies in educational reform requires a critical examination of “the institutional practices which they are used to defend” (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 72). The wider context is also related to questions about access and control (e.g., van Dijk, 1995), and who is included and excluded from decision-making processes, which has also been highlighted as a cause for concern by both education scholars (Pedersen, 2010b; Snaza & Weaver, 2015) and policy theorists (e.g., Garner & O’Sullivan, 2015; Meijer, 2019).

An analysis of content includes an analysis of language, including the choice of concepts and words, what topics and themes are included, and what assumptions and values are embedded in a policy. Strategic generalizations, metaphors, and the emphasis of specific topics are seen as tools used to guide interpretations of events and issues (van Dijk, 1995). Framing is an important analytical tool, and a policy issue or problem can be framed in different ways “due to the many actors and stakeholders with different interests and engagement in the issue” (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2017, p. 2). For example, climate change is framed in different ways, including the “scientific uncertainty frame, national security frame, polar bear frame, money frame, catastrophe frame, and justice and equity frame,” and each frame will define the problem in different ways, possibly identifying differing causes and solutions and infer different moral responsibilities (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2017, p. 2). This is one of the most important features of a narrative (including policy narratives), as identifying a cause for an event or issue (and how much weight or significance it is given) can help “determine what course of action we should take” (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2017, p. 2). Framing has been said to have two key aspects: selection and salience. As Entman (1993, p. 52) explains, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” Policies can highlight, or make more salient, specific pieces of information through repetition (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Omissions (or erasures) also constitute an important framing technique (Entman, 1993; Stibbe, 2015) and omissions can also reveal underlying attitudes and values of policies. Framing is thus defined by what is both included and omitted, such as “omissions of potential
problem definitions, explanations, evaluations and recommendations may be as critical as the inclusions as attention is strategically directed away from the omitted aspects (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Framing by labelling is a technique where “a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or any other key element in a narrative” is used and which can have significant impacts (Baker, 2006, p. 122). Framing can be seen to be a significant way in which violence against animals continues to be narrated under the guise of peaceable relations (Wadiwel, 2015). An analysis of content also considers the understandings and positioning of stakeholders, as well as the underlying assumptions and beliefs that shape who could and should be seen as a stakeholder. Framing helps construct a policy narrative, as it guides interpretations as to why an issue is important, who bears responsibility for it and how the issue or problem might be solved (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2016, p. 2). Others too have identified these components of policy narratives where policy solutions are also understood as the “moral of the story” (Jones et al., 2014).

An analysis of the effects of a policy are seen as a central part of the critical assessment of (educational) policymaking. Not all policies are successful, and it is important to question how and why some policies fail, and more importantly, who they fail (Jie, 2016, p. 1) and what the impacts are of the policy (Diem et al., 2019, p. 6). Rather than merely focusing on the intentions of a policy, the importance of understanding the different effects policies has been highlighted (e.g., Olssen et al., 2004, p. 72; Taylor, 1997). It is also important to question whether a policy solves or reproduces the issue it addresses and what the effects are on various groups and individuals (Olssen et al., 2004). Understanding the effects of a policy leads to the final stage of the cycle, answering the question: what could be done about the issue? In seeking to answer this final question, the possibilities of interspecies sustainability as a framework for creating “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020) is explored at the end of this chapter. What is of central interest to examining different dimensions of educational policymaking is to first identify some of the ways in which the “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) is maintained and thus how we might map out pathways for more inclusive educational decision-making.

Inspired by CPA, the different dimensions of educational policy have been examined by first going through the policy documents in their entirety. They were first examined to gain a general understanding of the broader policy narrative, followed by focusing on sections in which animals might have been specifically addressed in the policy. In addition, supportive documents have also been included
in analysis in addition to the actual policy document. For example, related to school
milk schemes, associated documents (e.g., annual reporting documents) were
included in the analysis and the curriculum analysis incorporated examples of
nutrition education materials that are offered to schools. Overall, the aim of this
initial mapping of the educational policy landscape was guided by identifying
policy narratives and their interconnections.

3.3 Sustainability: The United Nations Agenda 2030

In recent years, sustainability has increasingly become a key dimension in much
(Finnish) education policy. Understanding the ways in which sustainability is
defined and narratives put forth about sustainability are highly relevant particularly
to the Finnish educational context, as sustainability has become a guiding principle
in education. It is vital to question “what is being sustained” in (education for) SD
(Pedersen, 2019a, p. 7), as well as how dominant conceptions of sustainability and
SD are presented. Different slogans and buzzwords around sustainability and SD
are now omnipresent. These terms are often used interchangeably, which is seen to
obscure and conceal both “moral and political concerns, and fundamental
philosophical differences” (Bergmann, 2021, p. 2). As a result, do we really
understand what is asked of us and what is meant by a sustainable future, how to
build one, what can be considered a sustainable practice and whose lives and
futures matter and whose are framed as expendable? Climate change (or rather the
cclimate crises) can be seen to be one of the most pressing “meta-narratives” of our
time and the policy narratives put forth by the UN Agenda 2030 (UN, 2015) and its
predecessors play an important role in shaping understandings of how to ameliorate
the climate crises and have certainly played a key role in foregrounding
sustainability discussions in various local, national, and global arenas. This section
examines whether SD has been an effective foundational and guiding principle in
mitigating the climate crises and to what extent the policy narrative set out in the
UN Agenda 2030 (UN, 2015) attends to the necessary pathways for building
sustainable futures. The UN have played a key role in underlining the importance
of sustainability and the environmental crises the world faces. The resolution 70/1
Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted
in 2015 at the UN Conference for Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, came
into effect in 2016. The resolution consists of a “far-reaching and people-centered
set of universal and transformative goals and targets” (UN, 2015, p. 3).
The UN Agenda 2030 is not an international treaty and thus not legally binding, rather it offers guidelines for national policymakers to implement depending on localized contexts (Abate, 2019). It has come under scrutiny for its inability to prompt legitimate remedial action in the face of the climate crises and ecological disasters (e.g., Adelman, 2017; Kopnina, 2017, 2020). Despite it not being a legally binding treaty, the UN Agenda 2030 has been influential in bringing discussions on “sustainability” to the forefront of public discourse, as well as influencing the value frameworks underpinning educational policies, such as the Finnish National Core Curriculum. This section evaluates the foundational assumptions and values embedded in the UN Agenda 2030 by examining how animals are positioned in (and ultimately affected by) the agenda. Understanding the values and sustainability narrative put forth can shed light on some of the reasons why we appear to perpetuate the problems we are supposed to be solving through the integration of sustainability into various aspects of societal practices, including education. Who is traditionally considered a stakeholder in sustainability? Whose life and future are we, and should we be, considering? These are some of questions explored in the following sections.

3.3.1 The wider context: The road to sustainable development

While recent years have shown increased propagation of sustainability and SD in education, the road to SD has taken place over a long period of time. The UN Agenda 2030 calls for a “global partnership for sustainable development” that is “focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people” (UN, 2015, p. 2). The UN Agenda 2030 is a culmination of series of policies and the concept of SD was popularized by Brundtland Report (also known as “Our Common Future”), drafted by The UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. In the report (WCED, 1987), SD is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The report influenced other policies to come and steered focus towards SD, leading to it becoming a significant policy principle on an international scale (Paton, 2008, p. 94). The Brundtland Report classified animals into three general categories, “as wildlife implicitly being a constituent of ecosystems and biodiversity, as pests to be controlled, and as livestock,” i.e., living stock” (Bergmann, 2019, p. 2).
Scholars have identified how policies can be in conflict, incoherent, or create confusion and barriers to their implementation, “as even signatories to international declarations have been unable to create clear strategies or actions toward the institutionalization of sustainable practices” (Wright in Timmerman & Metcalfe 2009, p. 46). Sustainability policies have been criticized for their “loose and ambiguous language” often without even a clear definition of “sustainability” (Timmerman & Metcalfe, 2009, p. 54). This ambiguity and the lack of clear definitions create problems for policy implementation, as “strategies may be subject to misunderstandings, contradictions, and apathy” (Timmermann & Metcalfe, 2009, p. 54). Policy texts of sustainability and SD are particular examples of the ways in which policy texts “have a life” of their own, meaning they can be read and negotiated in different ways (Apple, 2019, p. 281). This alludes to the complexity of seeking to understand what sustainability is and what it asks from education (and us), if from the onset it has entered into a cycle of interpretation through which it can be used to rationalize different (and often oppositional) ends. How then should we understand sustainability and what is the narrative of sustainability put forward by the agenda and what might it mean for animals?

3.3.2 Content and effects: Whose home, whose future?

From the onset, the UN Agenda 2030 reflects a blatant anthropocentric focus and framing, where human interests appear to be prioritized and privileged and those of animals and nature ignored and omitted. This anthropocentric focus establishes a dangerous precedent for what is framed as a sustainable future and what actions are required to create it. In the current narrative of sustainability “humans consider themselves the dominant and most important life form” and animals and nature are considered important “only insofar as they are useful for maintaining the position of humans at the top of the social hierarchy” (Abate, 2019, p. 11). The exclusion of animal interests in the agenda reflects the wider structuring reality of the Western socio-political landscape, where animal interests are systematically overlooked. The SDGs aim to build a future “where all life can thrive” (UN, 2015, p. 2), yet it would appear that the current path we are on is one where no life will ultimately be able to thrive. The blatant omission of the interests of other animals sets a dangerous precedent, reinforcing the entrenched beliefs that animal and human lives are separate, reinforcing animals-for-us narratives underpinned by assumptions of human supremacy. Therefore, business-as-usual is able to continue
under the guise of environmental responsibility and sustainability, despite scientific evidence starkly demonstrating the contrary.

The UN Agenda 2030 can be seen to set a universal stage, or setting, by reaffirming that “planet Earth and its ecosystems is our common home” (UN, 2015). Yet the blatant anthropocentrism frames Planet Earth, “our common” home, as one where single-species interests take precedence by erasing the multitude of other beings we share this planet with and with whom our lives are inextricably connected. Through the repetition of phrases such as we are in this together, people-centered, our people, global citizenship and shared responsibility, narratives about a universal public and universal public interest are reinforced. While there is indeed a universal interest in survival and thriving, responsibility for environmentally destructive actions and its effects are far from shared, as there are deep inequalities in who is affected and how, and who is responsible for a runaway climate crises. Despite this anthropocentric “people-centeredness,” it is important to note that framing that humans are on a “collective journey” and that we are all in this together can be criticized for shifting the focus onto the numerous social injustices related to the climate crises, sustainability and indeed food production, and the unequal ways in which the climate crisis is experienced and caused. It has been argued “futures-oriented instrumental dimensions” found in (educational) policymaking “ostensibly in the service of ‘the common good’ generate particular closures rather than open things up for visionary social change” (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 683). The universalizing and ambitious policy narrative can be seen to generate particular closures, not only though its anthropocentric framing, but because of its ambiguous language that, despite being widely referenced in education, creates opportunities for the agenda and concept of “sustainability” to be “co-opted” for exploitative ends. In addition, by linguistically erasing all the other inhabitants of the Earth and through repetition, or rather selection and salience of seemingly unifying language (e.g., “our people,” “our common home”), hierarchically anthropocentric foundations of working towards “sustainable futures” (albeit anthropocentric framing) can be seen to reinforce the agenda and concept of “sustainability” to be “co-opted” for exploitative ends. In addition, by linguistically erasing all the other inhabitants of the Earth and through repetition, or rather selection and salience of seemingly unifying language (e.g., “our people,” “our common home”), hierarchically anthropocentric foundations of working towards “sustainable futures” (albeit anthropocentric framing) can be seen to generate particular closures, not only through its anthropocentric framing, but because of its ambiguous language that, despite being widely referenced in education, creates opportunities for the agenda and concept of “sustainability” to be “co-opted” for exploitative ends.

The resolution, a plan of action “for people, planet and prosperity,” states that it will leave nobody behind in its effort to “heal and secure our planet” (UN, 2015, p. 1). The UN Agenda 2030 is accompanied by 17 SDGs, each consisting of various ambitious targets that aim to set the necessary course of action for the world’s growing population “to live in harmony with nature,” while ensuring human life prospers and economic development continues. The 17 SDGs are divided into a
total of 169 different targets and 304 indicators. However, according to one review, “less than a third (29 per cent) of the 169 targets were well defined and consistent with the latest scientific evidence, 54 per cent could be more specific” and 17 per cent were considered weak (Adelman 2017, p. 16). The ambitious statements of the UN Agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs have come under scrutiny, starting from the ambiguous term “sustainability.” The SDGs address issues concerning human health, social justice and equality, economic growth, technological advancements, and the environment. The different goals are interconnected but analyzing each goal in detail is beyond the scope and focus of this work. The SDGs are communicated to the public through different communicative strategies, including use of visuals (e.g., photographs, videos), written reports, policy summaries, all of which are grounded in the guiding principles set out in the agenda and often children are used quite literally as “the poster child” for SD.

**Animals as “resources”**

Due to the anthropocentric value framework of the UN Agenda 2030, it comes as no surprise that other animals are framed as resources for human use. The strategic generalization of “natural resources” renders the lives of 80 billion land animals killed each year in food production invisible, as well the animals who lose their lives due to deforestation and other practices closely related to industrial agriculture. Fish are referenced as “stocks” and “yields,” calling for the conservation and sustainable use “of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” (UN, 2015) and an end to overfishing and restoration of fish stocks “at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield.” Other scholars have highlighted this worrying trend in the SDGs, identifying how animals are “indirectly suggested as a means to an end: making a better life and future for humans, in (and not with) the planet” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 204). Framing animals as resources and omitting direct references to them can be seen to implicitly contribute to the “cultural hegemony of animal products” (Fitzgerald & Taylor, 2014, p. 165). These types of strategic generalizations that are made by framing and labelling animals and nature as resources, reflects other societal narratives of animals as property and their instrumental value.

Framing animals as resources and omitting direct references to them or the systems in which they are exploited, directs focus away from questioning consumption practices. The global “consumption” of animals is estimated to continue to grow, with current “numbers” of animals killed in the food system
which are unfathomable. The ambiguity over what is considered sustainable or responsible “consumption” (with little consideration as to who is consumed) and the strategic omission of references to animal agriculture feeds into the widespread cognitive dissonance on the institutionalized violence and cruelty of our current food systems and the environmental destruction caused by the animal agriculture sector. The connections between sustainability and the lives (and deaths) millions of animals illustrates the systematic neglect and devaluation of animals in dominant (policy) narratives of sustainability. To address the absence of references to animals it has been suggested that to include animal welfare into the SDGs an 18th SDG should be introduced, one that specifically addresses animal welfare concerns (Visseren-Hamakers, 2020). However, in order for animal interests to be taken seriously and avoid these interests being overrun by human and economic interests we need to go beyond narratives of welfare.

**Greenwashing our way into oblivion?**

According to its projections, the UN estimates that “the equivalent of almost three planets could be required to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles,” as the global human population and unsustainable consumption habits continue to grow (UN, n.d.). In the UN Agenda 2030, a general framing of nature as something to be “sustainably” used, managed as a resource can be identified. The agenda calls for living in “harmony with nature” (SDG 12). Yet no mention is made of reducing the consumption of animal-derived products or how the grains fed to “livestock” could feed millions of people and ameliorate world hunger. Calling for responsible production and consumption, the UN highlights water pollution and scarcity, rapid human population growth, food waste and natural disasters as reasons to change to more sustainable practices. Yet there is no specific mention of industrial animal agriculture, only mentioning that “sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources” be achieved by 2030 (UN, n.d.). Nature (and subsequently animals) are framed as something to be “managed” “used” “restored” and to be done so in a “sustainable” way is framed solely from human survival perspectives. The UN Agenda 2030 overlooks the evidence about industrial animal agriculture as a leading driver of the climate crisis, despite demanding “urgent action on climate change” (UN, 2015, p. 2). Water pollution is highlighted as a serious problem in the agenda but omits references to the wasteful use of water in animal agriculture.
Despite the UN Agenda 2030 raising awareness of environmental issues and climate change, environmental degradation and animal exploitation continue at an alarming and accelerated rate. The worrying statistics in the latest version of the Living Planet Report (2020) indicate that wildlife populations across the globe have dropped drastically by 68% between 1970 and 2016. It is clear that we are not on a path to a sustainable future. There appear to be several inconsistencies within the agenda and between different policies of UN bodies. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) plays a key role in spreading unsustainable food practices across the globe, for example through the FAO Milk Scheme. Calling for responsible production and consumption, the UN highlights water pollution and scarcity, food waste and natural disasters as reasons to change to more sustainable practices.

Criticized as being an oxymoron, the “green myth” sets a dangerous path similar to that of the “humane myth.” Where the humane myth perpetuates the false idea that animal exploitation can be done in a “humane” way (and is thus acceptable), the green myth of the UN Agenda 2030 takes us further down a path where the destruction of nature is obscured under the pretense of continuous economic growth through “the sustainable use” of nature and other animals. This can be seen to be reflective of what has been described as “the ecological paradox” of the politics of unsustainability, referring to “the curious simultaneity of an unprecedented recognition of the urgency of radical ecological policy change, on one hand, and an equally unprecedented unwillingness and inability to perform such change” (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 36). At the center of this ecological paradox is the unwillingness to acknowledge the oppression of other animals and the urgent need to transform exploitative practices. Instead of tackling the root cause of our path to unsustainability, collective cognitive dissonance and slumber is fostered through greenwashing and humane-washing.

Children and future generations

Whereas animals are omitted from the SDGs, human children can be seen to quite literally be used as “poster children” for SD, as many of the SDGs “are ultimately justified by the fact that children are vulnerable individuals most affected by the problems that the SDGs aim to solve” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 204). Human children are portrayed and framed as victims of climate change, thus justifying remedial actions needed to secure their futures. However, thus far “the business as usual” approach to the climate crises continues and as a result, not only does the
UN Agenda 2030 fail other animals, it can be seen to be failing children (and future generations) by perpetuating animals-for-us narratives and strategically erasing direct accountability and references to the practices and industries causing the most destruction and violence (animal agribusiness).

The UN Agenda 2030 serves as guidelines for how a sustainable “common future” ought to be achieved. Despite foregrounding children in the SD discourse, it has been argued that the exclusion of children in citizenship and democratic participation continues to be justified (Rollo, 2016). Many of the SDGs are justified “by the fact that children are vulnerable individuals most affected by problems that SDGs aim to solve,” but they “are constantly “put on hold” expected to “bloom” in an uncertain future” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 205). It has been argued that this is due to the “cultural attitudes that adults hold towards children,” which are seen to hold children back (Barratt-Hacking, Barratt & Scott, 2007, p. 532). The hegemonic figure of the child, which is “not to be confused with the lived experiences of real children,” is seen as a “symbol of reproduction of the social order in political discourse” (Edelman in Pedersen, 2010b, p. 692). Environmental and climate justice are driven by an aim to protect the most vulnerable, such as children and future generations. The climate crisis is seen as generational injustice “as children and young people are currently inheriting social and ecological problems which they have very little part in creating” (Cutter-Mackenzie & Rousell, 2019, p. 90). Formal education can play a central role in this generational injustice, given that it has failed to adjust curriculums to respond to calls from young people for climate change curriculums, as well as inadequately attending to the unsustainable networks it is embedded in, namely its location in the AIC, of which school milk schemes are a prime example. While some “crimes” against present and future generations (Higgins, 2015, p. 154) may be more evident and openly problematized, an interspecies sustainability framework can shed light on how such schemes are crimes against present and future generations of cows, and they are also detrimental to present and future generations of humans. Understanding the “structural violence and intergenerational justice” (Sanson & Burke, 2020, p. 343) as an interspecies endeavor, as has been proposed by some scholars (Rupprecht et al., 2020), can shed light on our relations with other animals and the ways in which entire generations of some animals are born to die. The pervasive “anthropocentric bias” in climate ethics and policy, means that the interests of other animals “are almost always absent,” thus requiring a broadened understanding of climate justice as an interspecies endeavor (Pepper, 2019, p. 592).
If (policy) narratives are seen to “project a chronological end that is also a moral end, a purpose, a forecast, an aspiration” (Baker, 2006, p. 54), then what is the forecast and aspiration for a sustainable future put forth by an agenda of endless growth? Given that none of the targets set out in the UN Agenda 2030 have been adequately achieved (e.g., Diaz et al., 2019), the narratives of sustainability put forth by the UN Agenda 2030 can be seen to create a platform from which other decision-making processes grounded on SD are left on shaky ground from the onset. This dangerous domino-effect of unsustainability when SD is adopted can be seen through the adoption of SD principles in the Finnish National Core Curriculum, which is examined next.

3.4 Curriculum: The Finnish national core curriculum

The curriculum is an obvious and central part of educational policy and it has been argued that the curriculum “advocated by any society is the strongest statement of its beliefs in the purpose of education, of the values it holds dear and of what it strives for” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 161). Examining what is taught and why and what content is selected, raises questions about the exclusions, omissions and silences surrounding the curriculum. If knowledge is understood as socially and culturally constructed, it has been argued that we need to consider whose knowledge “is selected for the core curriculum” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 166), as “what comes to ‘count’ as legitimate curricular knowledge is intimately intertwined with social and political relations” (Wu, 2012, p. 6). An analysis of the curriculum can also shed light on the ways in which education contributes to the ways in “the animal” is constructed through the different dimensions of the curriculum and the circulation of various narratives about animals. The curriculum can broadly be understood as a tool of “epistemic violence” (Wadiwel, 2015) through its normalizing functions of hierarchical anthropocentrism.

It has been argued that curricula ought to be continually questioned, contested, and challenged, as well as the very modes of “knowledge creation and selection,” by critically examining “education itself and its relation to society and power hierarchies” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 169). Although education is “a highly regulated industry” it is not set in stone, and education systems are thus “neither natural nor unchangeable” (Murphy et al., 2009, pp. 7–9). Neither is education ever neutral nor does it “stand alone,” rather “it is subject to political interference based upon both economic and social needs of the society we live in and the international communities we are a part of” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 10). Understanding
education and the curriculum as multifaceted can shed light on the different ways educational institutions contribute to the reproduction and normalization of anthropocentric narratives and values, affecting the ways in which we come to understand who or what is considered as belonging to our communities.

Schools teach “far more than they advertise” and three different dimensions of curriculum, explicit, implicit, and null, have been outlined by Eisner (1985, p. 87). In addition to the three original dimensions, a fourth dimension, extracurricular, merits inclusion. An explicit curriculum refers to the objectives and goals outlined in the official curriculum and syllabus, which can be understood as the advertised “educational menu” (Eisner, 1985, pp. 87–88). The implicit curriculum (also referred to as the hidden curriculum) refers to what schools teach “because of the kind of place it is” including its organizational structure and practices, which are “salient and pervasive” yet “seldom publicly announced” (Eisner, 1985, p. 97) and Pedersen’s (2021) notion of education’s “anthropocentric infrastructure” can be particularly fruitful for thinking about the implicit curriculum of mainstream education. As a whole, educational policies can be seen to co-create the implicit curriculum of formal education. The null curriculum in turn refers to the “intentional omission of entire disciplines, and specific pieces of information, and prevents or restricts teaching opportunities: by avoiding particular subjects schools send the message that these areas are unimportant” (Repka, 2019, p. 102). It is the null curriculum, meaning what schools do not teach, which is seen to have “important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or a problem” (Eisner, 1985, p. 97). The extracurricular dimension of curriculum can include activities such as visits to zoos, aquariums, circuses, farms, petting zoos, and farming programmes such as 4-H programmes. Extracurricular activities such as these are seen to reinforce “messages of animals’ instrumental position in human society and their endless accessibility for human purposes” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 415). Extracurricular activities have also been referred to as edutainment (e.g., Spannring, 2017). The four dimensions of the curriculum do not function in isolation and often all dimensions occur simultaneously. The different dimensions of the curriculum can help shed light on the different dimensions of schooling through which (educational) violence against animals is manifested, but what is of interest in this specific chapter is the so-called “educational menu” of the Finnish National Core Curriculum.
3.4.1 Wider context: Education for (environmental) citizenship

In Finland, compulsory schooling applies to children between the ages of 7–15 and the national core curriculum sets out the core contents and objectives for different compulsory subject areas. These nine years of compulsory schooling are referred to as “basic education” and according to the Finnish National Agency for Education it serves to “support pupil’s growth towards humanity and ethically responsible membership of society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed in life” (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021c). The core curriculum is drafted by the Finnish National Agency of Education and approved by the parliament and the most recent curriculum was approved in 2014, coming into effect in 2016. The current curriculum has been described as “a progressive document” and is said to be a result of an “open, interactive and co-operative process” with numerous steering and working groups involved in the development process (Lähdemäki, 2019). All schools must follow the national core curriculum consisting of set objectives and core contents for different subjects, however there is leeway that offers municipalities and schools possibilities to formulate their own curriculum based on, and aligned with, the national curriculum (Lähdemäki, 2019).

Since the national curriculum is a general guiding framework and municipalities and schools have a certain amount of flexibility to adapt teaching and learning activities, an analysis of the core curriculum is not necessarily indicative of what happens in practice in all classrooms in all schools in Finland and there may certainly be instances where teaching and learning aims to take into consideration the intrinsic value of other animals and include their perspectives in the teaching. However, the representation, (mis)representation and/or omission of other animals in the core curriculum is indicative of the broader socio-political landscape that helps to shape how animals are positioned and viewed, and shapes and influences dominant ways of teaching and learning about human-animal relations, and in doing so plays a role in how human-animal relations might be (re)produced and constructed in education. It may also create constraints and occlusions for different kinds of human-animal relations to emerge, or be discussed, in formal education. Rather than universalizing the practices of all schools and all teachers, a critical analysis of the curriculum is rather more a critical analysis of what the curriculum reflects about the beliefs, values, and what education “strives for” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 161) and how it might reinforce hierarchical and oppressive socio-political relations (Wu, 2012, p. 6) between humans and other animals. Since schools teach “far more than they advertise” (Eisner, 1985, p. 87),
the exclusion of entire subjects, narratives and the resulting “speaking silences” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 51) that surround the “animal question” in education can be traced back to the curriculum (and even further traced and mapped to the decision-making processes that lead to a specific curriculum being formulated). As it serves as a guiding value framework for education, the curriculum can be revelatory of what kind of society formal education currently strives for, and through a critical lens, whether this society is something to be strived for can be questioned.

3.4.2 Content and effects: Where are all the animals?

Before examining how animal are addressed (or omitted) from the curriculum, it is important to lay out the broader policy narrative of the curriculum. The curriculum outlines seven transversal competences, one of which foregrounds sustainable living and becoming sustainable citizens. According to the curriculum, basic education acknowledges the necessity of SD and eco-social learning and teaching ought to strive to guide pupils to adopt sustainable lifestyles (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016, p. 16). While the extensive references that are made to sustainability, SD, environmental responsibility, sustainable lifestyles and eco-social learning can be seen as a step in the right direction, the shortcomings of the notion of SD and anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability (and its definitional haziness) do not necessarily offer coherent guiding principles upon which to found teaching and learning “in omnicidal times” (Pedersen, 2021). In addition, the curriculum has been found to be inconsistent in its use of the concepts and their allocation into different subject areas and thus is seen as failing to offer a concise and unified definition and concise conceptual tools (Mykrä, 2021, p. 315). These inconsistencies, definitional haziness, and weakness of the conceptual tools upon which current curriculum is founded upon can be connected to the broader critique of SD and the UN Agenda 2030, which from the onset set in motion a tricky terrain for understanding what a sustainable future might mean and entail and thus how might these ideas be integrated into teaching and learning. In addition, it is this definitional obscurity that permits exploitative practices to be framed and understood as sustainable and applicable to sustainable living and environmental citizenship.

The curriculum highlights the importance of the school climate and culture as a learning environment, making a references to taking seriously “responsibility for the environment” and focusing on “a sustainable future” (Finnish National Agency
School food practices are also seen as a way to promote sustainable lifestyles (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014, p. 42). While the extensive references to sustainability could be seen as a reflection of the urgency of the climate crises and socio-political landscape acknowledging the need to respond to the challenges of our time, other animals and understanding our communities as inherently multispecies are overshadowed by anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability. In ethics (7–9th grade), the topic area of “human rights and sustainable future” includes learning about different human-nature relations, including environmental ethics and animal rights and includes an analysis of how to act responsibly for sustainable futures (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016, pp. 412–413). While this can be seen as a welcome addition, why wait until 7th grade to begin to explore ethical human-nature, human-animal relations and until then largely foreground what would be seen as managerial perspectives on how to “responsibly” “use” or manage nature (including animals) as a resource?

In addition, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of children’s “participation, involvement and building a sustainable future” (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016). Environmental (or ecological) citizenship is said to be the main aim of environmental education where the remit of “care” or concern is said to include people, nature and future generations, be based on justice and compassion, and education is an avenue through which to “practice” or “enact” environmental citizenship (Cantell et al., 2020). It has aptly been argued that children and young people have the right to be active environmental citizens here and now, not something to be delayed until “adulthood” (Cantell et al., 2020). However, similar obstacles are encountered with the definitional haziness of the guiding principles (such as with sustainability), as there appear to be no clear definitions or understandings as to what environmental citizenship entails and it has been linked to notions of global citizenship, and broadly speaking it is said to entail a responsibility and right to “care for” one’s environment (Cantell, et al., 2020). Despite the national core curriculum emphasizing environmental citizenship, it has been noted that young people in Finland feel their participatory opportunities to be weak (Cantell et al., 2020; see also Ombudsman for Children, 2020). It has been highlighted that children and young people ought to have the right to have an active (environmental) citizenship “here and now” (Cantell et al., 2020) instead of continuously being “put on hold” (Policarpo et al., 2018). While the media and educational materials include information about the ecological crises we face (Cantell et al., 2020), education and schooling offer little space to work towards
solving them, and the anxieties that arise from children and young people mobilizing (e.g., the Fridays for Future movement) signal the constraints within which supposed active environmental citizenship are seen as “acceptable.” This is further problematized by the very structures and practices of schooling that play a role in the ecological crises, creating a paradox in which environmental citizenship for a sustainable future is called for (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014), yet the very “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) and associated practices (e.g., school milk schemes) can be seen to paint a dire picture. If the broader overarching policy narrative of the curriculum is founded upon SD that omits animals from its focus, how then are animals specifically addressed in the curriculum?

Where are all the animals?

The inclusion of references to other animals in the current curriculum received widespread attention and was hailed as a milestone for animal protection when the new curriculum was introduced. In early childhood education animal welfare is not integrated into the curriculum, but includes a mention that through environmental education children ought to be provided with opportunities to explore plants, animals and nature (Finnish Centre for Animal Welfare, 2016, p. 26). In the core curriculum, a distinction is made between animal welfare and animal rights, with references to both made in different subject areas. References to animal rights or animal ethics are made in the subject areas for the Evangelic Lutheran religion (7–9th grade) and ethics (7–9), while references to animal welfare are made in environmental studies (3–6th grade) and biology (7–9th grade). In addition, in the high school curriculum, animal ethics is included in the subject areas of philosophy and ethics. The divisions between disciplines and the wider framing of animal issues is indicative of the difficulties in understanding where animals “belong” and where and how discussions about human-animal relations in education might be appropriate. If not framed as a resource in “food production” in “nutrition education,” where and how would one learn about farmed animals, for example cows? Where, according to the curriculum, does a cow belong if not on a farm or in the subject area of “nutrition” or “food”? The effect the curriculum has on animal lives may not be immediately apparent, nevertheless the epistemic violence inherent in how they are implicated in and addressed by locating them in specific subject areas, such as cows as food and food producers, already presents a construction of a specific reality, in which animals categorized as “food” are located
in their “correct” place in our societal arrangements, normalizing and naturalizing their instrumental use. Animals as objects of enquiry (either as parts of the “food chain” or “producers” of products in the “food chain”), thus remains intact, despite the seeming “advancement” made by including references to animals and animal welfare in the latest curriculum.

Adding references to animal rights and/or welfare in the curriculum could be seen as a reflection of the wider socio-political changes with increased public attention and public discourse on animal welfare, as well as changes in public perception and attitudes towards animals (e.g., Kupsala, 2020), which however have had little effect on the numbers of animals “used” (as the numbers continue to grow). While the intentions of the policy could be seen as a promising indication of greater concern and attention being paid to the wellbeing of other animals, however adopting a welfare framework could be seen to fail by adequately representing the interests of animals and falling short in questioning animal use (by focusing on treatment) and the role of animal use in the ecological crises (and the effects of these uses on the animals themselves). With animal ethics reserved for high school philosophy and ethics courses, it leaves nine years of formal schooling to adopt a welfare framework for teaching and learning about animal use. The so-called moral of the story is then that animal use is normalized, naturalized, and justified. Grouping animals into a universal category then to be picked apart through species categorizations locates some species as objects of inquiry in the natural sciences, some as “food” and “edible” in “nutrition education,” and thus carefully preserves human exceptionalism and the “rightful” societal order. Education with its disciplinary orientation and divisions, has been critiqued by others, as it is seen to “further reinforce the marginalization of nonhuman animals” (Spannring, 2019, p. 13). While unsurprising, but no less worrying, the limited references made to other animals in the core curriculum and their anthropocentric and welfarist framing as resources (particularly so-called “farmed animals”), leaves substantial room for urgent improvement on the one hand, and on the other hand constrains how these improvements could be brought about. The importance of critical thinking is foregrounded in the core curriculum and scattered references are currently made to analyzing effects of our actions on “animal welfare,” which would imply that the curriculum does offer openings (albeit limited ones) to critically examine the anthropocentric framing of a sustainable future and sustainability as a single-species endeavor. But with a welfare framing, might we be falling into the “welfare trap”?
Falling into the welfare trap?

Although references are made in the core curriculum to “building sustainable futures” which suggests analyzing the effects of ones’ actions on oneself, other people, animal welfare, nature and society (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014, p. 242), the framing of animal welfare legitimizes the structural positioning of animals as resources. Given that the shortcomings of welfare legislation have now been widely acknowledged and the ways in which the humane myth serve to further rationalize human oppression of other animals under the guise of peaceability (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 186), the inclusion welfare narratives ought to be viewed with caution. As long as animal-derived products continue to be a dietary staple in schools, the inclusion of animal welfare in the curriculum will most likely fall short in accurately representing the industries that exploit animals, and exclude references to standard industry practices, such as the forced impregnation of cows and the forced removal of their babies. It has been argued that the dairy industry “too, relies on doublethink” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 147) and “both ignorance and denial presuppose an awareness of what there is to ignore or deny” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 146). As a consequence of the positioning of animals as resources through a welfare framing, animal interests not only remain overlooked and the inner and social lives of animals omitted from teaching and learning, the real-world consequences of the normalization of animals-for-us narratives contributes to the perpetual growth of the AIC. In addition, reserving animal ethics for older students could be seen as underestimating the interests and willingness of children to discuss what are perceived as difficult or complex questions related to human-animal relations (Tammi et al., 2020).

While a welfare framing can be seen to be problematic, it could be seen as an opening through which to introduce “the animal question” in teaching and learning. However, one does need to question whether we may be falling into the “welfare trap” and reproducing harmful assumptions about other animals and our relations with them, as the critique on welfare regulations in Chapter 2 has shown the insufficiency (and serious shortcomings) of a welfare framework. Thus, given the shortcomings of animal welfare, the role industrial animal agriculture plays in the climate crises, it appears that the welfare framing in the curriculum may indeed be insufficient. To better understand the welfare framing of (farmed) animals, it is worth examining some educational materials that are offered to schools as part of nutrition (or food) education.
3.4.3 Nutrition education: A simplified view of “milk’s journey”

The Finnish National Agency of Education states that “food” or “nutrition” education reflects school values and school lunch is associated with promoting sustainable lifestyles (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021a). According to the agency, nutrition education is related to issues such as ethics, responsibility, SD, the environment, health, human rights and democracy and the questions explored differ depending on the different years of schooling (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021b). These general guidelines could be seen to provide openings for critical discussions about the consumption of animals, yet looking at educational materials available online for teachers paints a different picture. In addition, the probability of critically questioning food systems and food habits in institutional settings where animal-derived products are the norm is questionable, given the self-censorship educators may revert to (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). Furthermore “censorship” over animals in food systems has also been an issue for initiatives that aim to include more plant-based foods into schools (Kaljonen et al., 2018). Looking at the ways in which cows and the dairy industry are presented in selected nutritional education materials offers a glimpse into some of the educational dimensions of the importance of school food. It is also an example of the ways in which formal education functions as an important connecting site to “hotspots of violence” (i.e., industrial animal agriculture), as it presents a significant space where epistemic violence against cows is enacted. Nutrition education materials on “milk’s journey” are also exemplary of how the “myth of consent” (Stănescu, 2017, p. 223) and “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari, 2020a) can be upheld and (re)produced through nutrition education and the “milk’s journey” narratives they present.

Nutrition education can be seen to give a simplified view and narrative of cow’s milk “production” and generally frames “dairy as something with an animal origin, but still something that is there for human use” (Linné and Pedersen, 2017, p. 124). Cows, just like other mammalian mothers, nurse their babies and yet it has been noted that “knowledge of this basic fact of biology is eroding” (King, 2017). Studies have shown that many people think that milk comes “naturally” from cows (not that they need to be in a constant cycle of impregnation and lactation). This cultivated ignorance (Rice, 2013, p. 114) is enhanced through carefully curated “farm to table” or “milk’s journey” narratives. Some have argued for more “authentic learning environments” for so-called “farm education” in order to teach about “the route of milk,” where students would be given opportunity to participate
in individual and group tasks on the farm, including “feeding cows and calves and baking” (Smeds, Jeronen & Kurppa, 2015, p. 388). The proposal is a worrying example of how environmental education principles (in this case Palmer’s popular model) might be used to rationalize the dairy farm as an authentic learning environment for environmental education, with no scrutiny of the role the dairy industry plays in ecological crises.

In nutrition education materials offered by Ruokatieto yhdistys ry (henceforth Finfood – Finnish Food Information) animals are not absent, but highly visible and can be seen to be explicitly positioned as resources, and cows in particular are highly visible in educational materials describing “milk’s journey” (Finfood – Finnish Food Information, 2021a). An educational video offered by Finfood – Finnish Food Information depicts calves behind metal bars, cows tethered by their necks (with reassurance from the narrator that the cows can spend their summers outdoors) and close-up shots of pumps being placed on the udders (breasts) of the cows. The video begins with a close-up of five cows in a field on a cloudy day and includes footage from inside farms as well as cows in fields. The video goes on to describe where cows “live”, how long they live and how much milk they produce during their lifespan, as well as what they eat and drink. The cows closest to the camera stare directly into the camera, while the narrator begins by telling us about the most common “dairy cow” breeds in Finland. We then learn about the different types of barns where cows “live”: ones where cows are tethered by the neck but are let outdoors in the summer and ones where cows “are free”, but do not need to be let outside even in the summer. We are told that cows usually begin to produce milk at the age of two after giving birth for the first time, while the camera films two calves behind metal bars eating hay. The narrator describes how cows “usually live to the age of five or six” and can produce up to 36,000 liters of milk during their lifespan. The narrator describes how cows are usually milked twice a day and footage alternates between showing how pumps are applied to cow’s udders and how the udders are hand-milked. Technological processes are presented, with film footage showing storage tanks, computer stations, and a milk processing plant with descriptions of milk processing processes such as pasteurization and packaging. The video ends with footage from a supermarket, followed by milk being poured

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8 Ruokatieto yhdistys ry [FinFood – Finnish Food Information] replaced Maito & Terveys ry [the Milk & Health Association] in 2020 and took over their work in disseminating “impartial” communication about the health benefits about cow’s milk consumption (FinFood – Finnish Food Information, 2020). The board of the association includes representatives from Valio Corporation, Finland’s leading dairy corporation.
in a glass, with the narrator listing the health benefits of cow’s milk and reminding the viewer that it is a good drink option for “every meal.” Illustrated posters of “milk’s journey” offered by the same association also depict mechanical pumps on cow’s udders, smiling farmers and “milk trucks” taking milk from the “food factory” to the store, with the final picture depicting children at home surrounded by various dairy products (Finfood – Finnish Food Information, n.d.).

The normalization of the commodification of female bodies is evident in these “milk’s journey” educational materials, where cows are said to enjoy being milked, highlighting the “voluntary” nature of milking, stating that they can choose when they want to be milked and choose to be milked “when their udders are filled with milk” (Finfood – Finnish Food Information, 2021a). This “voluntariness” is framed by highlighting the cows’ freedom of movement outdoors in the summer, freedom to choose when to be milked, and redirects the focus on selective ideas of voluntariness, omitting questions about “voluntariness” (or in fact any reference to) forced impregnation, being tethered by the neck, lack of freedom of movement of calves in crates, nor the traumatic separation and destruction of mother-child bonds. The educational materials also focus on the technological processes of milk production, such as pasteurization methods, and suggested activities for students include calculating the milk yields of cows across their lifespan and coming up with names for the calves who are born that year (Finfood – Finnish Food Information, 2021b). It is evident that the ways in which cows are addressed, under the guise of “nutrition education,” reflect welfarist framings and simplified “farm to table” narratives that exclude key industry practices, obfuscating violence against cows.

The practices of industrial animal agriculture are good examples of attempts to constrain animal resistance. It has been noted that “if cows did not have the ability to influence their lives and interact with their environment, the AIC would not need to design confining stables and cages or subject them to practices such as dehorning, forced impregnation, and separation from their offspring” (Canavan, 2017, p. 44). Consequently, it has been argued that it is not so much a question then of proving cows’ subjectivity or agency (Canavan, 2017, p. 44), but rather disrupting the “normative assumption” inherent in “human-centric notions of the “life purpose” and value of animals designated as food” (Arcari, 2017, p. 83). The framing of “milk’s journey” and portrayal of cows as milk-makers for humans, in addition to the omission of violence are strategies for turning cows into “objects for human use by muting their actual experiences” (Lloro-Bidart, 2015, p. 140).

In the educational materials there are close-ups of cow’s udders being hooked to machines. While cow’s udders are highlighted, other aspects of gendered
violence are omitted. It has been argued that “with a commodified mammary excretion like milk, it is possible to imagine a scenario where the animal is not harmed for the production of that product” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 11) and this framing is certainly present in the nutrition education materials examined. As the industry appears to be “open” by making (some) practices visible, the boundaries between fiction and reality can easily be obscured. The preoccupation with cow’s udders and the visibility of the mechanized procedures of milking, exemplifies ways in which “the entitled gaze” (Arcari, 2020) is at work in nutrition education. The entitled gaze is defined as being “suffused with a fundamental knowledge and sense of entitlement to use food animals” and is “constituted through social practices permeated with the normalized regime of power/knowledge/pleasure in relation to animals and meat” (Arcari, 2020a, p. 306). The ways in which cows are depicted in the selected education materials are exemplary of the functioning of the entitled gaze and anthropocentric entitlement. The epistemic violence that normalizes this self-declared ownership or entitlement is also facilitated by linguistic mechanisms that help distance the bodily functions of motherhood and present them as mechanistic production processes. Linguistic mechanisms, such as “udders,” instead of “breasts” and “lactate” instead of “breastfeed” constitute tools of epistemic violence that allow ways to distance ourselves from other animals. The visibility of cow’s breasts in educational materials lies in stark contrast with the censorship related to human breasts and the taboo of human women breastfeeding in public.

As such, nutrition education can be seen as an example of an “industry-mediated visibility strategy” (Arcari, 2020a, p. 291) where (some) practices are made visible and thus normalized. The visibility (of some) industry practices can be seen to contribute to “the myth of consent” (Stănescu, 2017, p. 223), exasperated by a seeming voluntariness in “milk’s journey” narratives, for example how cows can “choose” when to be milked and “voluntarily” go to the milking robots. The entitlement over another being’s body, reproductive system and the very biological processes of motherhood for human use are normalized through a peculiar preoccupation with the depiction of cows’ breasts in the selected educational materials, yet ones which simultaneously mask the questionability of dominion over another being’s body. While not all dairy industry practices are made visible, the instrumental use of cows and particular focus on mechanized routines and the focus on cow’s udders is emblematic of the epistemic violence schools contribute to the normalization of specific forms of gendered violence and disregard for bodily integrity. Educational materials about “milk’s journey” can be seen as one example
of “the commodification of visibility” (Arcari, 2020a, p. 298), where the entitled gaze is “suffused with a fundamental knowledge and sense of entitlement” (Arcari, 2020, p. 306). With a focus on cow’s udders the entitled gaze obscures gendered violence and normalizes the commodification of cow’s bodies for human use, where their breast and breastmilk are seen as something humans are entitled to and with little regard to the ways in which their bodies are forcefully manipulated and their offspring forcibly taken from them (for us to eat or enter the commodity chain as future “milk machines”). The commodification of visibility can be seen to be carefully manipulated in educational materials, reflective of the broader “happy cow” marketing tactics used by the dairy industry.

According to Eisner (1985, p. 97), what schools do not teach could be as important as what they do teach. For many animals, their knowledges, cultures, and ways of being in the world are omitted, overlooked, and excluded. The lived realities of some animals are systematically obscured, including those of farmed animals. Understanding the social and inner lives of animals, their cultures, languages, and histories often go unremarked. School food is one of the ways in which formal education is a hotspot for the continued violence against other animals. As has been noted by several education researchers, “anything that is so central to the human experience deserves a place in the school curriculum” (Rice, 2013, p. 118). It has been argued that schools cultivate ignorance in relation to animal exploitation and industrial agriculture, as these topics often go uncommented and uncritiqued (Rice, 2013, p. 114). Given the different dimensions of curriculum (Eisner, 1985), there are different ways in which (educational) violence against animals is manifested. In the case of cows, which are currently located in the nutrition (or food) area of education, this explicitly reproduces and normalizes “animals-for-us” narratives, specifically cow’s milk for human consumption. The implicit message of anthropocentric entitlement (Arcari, 2020a) and normalizing gendered violence in that the “commodification of cows” bodies is not seen as violence. Schools and “food education” help construct or “produce” a particular understanding of cows, namely as milk machines. The hidden (or omitted) curriculum of “food education” includes routine industry practices such as the sexual violence against cows through forced artificial insemination, infanticide, violent disruption of mother-child bond and complete disregard for the social and inner lives of cows. Extracurricular dimensions can include, for example visits to farms, 4-H programmes and other “care-and-kill school projects” (Cole & Stewart 2014, pp. 120–121) and pasture releases (Linné & Pedersen, 2017).
Moving beyond animal welfare however is restricted by “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) of educational institutions, which the curriculum itself upholds. Opportunities for animal perspectives to be included in education and how they are (mis)represented in educational decision-making is thus closely connected to the wider socio-political landscape. Moving beyond a welfare narratives is made increasingly difficult given the role of education in the AIC, of which school milk schemes and long-standing ties to the dairy industry are exemplary.

3.5 Consumption: School fruit, vegetable, and milk scheme

Consumption is said to be “the lynchpin of capitalist relations” (Wrenn, 2017, p. 201) and the very location of (some animals) in educational policies related to “consumption” is telling of their societal positioning as resources in our “meat culture” (Potts, 2017). Education largely continues to be a stronghold of the “the animal economy” and educational policies constitute part of the wider animal economy “where animals, their bodies, labor, and reproductive capacities are incorporated into globalized commodity chains and in our politico-economic stories of progress and development” (Emel & Wolch, 1998, as cited in Pedersen, 2010b, p. 690). The numerous ways education is part of “the global web of the animal economy are reflected in (and actively reproduced) in everyday school activities” (Pedersen, 2010b, p. 690), school milk schemes being a prime example. Pedersen (2010b, p. 690) questions what it would mean “mean for education to examine its own position in the animal (and human) economy.” Furthermore, what might it reveal about the discrepancies between a curriculum that calls for “environmental responsibility” and “ethical” (sustainable) citizenship’ and the consumption practices that are sustained and normalized in formal education? School milk schemes are an example of why school food indeed ought to be taken seriously (e.g., Weaver-Hightower, 2011) both within and beyond education research and indeed in the broader project of moving towards interspecies sustainability.

3.5.1 Wider context: The proliferation of cow’s milk

The European Commission promotes cow’s milk as an important source of vitamins and minerals, essential for strong healthy bones and encourages the consumption of cow’s milk on a daily basis. The European Commission renamed
its School Milk Scheme the School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme in 2015, coming into effect in the 2017/2018 school year, combining the previously separate schemes of milk and fruit/vegetables. According to the regulation, it aims to target the declining consumption of fresh fruit, vegetables and cow’s milk and promote healthy eating habits. The payment of subsidies is dependent on schools’ marketing of the scheme and the health claims of dairy products by using posters and supported educational measures (including nutrition education and farm visits). In the 2019/2020 school year, 105 million euros (out of the 250 million euro annual budget) were allocated to cow’s milk subsidies. This is a 5 million increase from the 2018/19 school year, taking away from the allocated budget for fruit and vegetables. According to the European Commission, in the 2018/19 school year approximately 155,000 schools (and over 20 million children) took part in the scheme, with “167 million liters of milk being distributed to European children, accompanied by a wider range of educational activities” (European Commission, 2020). This is a slight decline from previous years where around 159,000 schools took part in the scheme in the 2017/18 school year, in which an estimated 178 million liters of cow’s milk was distributed to children (European Commission, 2019). By analyzing the institutional arrangements related to consumption, specifically school milk schemes), we can identify possible conflicts of interest, biased narratives, networks of actors, and identify whether the health of children and environmental sustainability are really the driving factors behind such schemes.

Contributing to the rise of cow’s milk in Western diets was the need for affordable and abundant food sources in the aftermath of World War I in Europe and North America (Valenze, 2011). Public health officials have played, and continue to play, a key role in the normalization of cow’s milk in westernized diets. In an effort to build demand and normalize the consumption of cow’s milk, propaganda campaigns on nutrition and child welfare were seen to ensure the staple role of milk in Western Europe, the United States and Canada (Montford, 2020, p. 60). Cow’s milk provisions have been a part of school life since the implementation of school milk schemes by the European Commission in 1977. Despite declining consumption in some countries, as well as the growing popularity of plant-based milk types and increased awareness and concern over sustainability and animal welfare, the EU continues to be “the largest producer of milk in the world” exporting milk around the world and as a result, “milk and dairy products constitute the largest agricultural sector and one of the more important industries of the EU” (Bórawski et al., 2020, pp. 1, 12). Cow’s milk schemes are not unique to the EU and similar schemes exist across the globe. To promote the consumption of cow’s
milk, the FAO has organized the World School Milk Day since 2000 to raise awareness and promote school milk programmes and the day is celebrated in schools in over 25 countries (FAO, 2021). The World School Milk Day Celebrations in past years have included regional and school competitions and activities that focus on the health benefits of cow’s milk and various competitions, events and other activities are used to “celebrate” the day. Initiatives such as these can be seen as manifestations of “milk colonialism” (Cohen, 2017, p. 268). It has been argued that “the normativity of humans drinking another mammal’s milk should be seen as an injurious colonial practice that works against most of the world’s colonized peoples” as well as the animals themselves (Deckha 2018, p. 1, referencing Cohen, 2017). Historically, Europeans have regarded “non-dairy diets as civilizationally inferior” and cow’s milk has long been endorsed “as a universal healthful food” (Deckha, 2018, p. 2). Endorsing this narrative of cow’s milk has been used as a justification to dispossess land to raise more animals and since the modernization of technologies (e.g., pasteurization) it has enabled the global export and trade in “dairy” (Deckha, 2018, p. 2). This global trade continues to be strong today and the diverse network of actors at play to enables the expansion of the dairy industry and its stronghold on formal education.

In the 2019/2020 school year, Finland received over two million euros in aid for the provision of cow’s milk in liquid and other forms such as cheese, curd and yoghurt and a significantly higher number of students “participated” in the cow’s milk part of the scheme instead of the fruits and vegetables part (European Commission, 2021). This alone raises questions around how narratives of healthy foods are framed and constructed, and why fruit and vegetables are significantly overshadowed by cow’s milk. For Finland, the provision of cow’s milk is said to be a way to preserve “Finnish food culture” as cow’s milk is considered an essential part of Finnish food culture and a normal beverage accompaniment to meals (Finland’s School Milk Strategy, 2015, p. 9). The scheme aims to keep cow’s milk consumption at “desired” levels and therefore brings “benefits to the agricultural sector” as forming consumption habits is seen to then extend to the consumption of other dairy products (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, 2015, p. 8). In Finland, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry prepares the strategy for school schemes and responsibility for its implementation lies with the Agency of Rural

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9 According to the report 193 044 children participated in the school fruit and vegetable part, while 776 474 children participated in the school milk part (European Commission, 2021). In the 2021/21 school year the allocated EU aid for Finland was reported as 1 599 047 € for fruit and vegetables and 3 824 689 € for cow’s milk (EU, 2020).
Affairs, while municipalities and inter-municipal associations have responsibility for arranging school meals and they make the decision on whether to join the programme and whether or not to apply for aid (European Commission, 2017, p. 5). There are six identified needs for implementing the scheme and one of them is to “maintain the level of consumption of low-fat dairy products” (European Commission, 2017, p. 6). Other needs relate to improving the welfare of young people and the improvement of healthy diets, implementation of nutritional recommendations, to improve food education and knowledge about food production, to increase vegetable consumption, and increase “awareness of food production, environmental impacts, sustainable living” (European Commission, 2017, p. 6).

According to the report, in Finland the consumption of cow’s milk in liquid form has declined, but the consumption of cow’s milk in the form of cheese has increased (Luke, 2016 in European Commission, 2017, pp. 7–8). Some have argued that the prevalence of cow’s milk (in various forms) in Finnish diets is a result of institutional work carried out by “the Finnish milk regime” and because of a strong “societal trust in institutions” and Finland is said to have “the highest per capita milk consumption in the world” (Vinnari et al., 2019). The Finnish milk regime consists of formal and informal institutions and “a network of public, private, and third sector actors” (Vinnari et al., 2019). Subsidizing cow’s milk in schools and the promotion of cow’s milk consumption in nutritional guidelines plays a key role in normalizing and maintaining the consumption of cow’s milk.

To “assist” with the implementation of school milk schemes, different educational materials, advertising and “nutrition education” materials are provided. School milk schemes have operated within a wider dairy propaganda network, which in Finland for a long time included the organization Maito & Terveys ry [the Milk & Health Association], which promoted the consumption of cow’s milk from 1958–2020, and while now nutrition education materials are offered by Finfood – Finnish Food Information, the long-running activities of the organization are worth mentioning, given the active role it has played in promoting children’s cow milk consumption in Finland. It also continues to have an ongoing social media presence, continuing to promote the consumption of cow’s milk. The Finnish Milk Propaganda Office began to organize the first annual “milk days” in 1936, which today are coordinated by the FAO. The roots of “milk education” in Finland date from the 1950s and UNICEF played a role in subsidizing the technology needed to properly pasteurize and produce milk to address the deaths of young children in post-war Finland, as the leading cause of death was reported to be diarrhea due to
poorly treated commercial cow’s milk (Maito & Terveys ry [the Milk & Health Association], 2021a). Since 1973 the organization annually appointed a “Milk Girl,” whose job it was to educate others on the importance and benefits of cow’s milk consumption. The “Milk Girl,” chosen a part of a pageant-style competition, was usually a young healthy “cheery” woman wearing a long blue and white dress, which can be seen as a strategy to associate cow’s milk with Finnish cultural heritage. The “Milk Girl” was changed to the “Milk Ambassador” from 2006–2018 and “Nutrition Specialist” in 2019 (Maito & Terveys ry [the Milk & Health Association], 2021b).

Another example of educational materials offered to schools can be found in the posters provided by the Milk & Health Association, which has played an important role in school milk schemes in Finland. The association provides a range of educational materials that can be ordered by schools, including “milk’s journey” materials. Among the various materials offered are a set of posters advertising the claimed health benefits of milk consumption. For schools to participate in milk schemes advertising materials, such as posters, have been a requirement. In the posters offered by the Milk & Health association a wide range of animal caricatures, ranging from moose, meerkats, woodpeckers, cats, horses, ants, fish, pelicans, wolves, sheep and giraffes are used to advertise the importance of cow’s milk consumption. These cartoon animals are accompanied by slogans with plays on words on the claimed health benefits of cow’s milk consumption. For example, a smiling giraffe is depicted saying “I highly appreciate milk consumption.” Although it is difficult to translate the play on words used in the various posters, the use of animal imagery in itself presents a problematic dimension. The “cultural consumption” of “charismatic animals” has been seen as highly problematic given the mismatch between the omnipresent use of animal representations and the lived realities of the animals themselves (Courchamp et al., 2018). In this instance the use of animal imagery in relation to promoting cow’s milk consumption takes on another disconcerting turn in so far as the lived realities of the giraffes and other animals are obscured, as well as the cows whose milk they are used to advertise. These bizarre marketing techniques are exemplary of the “free-reign” over the use of animal representations to various ends (including in educational settings) and are an example of visual techniques used to reproduce the narratives of cow’s milk consumption as healthy, while simultaneously obscuring the lived realities of the animals it uses to fortify the narrative. With such a free-reign over the use of animal imagery where representations often obscure the lived realities of their kin, are there sufficient spaces or opportunities to critically examine taken-for-granted
categorizations, narratives and underlying assumptions about animals and human-animal relations?

The organization continues its “impartial” communication about nutrition and cow’s milk (e.g., via social media) under the guidance of its steering committee that consisting of representatives from three large dairy cooperatives and a dairy farmer (Maito & Terveys ry [the Milk & Health Association], 2021c). It is clear that cow’s milk has a long history and a strong continued presence in “Finnish food culture,” yet as one begins to unpack these histories and the seemingly “natural” position of cow’s milk as a dietary staple in Finnish “food culture” might become less fixed.

3.5.2 Content and effects: Absent cows and future consumers

School schemes promoting the consumption of cow’s milk under the guise of children’s health plays a role in the growth of the dairy industry, where intensified production has meant intensified manipulation and control of animal bodies. Health, particularly children’s health, is the primary framing of the importance of cow’s milk consumption and thus provides the rationalization of the so-called need for such schemes. Cow’s milk is framed as nature’s perfect food, essential to human health and development. Concerns whether it is necessary or natural to consume cow’s milk is evident in the debate over its health effects. As Desaulniers (2015, p. 33) points out, cow’s milk contains hormones, saturated fat, pesticides and several studies have linked the consumption of cow’s milk (in its different forms) to a wide range of health issues. (e.g., Montford, 2020). In addition, there have been studies about higher rates of osteoporosis in countries with high dairy consumption (see “calcium paradox” in Desaulniers, 2015, p. 19). The necessity for the consumption of cow’s milk (and what is considered a healthy recommended quantity) is not stable and nutritional guidelines are subject to change. For example, in Canada the latest nutritional guidelines have removed dairy and meat as stand-alone groups, advising Canadians “to consume more plant-based foods” (Montford, 2020, p. 61). Narratives of animal consumption being “normal, natural and necessary” (Joy, 2020) are not set in stone and the newest Canadian nutritional guidelines are exemplary of this, yet it is important to note that nutritional guidelines are subject to vested interests are not neutral.
Where are all the cows?

There are an estimated 23.3 million cows in the EU in the dairy industry (EU, 2017, p. 2), yet cows are particularly absent from documentation related to the school milk scheme. Cows are ubiquitously absent from policy documentation, where the only references to them are made in relation to the definition of “milk for human consumption,” milk and what types of milk products are included in the scheme. In the EU regulation on establishing common organization of markets in agricultural products (Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013, EU, 2013, p. 146), in the section outlining “milk for human consumption,” “milk” is defined as “produce of the milking of one or more cows.” Throughout the policy, which outlines the rationale of school milk schemes, and also in the associated documentation for school milk schemes “milk” thus becomes synonymous to “cow’s milk.” The absent referent, meaning how live animals are linguistically, definitionally and metaphorically made absent, is seen to permit “us to forget about the animal as an independent entity” (Adams, 2016, p. 21). Through the salience of “milk” in dairy industry narratives, cows have been made absent and the consumption of their milk normalized. Strategic omission of references to “cows,” let alone that this is their breastmilk, and labelling of her (the mother cow who is exploited) “milk” frames sets the scene for the policy narrative in such a way that exploitative practices are rendered inexistent. Cows are reported to suffer from various welfare and health problems as the welfare regulations “applicable to dairy cows are general and non-specific” (EU, 2017, pp. 2–4). It has been argued that “with a commodified mammary excretion like milk, it is possible to imagine a scenario where the animal is not harmed for the production of that product” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 11). With omissions of references to cows and the way cow’s breastmilk is ubiquitously labelled as “milk” contribute to the normalizing (and in this case making invisible) function of ownership over another’s body. School milk schemes also service as a structuring and legitimizing tool of violence, where under the guise claims to (human) children’s health and children are used as drivers to rationalize the commodification of a mother’s bodily function at the expense of her own child’s life.

School milk schemes function through and legitimate colonial and speciesist narratives of nutrition, which reinforce the taken-for-granted social positioning of cows as resources, as human property, and play a significant role in keeping the dairy industry afloat. The underlying “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari, 2020a) underpins the policy narrative of “animal breastmilk for us” and is exemplary of
the insidious practices and the extreme ends to which narratives of anthropocentric entitlement and *animals-for-us* can take us. The epistemic violence inherent in the social construction of “the cow” (although references to them are omitted in policy documents) serves to reinforce the socially constructed category of cows as milk-machines and the socially constructed reality (which serves as a driver for the legitimization of cow as milk-machine) of necessity. Here narratives of health, purity and care for (human) children play a role in rationalizing the socially constructed realities of *animals-for-us* as “need” and “health” (constructed and legitimized by policy narratives and related nutritional guidelines) serve not only to justify the commodification cows, but obfuscate the contested discussions around the consumption of cow’s milk. Previous research has questioned why the consumption of human breastmilk after infancy appears to be disgusting to many humans, despite our willingness to consume the breastmilk of other species (Desaulniers, 2015; Gaard, 2013). One suggestion is that the categorization of animals helps us “automatically organize and interpret information we receive” and classify animals as some “that produce milk for humans and the ones that produce milk for their own offspring” (Desaulniers, 2015, pp. 13–14). This echoes the idea put forth by Linné & Pedersen (2017, p. 124) of the normalized anthropocentric framing of cow’s milk as of animal origin but meant for humans.

It is important to return to the systemic violence cows are subjected to, as seen in the previous chapter, and how welfare regulations do little to protect animals from, but rather serves to rationalize and justify it. Cows exploited for their milk in the dairy industry are slaughtered at a fraction of their natural lifespan and many baby cows born in the dairy industry are killed shortly or at birth as “excess” or “surplus” unless they are “fattened” for a short while to be sold as “veal,” or in the case of female cows, enter a cycle of exploitation as their mothers. It has been noted that the “connection between dairy and slaughter is one that is under-recognized in public consciousness” similarly to the “the many facets of routine dairy production such as artificial insemination, semen production, feeding, tail docking, castration, dehorning, birthing, milking, transport, sale, slaughter and rendering” which are all “largely absent from the popular image of dairy production” (Gillespie, 2018, pp. 17–18). The carefully managed public image of the dairy industry and selectively framed “milk’s journey” narratives associated with cow’s milk production are reproduced in educational contexts as part of “nutrition education.” It is clear that school milk schemes systematically serve to sustain the exploitation of cows, but they can also be seen to fail the children who are used as pawns to justify and rationalize the “need” for such schemes.
Children as future consumers

The ways in which specific “needs” and framings of “health” are managed and communicated through school milk schemes can shed light on the ways in which schools function as spaces where certain consumer habits are cultivated, in this instance as a means to help stabilize the dairy industry and secure the future demand for cow’s milk products through the normalization of cow’s milk consumption in childhood, which is seen as an important period in habit formation. This is evident in both the EU rationale for the scheme, which states that the consumption of “milk and milk products by school children should be encouraged with a view to durably increasing the share of those products in the diets of children” (EU, 2013, p. 3). While this also applies to fruit and vegetables, cow’s milk in Finland is foregrounded over the provision of fruit and vegetables. This focus on maintaining and building consumption patterns in which cow’s milk products are included is echoed by the FAO commodity specialist in the dairy industry Griffin (2005, p. 3), who highlights how “children represent an important market because dietary habits established in childhood persist into adult life.” School milk schemes frame children as “tomorrow’s adult consumers” and are considered to be an investment in the future demand for milk (Griffin, 2005, p. 3). According to Griffin (2005, p. 9), school milk schemes are a ways of creating new customer bases and for example in Japan played an instrumental role in the increase of Japan’s annual milk consumption. But at what cost are these consumer habits cultivated? School milk schemes are justified through narratives of children’s health, and it is not only animals the policy fails, but also children. According to Finland’s School Milk Strategy (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, 2015, p. 8), the (cow) milk scheme is seen to benefit “the agriculture sector” through “increased consumption” and through a “growing awareness of milk in general.” With schools as particular sites of economic expansion for the dairy industry, we can see the place of children in the commodity chain. Contested health claims aside, school milk schemes can be seen to fail children and young people by commodifying them as “future consumers” and knowingly implicating children in an industry that is known to play a significant role in the . As a result, the “entanglement” of children and other animals, in this instance cows, in different societal narratives, such as the narrative of what a “healthy diet” consists of, who and how is it decided, ought to be a cause for concern. Assessing the narratives of cow’s milk as normal, natural, and necessary could help us move towards “healthier policy ecologies” in education more broadly. Given the shortcomings and inconsistencies between the
three different educational policies, could interspecies sustainability as a foundational principle lend itself to the ambitious of moving towards “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020) in (and beyond) education?

3.6 Re-imagining educational policies through interspecies sustainability

It has been argued that central to understanding the current ecological paradox of the “politics of unsustainability” is attending to the ways in which environmental issues (and proposed remedial actions) are continuously *decoded* and *recoded* (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 36). Given the severe shortcomings of conceptual tools to guide the parameters of what environmental citizenship might entail (following a neoliberal and anthropocentric SD), the challenges for schooling to become a space that works towards sustainable futures, let alone ones that serve as “spaces of peace” (Wadiwel, 2015) where multispecies flourishing could be discussed and worked towards appears limited. Given the shortcomings of SD, it is important to return to the question of sustainable futures for whom and what is it that is being “sustained” by sustainable development” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 7)? While schools are embedded in the AIC and the animal economy, education will continue to contribute to “the politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011). To attend to these shortcomings, interspecies sustainability could offer a more coherent framework from which to weave new collective narratives, or *stories-to-live-by* (Stibbe, 2015), as well as more fitting understandings of what active (environmental) citizenship entails in our multispecies communities.

Each of the three policies are largely framed through child-centered narratives: SD is ultimately justified as serving children and future generations (see also Policarpo et. al, 2018), the curriculum is framed as offering children and young people the tools needed to become ethical and “environmentally responsible” members of society, while cow’s milk schemes are framed through narratives of concern over children’s health. Although children are central to these policies, whether their interests are truly attended to is contestable, given that children are inherently negatively impacted by the current policy narratives put forth, which ought to be a cause for concern and an avenue for amalgamating interests between those concerned with children’s participatory rights and a right to a future of their own (e.g., Ombudsman for Children, 2020) and animal rights more broadly, given that both children and other animals are inherently entangled in these policy narratives. Each of these policies can be seen to fall short in attending to children
and young people, as they can be seen to reproduce the “problem” they appear to address (sustainable futures) due to the paradox these policies create through their (intentional) blind spot: animal exploitation. Understanding the different narratives that circulate through and shape formal schooling could shed light on the complex processes of narrative disruption and re-narration involved in seeking to undo epistemic (and systemic) violence against animals. What is important to note is how narratives become what are now (established policy narratives) and how, even though they may appear to be taken-for-granted or even to have become “stock political narratives” (Baker, 2006) as in the case of SD how these narratives can be molded, disrupted and reconfigured in search of more adequate stories-to-live-by (Stibbe, 2015) in “omnicidal times” (Pedersen, 2021).

Each of the policy narratives unsurprisingly (albeit no less concernedly) stem from a hierarchically anthropocentric positioning, thus rationalizing animals-for-us assumptions, or an “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari, 2020a), setting the scene and groundwork for animals to be used as resources for human use. All of the policies play a role in legitimizing and obfuscating violence against animals and have profound effects on their lives. The anthropocentric framing of current policies reduces animals to resources for human use and contributing to the “cultural hegemony of animal products” and institutionalized cruelty towards animals (Fitzgerald & Taylor, 2014, p. 165). Their categorization and labelling as resources in the UN Agenda 2030 and exclusion from our planetary community (“our common home”) influences the ways in which sustainability, sustainable futures and ecological citizenship are understood and framed in the Finnish National Core Curriculum. The omission (or general categorization as resources) of animals in policies serve to legitimize hierarchical power relations and socially constructed realities where the animals-for-us view is the norm. Each of the policies reinforce and feed into the cycle of epistemic, systemic, and intersubjective violence against animals (Wadiwel, 2015). If, as Wadiwel (2015) suggests, we can be seen to be at war against animals, then the policies circulating within the educational policy landscape can be seen to offer further tools in the arsenal of weaponry used to uphold and rationalize this war, where the curriculum can be seen to serve as a particularly powerful tool of epistemic violence, and school milk schemes reinforce the networks of systemic and institutional violence while SD is used as a particularly powerful tool for the ongoing oppression of animals, rather than seeing animals as stakeholders in their own right. In this way further violence against animals may be rationalized under the guise of building a sustainable future for
(some) humans. Paradoxically, as has aptly been noted by Arcari (2020b), this war waged against animals, ultimately becomes as war in which all lose.

The inconsistencies between the policies creates a paradox where the information and issues are considered too difficult or too taboo to discuss with children and young people, yet simultaneously little is done to change the ways in which schools themselves contribute to the problems, thus creating a vicious circle of a culture of “speaking silences” about animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019). Because of the messy realities of policy formulation and implementation (Jie 2016), responsibility and accountability can easily become obscured, just as it is obscured in the different dimensions of violence against animals (Wadiwel, 2015). When the time comes to address the shortcoming of formal schooling in tackling sustainability in effective ways, will responsibility be placed on teachers, school administrators, principles, students, or broader networks of educational decision makers? If the structures and practices of educational institutions were appropriately tackled, the dilemma of how to teach and learn “for future survival” (Common Worlds Collective, 2020) might not appear as the tricky terrain it currently does, as school culture and climate and its infrastructure itself would “walk the walk,” meaning it would have addressed the exploitative practices it is connected to, thus it would not need to be afraid to “talk the talk” (and thus there would be no need for collective curious silences about “the animal question” nor the paralyzing paradox of the current politics of unsustainability).

School food practices which have centralized the consumption of animals shed light on the scale of the systems of violence education is connected to and its role in the AIC. The number of meals served in Finnish public schools alone and the subsidization of cow’s milk creates inconsistencies when the school climate itself fails to provide consistent examples of the necessary building blocks and practices for creating a sustainable future, especially given the central role industrial animal agriculture plays in environmental crises, putting planetary survival at risk. As long as schools are embedded in the “animal economy”, understanding and positioning animals as stakeholders in education in ways that challenge their status properly, remains difficult. Animal welfare and anthropocentric understandings of sustainability cannot be the end goal, nor the foundations upon which understandings of “sustainable futures” can be built. Continuing business as usual of a cultivated ignorance (Rice, 2013) should not be an option and neither should children bear the burden of a policy landscape in which they too are merely used as either “poster children” advancing international agendas (SD), commodified as future consumers to ensure the growth of a colonial project which is the unjust,
unsustainable and unnecessary (the dairy industry) and with a curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014) implicated in both.

There has been increased debate on what a “planetary diet” ought to look like in light of the current state of affairs and different initiatives in Finland have begun to map out what more “climate conscious” school food could look like. While the need to move towards a more plant-based diet is aptly recognized, this initiative could fall short, as which animal bodies are “consumable” continues to be assessed merely through calculations of the carbon footprint, leading to the promotion of a continued consumption of chicken (reference) and failure to recognize and question the role of cow’s milk consumption. Transforming school food practices in Finland continues to be debated but falls short of acknowledging the role of the animal industrial complex in education, however, there are also initiatives for “climate friendly” catering and public procurement specifically focused on plant-based foods (see, e.g., Climate Sustainability in the Kitchen, 2021). One site for collective action and strategizing could be to challenge the flow of cow’s milk through schools, given the dietary racism inherent in such schemes, as well as the contested health claims of cow milk consumption, the environmental effects of the industry, and the ways in which violence and domination of animals is rationalized and justified. This would entail broader strategizing including working towards just transitions and reallocation of subsidies currently used to maintain the dairy industry. Given that initiatives promoting more “climate conscious” school food (Kortetmäki & Pudas, 2020) continue to promote the consumption of (some) animals and animal-derived products (e.g., consumption of chicken, seen as a more “carbon emission” friendly “meat,” as well as cow milk) greater attention ought to be paid to the ways in which “sustainability” and “climate friendly” ideas are framed, requiring an interspecies justice perspective of sustainability.

Policy narratives are often expected to offer a policy solution or a “moral to the story” (Jones et al., 2014), yet despite serving as guiding frameworks, there are significant inconsistencies to the so-called “solutions” these policies offer. For example, the UN Agenda 2030 is widely criticized for its technoscientific fixes and endless growth, the national core curriculum claims to foreground environmental citizenship for sustainable futures, yet fails to offer clear understandings as to what that entails. In addition, foregrounding sustainability while cow’s milk continues to flow through schools under the guise of a fabricated “need” for cow’s milk is a stark example of the sort of inconsistencies in the way consumptive habits are constructed. Each of these policies contribute to the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011). While SD can be seen to have become “a stock political narrative”
(Baker, 2006, p. 15), the inherent anthropocentrism of SD can be seen to perpetuate the problems it aims to address, as is evident in the shortcomings of the SDGs (Diaz et al., 2019). Similarly, while it can be seen as a step in right direction to include sustainability and ecosocial learning in the national core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014), it too can be seen to fall short in adequately attending to the root cause of the problems we face (hierarchical anthropocentrism) due in part to the definitionally hazy conceptual tools of “SD” and “sustainability”. Central to all of these is the need to redefine “the social” in social sustainability to include human-animal relations” (Pedersen, 2021, p. 9). An interspecies sustainability framework could assist in broadening understandings of “the social,” “the public,” or “the commons” and help map out possible avenues towards just multispecies sustainability. Given these shortcomings, how might we move towards “critical and creative policy alternatives” to build “healthy policy ecologies for sustainability” (Stratford & Wals, 2020, p. 1). If hierarchical anthropocentrism and animal exploitation are currently central to our path of unsustainability, interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021) could be seen as a promising framework to help map out possible pathways out of unsustainability and the current path towards “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019). Interspecies sustainability “acknowledges animal agriculture as a key carbon intensive industry, and one that includes interspecies ethics as an integral part of social justice” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, pp. 112–113) and would therefore challenge the violence that underpins the majority of human-animal relations and could have significant effects on the lives of cows (and other animals).

If educational policies related to consumption were to coherently address the highly contested nature of health claims used to defend the consumption of cow’s milk and take seriously their own stated need for educating for sustainable future (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016) and reflect this in institutional practices by removing animal-derived products from school catering, this in itself could significantly alter the framing of cows and other farmed animals in education. However, as this is unfortunately not likely to be the case in the immediate future, how could we begin to teach and learn about cows in ways that are attentive to their subjectivity, social and inner lives and challenge their social construction as resources for human use? Nutrition of food education is a prime example of the severe shortcomings of the ways in which the lived realities of animals are largely omitted from and (mis)represented in education.

The UN Agenda 2030, more precisely SDG 16, calls for “peaceful and inclusive societies” and the framing of peace and justice is repeated throughout,
highlighting a determination “to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence” (UN, 2015, p. 2). However, as the previous discussion on the AIC has demonstrated, a peaceful future that is “in harmony with nature” appears to be an oxymoron, and while animals and nature continue to be framed as resources for human use, we are likely to continue along an increasingly violent and destructive path leading to further ecological destruction, which would signal that a radical transformation in not only political systems, but societal arrangements and narratives are needed. An interspecies sustainability framework could better attend to the ways in which animals are addressed these policies. For example, it would disrupt the normative positioning of animals as resources and disrupt the ways in which they are (mis)represented and categorized into specific subject areas. By disrupting the social construction of animals based on their utility to trivial human practices, animals could be understood as stakeholders of their own lives and futures in their own right and inherently transform the ways in which we view and act in our multispecies communities. In addition, interspecies sustainability could more adequately address how environmental citizenship is understood, given that “socially responsible sustainability begins where exploitation ends” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 137). This ultimately implies that working towards “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020) in education necessitates working towards schools as “spaces of truce” (Wadiwel, 2015), where connections with explicative systems are re-evaluated. How could interspecies sustainability (Bergmann 2019, p. 202) help to build healthier, just and truly sustainable policy narratives, which aptly diagnose problems, offer more coherent solutions and strategies, and more adequate understandings of who is a stakeholder in our multispecies world? If animals are understood as individuals with intrinsic value and a right to a life of their own, how could their interests be better represented in the curriculum and other educational policies and how would this change the understanding of what ecological or environmental citizenship means in multispecies communities?

Interspecies sustainability could offer a more fitting guiding framework, as it focuses on animals as subjects (beings with intrinsic value and a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018) and challenges the very industries and the animal economy that can be seen to be leading us down our current violent and unsustainable path. How might sustainability be understood differently if other animals were understood as key stakeholders (and not resources), as stakeholders and agents in their own lives and in a collective multispecies sustainable future? What implications could the reframing sustainability as an interspecies endeavor,
where “our common home” is understood as a complex multispecies planetary community, have on educational policy and practice? What could educational policy, including curriculum, look like where teaching and learning is framed by striving for respectful and peaceable multispecies coexistence? If changes in curriculum are seen as a reflection of “the changes in the surrounding world” it has been argued that schools then need to not only “take these changes into account,” but rather take “a proactive role in building the future” and thus to take seriously their “role in defining what kind of future they should be involved in constructing” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 166). Whether schools remain spaces of violence and unsustainability or spaces that strive for peaceable relations that seek to offer children and young people opportunities to build a sustainable future is an urgent question to be tackled.

Despite the framing of human children as the ultimate beneficiaries of SDGs, animals and children are seen to share “a common condition of vulnerability” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 205). Others have highlighted how future generations (and children), together with wildlife and natural resources fall under a common category of “the voiceless,” as they share “common vulnerabilities” and “require collective protection” (Abate, 2019, p. xii). However, children and other animals are not voiceless in and of themselves, but rather they have been rendered voiceless through power relations and hierarchies that allow for their interests, voices, agency and rights to be collectively overlooked and silenced (although to varying degrees and with varying consequences). As Meijer (2019, p. 240) has pointed out, including animals in “interspecies politics” is not about humans “giving other animals a voice, it is about understanding and recognizing that they have been speaking to us all along.” Not only have animals been voicing and demonstrating their agency, so too have children and their voices are getting louder through collective mobilization and action. Children and other animals ought to be considered stakeholders in a sustainable future in their own right, which begins and is founded upon what we do now in the present (not an abstract future). An interspecies sustainability framework could offer a more applicable frame and foundation from which to construct policy narratives that tackle the shortcomings of the educational policy landscape in its current form, which can be seen to explicitly fail animals, as well as (human) children by implicating them in institutional practices (e.g., school milk schemes) that are inherently unsustainable, unjust and harmful to the health of children themselves, animals, and the planet.
3.7 Chapter summary

If different dimensions of educational policy can be seen to create a paradox of *sustaining the unsustainable*, where could we go from here? An interspecies sustainability framework could offer pathways to work towards educational policies that are framed in less hierarchically anthropocentric ways and offer tools to rethink problematic policy narratives related to sustainability, the curriculum and consumption, which sustain and legitimize current *animals-for-us* narratives. Since the representation of animal interests in educational policy is reflective of wider socio-political developments (or lack thereof), building effective alliances would appear a necessary step to transform the interrelated socio-political landscape that continues to justify violent human-animal relations, and which can be seen to impede multispecies flourishing (and sustainable futures). Given the severe shortcomings of current educational policy that maintains an “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021), what are the possibilities for moving towards ways of teaching and learning through which animal perspectives could be introduced into educational spaces? The following chapter explores what possible pedagogical openings there are to work towards “spaces of peace” in formal education, where animals are understood and positioned as stakeholders in their own right.
4 Animals in educational frameworks: Pedagogical openings for interspecies sustainability

While the policy shortcomings examined in the previous chapter paint a dire picture of animals in education, there are several promising developments being made in education research and practice that could offer ways in which teaching and learning could be more attentive to animal perspectives. This chapter explores the pedagogical openings for education for interspecies sustainability and understanding animals as stakeholders by exploring the opportunities offered by different educational frameworks broadly categorized under “the animal turn.” A birds-eye mapping of different pedagogical frameworks that stem from slightly different theoretical underpinnings can shed light on the pedagogical openings for understanding animals as stakeholders. In addition, how these pedagogical may converge on key principles is explored, as well as whether effective alliances between these animal-inclusive pedagogies could offer a more unified approach for wider systemic change in moving towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability.

4.1 Introduction

In formal education, hegemonic hierarchical anthropocentrism remains intact and is further reproduced through the adoption of SD agendas under the guise of “greening schools.” It is thus unsurprising, but nevertheless disconcerting, how CAS scholars have identified that animals-for-us narratives in education can be excruciatingly slow and difficult to change and challenge. Spannring (2017, p. 66) has identified how curriculum and disciplinary boundaries, educational settings and tools “reinforce the marginalization of the nonhuman animal” echoing the limitations posed by the curriculum identified in the previous chapter. In addition, cognition and quantifiable knowledge is seen as the primary preoccupation of education, rather than “a cultivation of ‘sensitivity to hear and see’ or foster compassion for all beings” (Spannring, 2007, p. 66). Behind the narratives circulating in formal education are real lives (and deaths) of countless individual animals. Nutrition education, nutritional guidelines, school food practices, dominant understandings of sustainability, and the ways in which animals are represented in curricula and educational materials, are all connected to a violent
reality beyond (and sometimes within) school walls. Recognizing the real world connections and implications of current educational policies and practices is important, as we can begin to see the role formal education plays in the wider socio-political landscape of human-animal relations. If the lived realities of animals are often overlooked, how can we begin to ensure that animal interests are justly represented in formal education and their use as mere depersonalized species representatives, educational tools, and resources for human use is challenged and transformed? Fortunately, “alternative” educational frameworks have been proposed and this chapter explores the possibilities they offer. Through a birds-eye view of different pedagogical frameworks under the “animal turn,” this chapter aims to explore the pedagogical opportunities they offer to better understand and position animals as stakeholders in education and how these frameworks can help foster (educational) settings that aspire to achieve peaceable relations and to be “spaces of truce” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 8), necessary for creating true possibilities of interspecies sustainable futures.

A birds-eye view of educational alternatives can also shed light on the opportunities for building effective alliances both among these animal-inclusive frameworks, as well as with the wider field of environmental, climate change and sustainability education. Interspecies sustainability could offer a possible unifying framework for identifying and amalgamating intersecting interests between these different educational frameworks in efforts to build effective alliances (George, 2019). The systemic transformations needed within and beyond educational research in light of the urgency of the ecological crises we face and intensified animal exploitation requires unifying fragmented approaches to strategically work together for systemic change and wider educational reforms necessary for interspecies sustainability and justice. This is not to imply that only one of the frameworks is to be selected as the “right” one, but rather this study aims to identify possible convergences between the frameworks to effectively strategize together for systemic reforms. If we are to take seriously our own calls to action on the needs to transform education and the urgency of the ecological crises we face, it would be a missed opportunity for educational scholars and practitioners to not work together though a more unified front.

4.2 Navigating the “animal-turn” in education

Despite developments that rightly foreground tackling the “business as usual” of dominant forms of environmental and sustainability education, a gap remains
between these concerns and “the animal question.” Animals and animal issues run the risk of being left as an afterthought (or no thought at all) (e.g., Oakley, 2019; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Spannring, 2017). In addition, as discussed in previous chapters, sustainability narratives can be used to further commodify and instrumentalize animals, including in educational contexts. The need to disrupt animals-for-us narratives and recognize animals’ intrinsic value is exemplified through an educational project where “rearing animals”, specifically chickens, was seen as “a concrete example of how to show respect for the environment” through sustainability learning (Wolff et al., 2018, p. 5). This is a troubling example of how sustainability can be used to not only justify the instrumental use and objectification of other animals under the guise of “respect”, while overlooking animal interests and failing to address the wider AIC and its role in the . These types of projects raise the question about “what is being sustained in education for sustainable development” and environmental education more broadly, and “whose “reality” is represented” (Pedersen 2019a, pp. 4, 7) and whose if often all too easily excluded.

Given the shortcomings of educational policy, the occlusions and constraints posed by the “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) that policies rationalize and uphold, what openings and pathways might different “animal-sensitive” (Spannring, 2019, p. 12) or animal-inclusive pedagogical frameworks offer for including animal standpoints into educational spaces, and for them to be seen as stakeholders in education in our multispecies communities and in conceptions of a sustainable future? Finding ways to create educational spaces where animal subjectivity is emphasized and peaceable relations fostered has received increased attention in Finnish education research (Saari 2020; Tammi et al., 2020), but has nonetheless remained marginal. For this reason, I turn to educational frameworks put forth under the “animal turn” as well as long-running humane education to navigate the pedagogical opportunities and openings they might offer also for Finnish educational research and practice.

At the beginning of the so-called “animal turn” in (environmental) education research, human-animal relations were critically examined and there was said to be a shared “overarching commitment to position other species as subjective stakeholders” in research (Oakley et al., 2010, p. 89). However, it has been noted that despite a proliferation of animal-focused educational research, this foundational commitment appears to be increasingly missing and much of the research carried out fails to “stand with the animal herself” (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1140). Different educational frameworks representing the “animal turn” in (environmental) education stem from different, yet sometimes intersecting,
theoretical foundations. Some of the frameworks which continue to be of scholarly interest include common worlds pedagogies (e.g., Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018), critical animal and total liberation pedagogies (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Nocella II et al., 2019; Trzak 2019), humane education (e.g., Itle-Clark, 2020; Saari, 2018, 2020; Weil, 2016), ecojustice and ecopedagogy (e.g., Andrzejewski et al., 2009; Kahn 2010; Lupinacci, 2020; Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016; Martusewicz et al., 2015) and diverse critical and intersectional approaches to animal-focused environmental education (e.g., Lloro-Bidart & Banschbach, 2019; Oakley et al., 2010; Russell, 2019).

The diversity of animal-focused educational scholarship alludes to the multitude of strategies available for critical inquiry into human-animal relations and the ways in which educational spaces can (and in some instances already do) contribute to ways that seek to foster interspecies equity. It is beyond the scope of this study to present in detail the diverse studies that have been presented under each of these frameworks. Rather the aim is to explore whether and how these frameworks might already share significant guiding principles and aims, enough so to present a coherent alliance that foregrounds the importance of critical animal-focused education as a stepping-stone to building broader alliances in the wider (thus far predominantly anthropocentric) field of environmental and sustainability education, as well as schooling more broadly.

If what we are up against is indeed a complex (growing) machination of the AIC, it would be more conducive (and vital) to identify points of convergence between the different animal-focused educational frameworks in order to create more systemic solutions, or at least to represent a more cohesive unified front. Conceding that wider educational reforms require significant processes of “unlearning anthropocentrism” (Lupinacci, 2019) in education and society more broadly (a multifaceted endeavor in itself), identifying converging interests (planetary survival perhaps?) within and beyond animal-inclusive education could be seen as an important step.

The type of pedagogical reform required in light of the climate crises and growing exploitation of animals requires animals to be understood and positioned as “subjects rather than objects” (Lloro-Bidart & Banschbach, 2019, p. 2) through an intersectional educational approach that “foregrounds the entanglements of animal, environmental and social justice issues” (Russell, 2019, p. 35). What will become more apparent through the exploration of the different frameworks put forth under the animal turn is that each of these frameworks echo to a certain extent Weil’s (2016) solutionary approach to humane education, as these frameworks
share many commonalities. As such, it is no longer just a question of how to teach (as several promising frameworks already exist), but rather how to address the systemic obstacles in education that impede the wider implementation of a foundational value framework that attends to the necessity of disrupting the AIC (and the location of education in that complex) in order to effectively build interspecies sustainable futures. While debate on the purpose and future of education understandably largely focuses on children and young people, several scholars have rightly highlighted the importance of higher education (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Russell, 2019) and teacher training (Gómez-Galán, 2008, 2009; Itle-Clark, 2020; Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016; Turner, 2019). Without teachers gaining the strategies needed to cultivate teaching and learning spaces that attend to sustainability, the climate crises and human-animal relationships during their training, they are likely to face greater challenges later on in their teaching careers, when these skills become increasingly necessary.

Russell & Spannring (2019, p. 1138) explain how critical animal-focused approaches to environmental education have both “constructive and reconstructive ambitions” as they aim to encourage us to recognize “our co-existence with the more-than-human and envision and create ways to contribute to practices that enable humans to live ethically and sustainably within and as multispecies communities.” If we recognize our communities as already inherently multispecies, significant shifts are needed as to whose knowledges, experiences, narratives (insofar as we can imagine animals’ perspectives) are included in education in what ways. Given the restricted ways in which we currently come to learn about animals such as cows, different frameworks not only challenge (educational) violence against animals but offer ways in which “we can learn from and with other animals” (Oakley, 2011, p. 9).

A range of approaches have been proposed under the so-called animal turn and this chapter focuses on four specific approaches or frameworks, ranging from ecocritical pedagogies, posthumanist inspired common world pedagogies and CAS, and abolitionist inspired critical animal pedagogies (see Figure 5). In addition, humane education is foregrounded, as it is already widely used in educational practice in different contexts. While these are not reflective of the field of animal-inclusive education in its entirety, they have been chosen as they stem from slightly differing starting points and theoretical underpinnings. Each of these frameworks can offer ways to foreground animal perspectives in education and in educational discussions on sustainable futures, by positioning animals as intrinsic beings with a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). Critical animal-focused
environmental education sheds light on the opportunities for intersectional interspecies pedagogies (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Russell, 2019), and ecocritical pedagogies foreground (un)learning anthropocentrism (Lupinacci, 2019), while critical animal pedagogies seek ways to learn “with, from and for” animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420). This study originated from an interest in humane education (Weil, 2016) and a mapping of the pedagogies broadly connected to the so-called “animal turn” in education research, which in turn stemmed from an interest in understanding how humane education is situated in the broader field of growing animal-inclusive education. In what ways might these pedagogies reconfigure the educational landscape so that animals too are understood as stakeholders, where their agency and perspectives are foregrounded, and how might they create openings for different ways of teaching and learning about animals and the complex relations we have with them, in what ways might these different frameworks differ or converge? Additionally, how might we begin to possibly restore human-animal relations in educational spaces? This chapter aims to explore some of the opportunities for building effective alliances both within animal-inclusive education as well as beyond it through a birds-eye view of the field and then focusing on humane education more specifically.

Fig. 5. Animal-inclusive pedagogies for an education for interspecies sustainability.
4.2.1 Ecocritical pedagogies for a “commons curriculum”

Ecocritical pedagogies explore the entangled lives of humans and nonhumans and according to Lupinacci (2020, p. 6), recognizing anthropocentrism and human-supremacy is an important entry-point to “unlearning the injustice and pervasive violence of Western industrial culture.” Drawing on ecojustice education (Martusewicz et al., 2015), ecofeminist and critical animal pedagogical frameworks, Lupinacci (2020, p. 5) explains how (un)learning anthropocentrism through ecocritical pedagogies consists of analyzing how culture, language and their underlying values and beliefs “shape our thinking and contribute to injustice.” Central to ecocritical pedagogies is creating teaching and learning spaces that foster a critical examination of Western industrial culture and its impacts and the links between hierarchical power relations in efforts to foster teaching that “support socially just and environmentally sustainable communities” (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016, p. 41). By focusing on community-based learning for “multispecies justice and equity”, ecocritical pedagogies highlight the importance of rethinking dominant assumptions upon which meanings are constructed (Lupinacci, 2020, p. 12).

Proposals for a “commons curriculum” advocate focusing on possibilities of “reimagining our relationships with things we share in common,” including water, air, and food and focusing on “localized responses to issues directly impacting our communities” (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2018, p. 112). Central to an ecojustice framework as “a pedagogy of responsibility” is questioning one’s “just and ethical obligations” to one’s community (Martusewicz et al., 2015, p. 22), with a broadened understanding of who and what belong to our communities. As a result, reassessing the role education ought to play in transitioning to “just sustainable communities” (Lupinacci, 2019, p. 813) includes a radical rethinking of what is meant by citizenship and “what it means to be educated for citizenship” (Martusewicz et al., 2015, p. 22). From this perspective, ecocritical pedagogies offer valuable framings from which to reimagine and craft more apt curricula for multispecies societies and what sustainable citizenship (as foregrounded in the Finnish National Core Curriculum explored in Chapter 3) asks of us through an ecocritical and multispecies lens.

Given the broadened understanding of community and acknowledging “the right of all beings to coexist in peace” (Lupinacci, Happel-Parkins, Turner 2019, p. 5), central to an ecocritical framework is exploring what community membership and citizenship mean in multispecies communities and what our responsibilities to
our human and “more-than-human neighbors” (Lupinacci et al., 2019, p. 6) are. Ecocritical pedagogies offer opportunities to challenge and disrupt taken-for-granted perceptions of other animals by creating teaching and learning spaces where individual narratives of other animals and their lived realities are invited, rather than omitted. Ecocritical enquiry can open spaces for disrupting taken-for-granted narratives and the assumptions embedded within them, tackling “root metaphors” that are “encoded in the language that allows for the conceptualization of certain relationships while hiding others” (Bowers, 2002, p. 22).

The problematic nature of dominant narratives circulated in and through education that are presented as a taken-for-granted reality are seen to prepare “young people for their fate in a very unhealthy and in many ways broken society” (Lupinacci, 2019, p. 83). However, it could be argued that young people are in fact being unprepared for their futures in these unhealthy and broken societies, as there is little space offered in education to critically examine harmful foundational assumptions and practices and their consequences, or let alone propose and work towards alternatives. This could be seen to risk leaving young people unprepared to critically challenge the entrenched beliefs that are the root causes of unsustainable and unjust systems. This leads to a business-as-usual approach, evident in educational policy and practice, where an exploitative culture is presented as anything but exploitative and violence against other animals is framed under the guise of peaceability (Wadiwel, 2015). This is what makes Lupinacci’s (2019), and numerous other scholars’ calls to action even more urgent and necessary.

Since ecocritical pedagogies have a broadened understanding of who belongs to our communities they seek to find ways that can help us “consider voice, agency and value in the more-than-human members of the communities” (Lupinacci, 2019, p. 81) and are guided by the notion of interspecies equity (Lupinacci, 2019, p. 86). The educational framework Lupinacci and other ecocritical scholars advocate for can be seen to echo many of the core tenets of interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2020). Reflecting proposals made by others about learning with other animals (Taylor, 2016), Lupinacci (2019, p. 95) too questions what we could learn from our “more-than-human relationships” if we were to practice “listening to the more-than-human world” and learn together about “how to respect diverse species and their intrinsic worth and value in our living and local ecologies—our communities.” Activities such as journaling and letter writing (related to more-than-human teachers) and telling stories of animal resistance are seen as ways to open up spaces for analysis about how “we continue to treat one another and the more-than-human
world with such disregard, disrespect, and cruelty” (Lupinacci, 2019, p. 96). Others too have highlighted the “wondrous possibilities” offered if we were to stop and for a moment “ponder the spontaneous creativity of spiders and the life-worlds of wood ticks” (Bell & Russell, 2000, p. 200). These seemingly simple, yet all too easily ignored, moments of awe and wonder could too serve as openings for seeing cows as more than the carefully curated milk-machines that are normally circulated in educational settings. These examples of slow pedagogies founded on attentiveness may lie in stark contrast to the rapid ecological decline enveloping education, yet they could be key to fostering more attentive and just intersubjective relations with other animals, opening possibilities to build towards more systemic changes.

**Interspecies food justice pedagogies**

Food education takes on a broadened meaning from an ecocritical animal-inclusive perspective, extending beyond “nutrition” to more explicitly include social justice, animal rights, and environmental issues. Critical animal-focused environmental education includes teaching and learning about systems that have significant impacts on the environment, people, and animals, of which food systems are a prominent example, and proposals for *interspecies food justice pedagogies* have been made (Lloro, 2020; Lloro-Bidart, 2019). Challenging so-called “humane” forms of animal agriculture and including social justice dimensions in discussion can provide opportunities to recognize how “injustices are intricately linked through power structures (e.g., neoliberal capitalism) that exploit animals and some humans alike” (Lloro-Bidart, 2019, p. 56). Food offers the possibility to act as “an excellent entrée for investigating a whole host of complex and interconnected issues” on how food systems impact animals, the environment and those working in these systems (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1138). Indeed, this interconnected lens is one that is found in many of the frameworks explored here. Food systems are seen not as a topic to be shied away from, but critically and creatively explored. Although food has been included in some research in the field of environmental education, Pedersen (2019a, p. 9) has aptly identified how some approaches reproduce *animals-for-us* narratives and thus reinforce educational ties to the AIC. Intersectional interspecies food pedagogies can help problematize narratives of sustainable consumption and broaden conceptions of ecological citizenship in multispecies communities by critically examining the objectification and commodification of both humans and other animals (Spannring, 2019).
It has been argued that to some extent people “know enough to know that they don’t want to know more” about the use and treatment of animals, as there is already some idea about the violence involved in industrial animal agriculture (Gillespie, 2018, p. 12). Since the consumption of animal-derived products is closely connected to cultural and personal identity (e.g., masculinity) and interpersonal relationships (Darst & Dawson, 2019, p. 222), it is often viewed “as a private affair” (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2018). This is where intersectional food pedagogies can offer opportunities where discussion is not necessarily lead by or introduced through “the ethics or morality of meat eating” per se (Lloro-Bidart, 2019, p. 67), as this may lead to a variety of emotional responses, such as denialism, cognitive dissonance and avoidance strategies (Darst & Dawson, 2019; Lloro-Bidart, 2019; Spannring & Grušovnik, 2018). As a result, suggested pedagogical strategies include transformative learning inside and outside the classroom that foreground both wider issues such as diverse cultural contexts, social inequalities (e.g., access to healthy foods) and the importance of validating “each individual’s starting point and possibilities to contribute to change on his/her own terms” (Spannring & Grušovnik, 2018, p. 6). Similar observations on the importance of starting where students are at have been made by others (Darst & Dawson, 2019; Lloro-Bidart, 2019, 2020; Russell, 2019) and the role of “critical, reflective, and reflexive dialogue” is highlighted (Lloro, 2020, p. 155). Yet even the most well-meaning and open discussions might often run into structural obstacles, as well as “boundaries” between home and school and who and where should or could discussions about contested issues such as animals as food be tackled. This is particularly important in relation to younger learners. However, it has been noted that often children themselves bring up complex questions and are interested in discussing the complexity of human-animal relations (e.g., Tammi et al., 2020).

Learning with and from food movements is also seen as a promising learning strategy (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2018, p. 94) and can serve as way to learn about, as well as enact active (environmental) citizenship. Examples and narratives of various forms of community action and organizing can illustrate the opportunities to challenge oppressive food systems, including efforts to offer healthy school food (e.g., the Coalition for Healthy School Food), health care professionals mobilizing against dairy (e.g., Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 2019), as well as the global movement of mothers organizing to challenge the consumption of cow’s milk (e.g., Mothers Against Dairy, 2021). In addition, intersectional organizing around food justice (e.g., the Food Empowerment Project, 2021) and other forms of community organization (e.g.,
Overthrow Community Fridge in New York City, see VegNews, 2021) are all examples of different ways to learn with and from collective forms of organizing that also expand ideas of food within broader frameworks of justice and beyond an individualist lens. With a broadened framework for understanding food as an interspecies justice issue, these, and other examples of collective organizing, may motivate others (including education researchers) to challenge the stronghold of the AIC in formal education and find ways to effectively foster multispecies flourishing in our communities by challenging the structural obstacles in the way. Moving on from collective and community organizing to another pedagogical framework that is also linked to the idea of a shared commons, but approaches it in a perhaps slightly different way, is the posthumanist-inspired common world pedagogical framework.

4.2.2 Common world pedagogies and “becoming worldly together”

Posthuman education scholars too have recognized the inefficiency of current educational frameworks in responding to the challenges we face and argue that new ways of thinking and acting with the “more-than-human world” are necessary to attend to the environmental crises we face (Malone & Truong, 2017, p. 4). Posthuman education research questions what education could be if “man” was not the measure of everything worthy and valuable (Snaza & Weaver, 2015, p. 2) and emphasizes taking into account the interiority and inner lives and emotions of animals, asking what we could learn from other animals (Morris, 2015) and exploring how animals could be made visible in the classroom in ways that animal voices and experiences are not lost (Miller, 2015). Posthumanism seeks to challenge the idea of human exceptionalism by replacing the idea of “human” as a separate category from everything else with an ethic of mutual relation (Taylor, 2016, p. 7).

One pedagogical framework stemming from posthumanist theorizing are common world pedagogies, which examine the interdependence of our lives with the lives of other species (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2016, p. 150). Primarily (but not exclusively) used in early childhood education settings, the conceptual framework of “common worlds” resists the nature/culture binary and tackles the “ethical and political challenge of learning how to live well together and to flourish with difference” (Taylor & Giugni, 2012, p. 111). Common worlds pedagogies draw inspiration from Latour’s notion of “common worlds,” which posits that the common “is neither predetermined nor fixed, but in a continuous state of
composition, of commoning” where “humans are not the sole composers or caretakers of the commons” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 13). Common worlds pedagogies also stem from Donna Haraway’s theorizing, including her idea of “worldings—or the co-making of worlds” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 2). As a result, the so-called common worlds of children and animals are seen as an “ongoing, interactive, multispecies process of becoming worldly together” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 13). This is not to say that these “common worlds” children and animals are seen to inherit and co-inhabit are harmonious, innocent or pure, but are rather seen as “pragmatic and down to earth,” messy and damaged, and instead of being utopian they are seen to be “brimming with potential” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 13).

As discussed in Chapter 2, proponents of common worlds pedagogies are critical of tendencies to romanticize child-animal relations as harmonious or innocent and are critical of children’s opinions, voices and perspectives being belittled or dismissed (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 13) and thus seek to foreground children and other animals as active subjects in their own right. Common worlds pedagogies have for example explored children’s “more-than-human” relations including child-insect relations (Nxumalo & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2017) and children’s kangaroo encounters and child-raccoon co-habitations (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015). Attempts to decenter the human and move beyond anthropocentric hierarchies are aligned with challenging “settler colonial and Euro-Western binary logics” (Nelson et al., 2018, p. 4). While these aspirations are clear, the problematic nature of some posthumanist terminology, such as the term “more-than-human” has been criticized for further centering on the “human” as it used as a denominator and generalizes all living (and non-living) entities together. While the universal categorization of “animal” is recognizably problematic, attempts to decenter the human through posthumanist terminology comes with its own challenges, such as categorizing rivers, mountains, trees, animals, insects, bacteria together under one term where “human” is used as a denominator. Posthumanist research in general is seen as running the risk of romanticizing certain types of “multispecies relations,” while overlooking the structural oppression of others and overlooking power relations, systems of violence and commodification of animal lives (e.g., Arcari et al., 2020; Giraud, 2019; Wadiwel, 2015; Weisberg, 2014).

Nonetheless, common world pedagogies diverge from traditional approaches to environmental education and are generally critical of what is considered a traditional humanist “stewardship” model of (some) environmental and sustainability education where humans are positioned as primary change agents
As a result, it calls for a more relational approach to the “more-than-human” with the aim of “learning ‘with’ nonhuman others rather than ‘about’ and ‘on their behalf’” (Taylor, 2016, p. 1448). Critical of what are seen as “human rescue and salvation narratives” it has been argued that instead of “striving to ‘save’ the world” we would be better off with more modest responses and should work towards ways of becoming “more worldly by focusing upon our entangled relations with the more-than-human world” (Taylor, 2016, p. 1458). However, whether modest responses “of becoming worldly” suffice in light of runaway climate change and growing animal exploitation, and exactly what these processes of becoming more worldly entail or what is seen as modest (as opposed to its counterpart?) remain unclear. For example, if we consider children’s and cows’ lives as being entangled and thus sharing a common world, what do these common worlds look like and what do they entail?

**Common violent worlds: The entangled lives of children and cows**

If children and animals are indeed understood as sharing “common worlds,” what do these common worlds look like and entail for children and cows where their lives are forcibly “entangled” through school milk schemes? To what extent do children and cows “co-make” these spaces where their worlds collide, yet where they are unlikely to encounter each other as living embodied beings? To what extent are children and cows engaged in “a multispecies process of becoming worldly together” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019, p. 13) in this instance? Moving beyond the animals we may encounter in our more immediate surroundings, the common worlds of children and animals reveal wider systemic power relations, including the positioning of both children and animals as resources in school milk schemes (albeit with drastically different consequences for both). Children are positioned as future consumers (Griffin, 2005), female cows are positioned as “milk machines” and their own children either endure their fate (as future “milk machines”) or regarded as “excess” to be discarded and killed shortly after birth (male calves), or killed and sold as “veal.”

Giraud (2019, p. 178) aptly notes how it is insufficient “to acknowledge the non-innocence of all forms of relation” since valorizing certain moments of encounter and relation may “obscure rather than open up responsibility,” as “ethical and epistemological responsibility is not found solely in the moment of encounter itself” (Giraud, 2019, p. 180). While some children may encounter cows on carefully curated visits to “dairy farms,” what happens at the moment of encounter,
for example when children “meet” a calf in his crate on an “educational” visit to a dairy farm (Tammi et al., 2020, p. 213)? It is moments like these that allude to the problematics of universalizing (and perhaps romanticizing?) the so-called non-innocence of some relations. In addition, it sheds light on the need to further unpack how animals and children might share a process of “co-making” of these shared worlds. In these rare (and carefully curated) encounters with cows, how are children and the calf in his crate involved in a “multispecies process of becoming worldly together”?

The structural inequalities embedded in child-cow relations may naturalize significant exclusions, as agency has already been distributed “in ways that make it difficult for particular actors to contest the relations they are embroiled in.” (Giraud, 2019, p. 181). It is thus valid to question what ethical and political implications arise from being embedded in this type of relation (Giraud, 2019, p. 177). Child-cow relations are an example of how it has been rightly argued that animals’ entanglement with humans “usually means more dependence, more oppression, and more exposure to human-induced violence” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 8). Under the guise of narratives of care of (human) children and their health, school milk schemes contribute to dietary racism (Repka, 2019), colonialism (e.g., Cohen, 2020), environmental destruction, and institutional and epistemic violence against animals. Thus, it is fair to say that some human-animal “entanglements,” such as those between children and cows in the world of school milk schemes, ought not to be, and what follows are questions of how to untangle or unravel these “common worlds” that are harmful for all involved.

While conceptualizing “common worlds” as shared spaces is understandable and indeed reflective of the interconnections between human and nonhumans, to generalize that animals and children share a process “co-making” their shared worlds in situations where the presence of animals is forced, disregards the anthropocentric assumptions and forced presence of animals in many of these “common worlds” (or situations) and how subjectivity and agency are severely restricted and “pre-determined” beforehand. With that being said, the idea of “common worlds” can be helpful a conceptual tool in interrogating what kinds of “common worlds” (or commons) ought to be strived for, taking into consideration the severe restrictions and power imbalances of those embedded in these “common worlds.” Therefore, if the “common worlds” idea is seen as a useful conceptual tool to broaden conceptions of the commons being inherently multispecies and thus encouraging us to think about our communities in different ways (Taylor & Giugni,
2012, p. 110) it would serve to ask how and why so many within these commons continue to be persecuted, commodified and killed.

Others have noted how these types of relational viewpoints are necessarily “incompatible with a contextual argument that applies to a normative view to human utilization” as they “can be adapted to take into account systems of violence and the ways in which ethics might be formed by context and situation” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 7). If these “common worlds” are more often than not inherently violent and deadly, we might ask how we could begin to navigate ways of teaching and learning for a more peaceful co-existence, which will inherently involve situational and relational approaches. These situational and relational approaches could be navigated without falling into romanticized notions of “co-creation” when often who we are “entangled” with have no say. Or in the case of children and cows, are “entangled” not through particular encounters, but wider socio-political (and economic) settings. It would appear then that not only do (many) human-animal relations need to be “untangled,” but further unpacking of some of the notions that are used to guide these relations and pedagogical frameworks (such as the claims of “co-creation”), which if used as a blanket statement may obscure complex relations, and the socio-political landscape and power imbalances inherent to these “common worlds.” This is where critical animal pedagogies could offer some of the necessary tools for navigating pathways forward with some of these limitations encountered.

4.2.3 Critical animal pedagogies and “standing with the animal herself”

Proposals for critical animal pedagogies (CAP) arise in response to the ways in which schools contribute to the implicit and explicit reproduction of narratives of other “animal’s instrumental position in human society” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 415). Stemming from CAS and abolitionist theory, CAP as formulated by Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016) opposes some of the educational approaches arising from posthumanist perspectives, which are seen to emphasize mutual entanglements while overlooking deeply embedded “asymmetric human-animal power relations” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 46). The word critical refers not just “to engagement with critical theory, but equally a commitment to be critical of anything that purports to study animals and at the same time fails to engage, support, protect and stand with the animal herself” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 7). CAP is seen to have the potential to disturb “the
norms, practices, culture, and structures that render animals endlessly accessible to human use” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 7).

Drawing from MacCormack’s proposal for a Gracious Pedagogy (2013), which sees pedagogy and “the will to know” as “acts of war that animals can neither win or participate in” CAP calls for leaving animals alone, and instead, education ought to be directed at “unthinking the human” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 416). MacCormack considers human-animal relations are primarily parasitic, where other animals have been “endlessly silenced, classified, used, abused and parasited on by education” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 416). Pedersen (2019a, p. 9) suggests that education could have the potential for “unlearning and relearning our being in the world” but suggests doing so by “standing with, staying away, and stepping aside.” CAP thus foregrounds “leaving the animal alone”, where instead of encouraging additional “interaction or connection with animals in education” we should “disentangle animals from the demands we make on them, and thereby to free ourselves from our harm-inflicting behaviors” (Pedersen, 2019, p. 9).

However, some have questioned what leaving the animal alone would look like in practice (Horsthemke, 2018). In certain instances, leaving the animal alone is clear, to cease dissection and other instrumental uses of animals in education, while in other instances it would appear impossible for education to leave the animal alone, given their ubiquitous presence in education (and society). Given that animals are already excluded from education insofar as their knowledges, cultures, languages and right to a life of their own, calls to “leave the animal alone” could be problematic without clarification as to what is exactly being called for, as it may run the risk of reinforcing their existing exclusion (null curriculum) and thus reinforce the implicit curriculum of oppression and domination. It has been argued that the proposed “hands-off” approach of CAP would be problematic given that nothing would be learned about “the animal” and would, as a result, “erode any basis for concern, empathy and compassion” (Horsthemke, 2020, p. 906). According to Horsthemke (2020, p. 906), there appear to be inconsistencies between the proposed “absence of animals from pedagogy” and intervening “in processes of escalating oppression” (Pedersen, 2014, p. 17 in Horsthemke, 2020, p. 906). While it appears unlikely that animals will be absent from pedagogy, what we can however strive for is to attend to the ways in which we do come to learn about animals to ensure (as best as we can) it is done in ways that respect their intrinsic value and strive for respectful and peaceable co-existence. It could be argued that critical animal-focused educators and researchers have a responsibility to intervene
and effectively work towards ensuring that the ways in which animals are represented or present in education (because currently they will be regardless) is done in ways that do not perpetuate and normalize their exploitation, but rather which focus on how we can build peaceable relations and respectful co-existence.

**Learning with, from, for animals**

Calling for teaching and learning for a “respectful non-intervention in animal life” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 417) inherently requires a shift from a “mere instrumental curiosity” of learning about animals to “learning with, from and for them” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420). It is suggested that one way of shifting attention away from animals is to move attention “toward human behavior, institutions, and thought regimes that have made our appropriation of animals possible” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 8). This could be done through a critical examination of societal norms, discourses, and institutions, which “organize our affective responses towards animals” and comparing the narratives of animal exploitative industries to the “actual life situation of animals” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 418). This can be carried out through an analysis of narratives and myths that surround “the animal production system” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 54). Three main objectives for a critical animal pedagogy have been outlined as deconstructing “knowledge, norms and perceived ideas” about animals using a critical-analytic approach, encouraging and demonstrating “alternative ways of relating to animals”, and maintaining “a respectful distance (MacCormack, 2013) with regard to the integrity of animal life and not by default to take human self-interest as a point of departure” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 427).

Other CAP scholars have broadened understandings of what constitutes a critical animal pedagogy, acknowledging the “cross-pollination” between different models of education, through which CAP is positioned at the “intersection of critical pedagogy, anarchist modes of education, ecopedagogy, intersectional radical activism, and humane education” (Repka, 2019). Others have argued that teaching and learning should include “the diversity and depth of animals lives” including perspectives on their “societies, cultures and emotional capacities” to foreground their complex subjectivity, and as a result can highlight how “harm enacted through objectification and exploitation is not only physical but also psychological and emotional” (Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014, pp. 151–153). Including animal subjectivity “in richer and more complex ways” is seen as an
addition to the intersectional and anti-oppression commitment central to critical animal pedagogy. Foregrounding animal subjectivity, for example through cognitive ethology, could disrupt “the tendency to reduce experiences to victimhood” and could also shift “our discourse from charity and pity to the possibility of more humble and holistic alliance” (Corman & Vandrovcová, 2014, p. 153). Interdisciplinary alliances where ethologists play a role would be beneficial for any field tackling animal ethics (Balcombe, 2011, p. 281). Other CAS scholars have also made suggestions for different ways they have approached a critical animal pedagogy, for example through critical animal geographies (White, 2019), infused into language teaching (DeMelo, 2019), and through the use of comics as teaching and learning resources (Parson, 2019).

CAP echoes a trend of disrupting conventional teacher/learner hierarchies in favor of collective learning (Gunnarsson Dinker, 2019; Lupinacci, 2019; Repka, 2019; Trzak, 2019). It also takes into consideration the importance of working together with students “in a continuous dialogue about how concerns, frustrations and injustices may evoke feelings of anger” (Repka, 2019, p. 114). CAP acknowledges that “students are a necessary voice in creating positive change” (Repka, 2019, p. 114.), thus building collaborative learning spaces that offer possibilities for action are important. Skeptical about substituting anthropocentric curriculum with other “programmatic and predefined curriculum”, CAP instead emphasizes a “collective, reflective pedagogical theory and practice” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 58) Skepticism over predefined curriculum echoes concerns raised in environmental and sustainability education over instrumental agendas (e.g., Jickling & Wals, 2012; Wals, 2011). While this skepticism is understandable, some guiding framework is nonetheless necessary, particularly if working towards systemic transformations in the education system. While collective and reflective learning is needed, coherent frameworks are necessary if current anthropocentric value frameworks are to be transformed and ways of teaching and learning for respectful and peaceable co-existence with other animals are to be infused into schooling.

Let’s get critical!

Critical approaches are sometimes dismissed as normative and there may even be a “widespread anxiety about critical animal pedagogies”. However, these dismissals can be seen to be “invalidated by the fact that education, as policy and practice, is always already normative and cannot be otherwise” (Gunnarsson
Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 46). It has been noted that there appears to be a tendency in (some) education research to position animal rights as “moralizing” or in terms of presenting “easy solutions in a reality that is more complex” (Pedersen, 2019a, pp. 4–5). Critical however does not necessarily mean moralizing or “being programmatic” instead being critical can provide spaces “for critical reflection: reflection on how to think outside the box, how to read in new ways, how to eat in new ways, how to teach and learn in new ways” (Pedersen, 2019a, pp. 4–5). These critical learning spaces can provide opportunities for “reflection on how critical educators, students and animals may jointly create new educational and world-forming conditions” (Pedersen, 2019a, pp. 4–5).

In many instances it seems that critical thinking and constructive critical dialogue is avoided, perhaps even dreaded. Given that human-animal relations are complex and embroiled in exploitative power relations, and that at the very core of climate justice and interspecies sustainability are conflicts of interest. Conflict should not deter us from engaging in critical (constructive) dialogue, rather it should be embraced. One of the reasons why educators and teachers may shy away from discussing human-animal relations with children is that it is considered too “difficult.” While there are legitimate concerns about how educators could address these issues in formal educational settings, research on child-animal relations has found that children are open to (and often initiate) questions that are complex and difficult to answer (Tammi et al., 2020). Instead of shutting down critical inquiry, it should be seen as a way to navigate and find answers to the precarious times we live in. However, despite the willingness and openness to explore difficult questions, it is important to be attentive to the challenges educators face, including attitudes and expectations from parents, colleagues, and the school culture more broadly. Critical enquiry can take many forms and the different dimensions of the curriculum (Eisner, 1985) allude to the ways in which we might approach “the animal question”. Perhaps strategies do not always have to be explicit, and often implicit ways of exploring taken-for-granted assumptions and narratives are needed. Critical and creative inquiry and exploration should be embraced, not dreaded, and perhaps greater attention should be paid to the many forms it can take. Critical and creative inquiry are central to humane education and in fact many of the objectives of CAP can be seen to echo objectives of some models of humane education, which is explored next.
4.3 Humane education: Towards solutionary pedagogies

The previous educational frameworks proposed by education scholars have demonstrated an overall tendency to move towards learner-centered and intersectional approaches to teaching and learning about, with and for animals. Concern over human-animal relations and the role of education in addressing and improving the treatment of other animals is not however new. An educational approach with a long history, which continues to be implemented in different educational settings today is humane education. Despite its continued popularity, it has been noted that what humane education actually is may sometimes be oversimplified (Caine, 2012, p. 9), due in part to the use of “humane education” as an overarching umbrella term to refer to numerous different (and sometimes conflicting) educational approaches. Humane education is examined here in more detail because it has been adopted as an educational framework by different organizations that run a variety of educational programmes around the world. While there are a rich set of educational frameworks proposed by scholars, humane education already has an important “foot in the door” and the work being done by different organizations merits analysis, as well as understanding the origins and developments of this educational framework. Chapter 5 will explore some of the experiences of those working in the field, which can help us move forward in the practical implementation of animal-inclusive educational frameworks. Before doing so though, it is important to begin with an understanding what humane education is and how it is situated with the pedagogies posited under “the animal turn”.

Humane education scholars have called for education approaches that promote “planetary care inclusive of all of Earth’s inhabitants” (Caine, 2012, p. 10) and is one of the frameworks that aims for an interconnected exploration of social justice, sustainability, and animal protection (e.g., Weil, 2016). Humane education is seen to offer ways of “introducing and sustaining non-anthropocentric curricula” and thus creating kinder classroom settings (Caine, 2012, p. 11). Despite the perceived popularity of humane education, some are concerned with what they consider as “little progress” being made in the field (Unti, 2020). Structural issues certainly play a role in an apparent stagnation of the field, as well as confusion over what humane education actually is, as it is often used as an umbrella term to cover various issue and teaching strategies and is carried out in a variety of settings. In some countries, humane education “appears to be in danger of disappearing” as a core focus of the animal protection movement, as some organizations have
removed or reduced “their commitment to humane education and related programmes” (Unti, 2020). This is seen as an outcome of various factors, such as difficulties in integrating humane education into formal education, lack of measurable outcomes, as well as broader societal values undervaluing education and perceptions of “animal protection as a special interest” (Unti, 2020).

The field is seen to be advanced by specialized organizations offering educational resources and teacher training (Unti, 2020) and through efforts to include humane education into higher education (Itle-Clark, 2020). In some countries however, some animal protection organizations are beginning to show an interest in humane education and there are efforts to “unify” the field, for example through the creation of the Humane Education Coalition. Taking a broader view of the future of education in the time of the climate crisis and growing animal exploitation, one of the key challenges (not just for humane education) needed to be overcome is addressing the misconception that animal issues and human-animal relations are separate and distinct from environmental education and sustainability concerns, when they are in fact central to sustainable futures and attending to the ecological crises.

4.3.1 The origins and various forms of humane education

Because of this fragmented and sometimes inconsistent view of what constitutes humane education, it is important to examine the origins, developments (or lack thereof) and the different forms of humane education. In doing so, it is easier to see where humane education fits in within the broader field of environmental and sustainability education and animal-inclusive pedagogies.

The kindness-to-animals ethic

Humane education emerged from philosophical traditions where concern over cruelty to animals had anthropocentric underpinnings, as violence against animals raised concerns that this cruelty and violence would lead to violence against humans (Itle-Clark, 2013; Unti & DeRosa, 2003). It has been argued that this concern reflected “the era’s social feminism, animal protection, and temperance” as they “shared a deep concern about the implications of cruelty and violence—particularly male cruelty and violence—for individuals, the family, and the social order” (Unti, 2020). The kindness-to-animals ethic and promotion of humane education was therefore seen “as an antidote to a depraved character and a panacea
Humane education has been part of organized animal protection to different degrees and throughout its history has grappled with challenges related to funding, “competing” with other societal concerns and major events, as well as serious difficulties with its implementation into formal schooling (Unti & DeRosa, 2003).

Humane education has also grappled with societal changes in the ways in which animals are used. Industrialization saw changes in animal use, and it has been noted that the humane movement’s traditional focus on intersubjective violence and acts of cruelty (originally focusing on animals used for labor, e.g., horses) “failed to touch upon newer and socially sanctioned forms of animal use” (Unti & DeRosa, 2003, p. 32). As a result, the movement’s own “self-censorship and the constraints imposed by educational institutions” hindered developments for humane education to address “new” dimensions of animal cruelty and as a result it failed to challenge forms of systemic violence and “institutionalized uses of animals”. For example, this included the use of animals for food, fur, and experimentation, as these forms of use “were well beyond the experience and influence of most individuals” (Unti & DeRosa, 2003, p. 32). Schools and the education system were sites of struggle where “agricultural societies, industry associations, religionists, and science education groups also fought for a stake” (Unti & DeRosa, 2003, p. 32). While Unti and DeRosa’s overview of the history of humane education focuses on the United States, the influence and control that agriculture and industry fought to have in education is not exclusive to the United States and is telling of the deep roots of the AIC’s connections to formal education.

Not only did the kindness-to-animals ethic fail to challenge institutionalized violence and animal exploitation, its anti-cruelty focus has been criticized for not adequately addressing the interests and rights of animals, and this original anthropocentric focus has been said to “distract from what it is about the recipient, in this case the individual animal, that is worthy of moral consideration” (Horsthemke, 2018, pp. 160–161). This critique has been echoed by others (Taylor & Signal, 2008) and remains a cause for concern in some humane education programmes where animals are used as “classroom pets” (Daly & Suggs, 2010), as animals used as tools for education can lead to programmes with significant moral blind-spots (e.g., Wolff et al., 2018). There are however programmes that rightly focus on “animals’ needs and safe ways to interact with them” (Szecsi, 2014, p. 50). With animal shelters inundated with abandoned, unwanted and abused “companion animals”, and pet industries booming, it is clear that “the public needs accurate information” about the animals we share our world (and homes) with (Irvine, 2002,
Humane education is often seen as an important endeavor in fostering more compassionate human-animal relations.

**Different forms of humane education**

Given its long history, what does humane education look like today? There are many answers to this question, as humane education is used as an umbrella term for multiple education programmes in different contexts. While the field of humane education is broad and has no one set definition, many humane education approaches share at least some common characteristics and their respective definitions have included phrasings such as “instilling, reinforcing, and enhancing young people’s knowledge, attitudes, and behavior towards the kind, compassionate, and responsible treatment of human and animal life” (Ascione, 1997, p. 57). This reflects the longstanding association of humane education with its original kindness-to-animals ethic. However, humane education has developed toward a broader social justice oriented approach, which aims to equip “learners with the tools to think critically and identify creative and impactful solutions to interconnected global challenges” (Humane Education Coalition, 2021). Before examining this broader approach in more detail, it is salient to map out some of the other forms of humane education.

Humane education continues to be of interest in different settings. For example, animal shelters may focus largely on “responsible pet ownership”, which is connected to an interest in the human-animal bond or human-animal interactions (Jalongo, 2014a, p. 8). In some settings, humane education may refer to animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted interventions, where animals can be seen to be positioned as “healers, friends and therapists to children and young people” (Fraser et al., 2017, p. 13), and the focus is on human benefits of these interactions. Animal-assisted interventions have received critique; as some have argued that not all instances of animal interactions are necessarily ethical and safe environments are needed where children (and adults alike) can learn about respectful co-existence (e.g., Irvine, 2002). Live animals are not included in all humane education programmes, but animal-related content in lessons through stories and activities “are used to increase children’s ability and willingness to understand another’s perspective (cognition), share another’s feelings (affect), and help others (behavior)” (Faver, 2010, p. 365). Animal portraiture photography has been argued to be “a form of visual culture” that can inspire care and respect for other animals.
and offers an alternative to the otherwise “ubiquitous use of animal images” in educational contexts (Kalof et al., 2015, pp. 220–222).

Other creative approaches that aim to foreground animal perspectives and foster compassion include puppet theatre (Rule & Zhbanova, 2012), language arts and literature (Crawford, 2014), and the use of poetry and crafts focusing on animals that may be disliked and feared (Rule & Zhbanova, 2014). Humane education activities offer various examples of moving beyond instrumental knowledge about animals. Humane education is said to extend social emotional learning (SEL) “to encompass all living things” (Jalongo, 2014a, p. 6) where respect, kindness, compassion and empathy are at the fore, since “cruelty and violence are pressing concerns with broad implications for society” (Jalongo, 2014a, p. 4). Empathy has been defined as the ability to identify with another’s “emotional states, both negative and positive” and “relies on feeling with (rather than for) another” (Jalongo, 2014a, p. 6). Activities that aim to elicit “empathic imagination” (Jones, 2017) are used in humane education to imagine the possible feelings, experiences, and thoughts of other animals in specific situations or events (Caine, 2012). Through these kinds of pedagogical practices animals can be understood and positioned as stakeholders in education, as their interests and lived experiences are central to the teaching and learning. Recognizing the diverse emotional responses that may arise, humane education can be seen as a balancing act of starting where students are at and creating safe respectful spaces for tackling difficult issues in age-appropriate ways.

Humane education also tackles issues of animal use and situations or practices that may harm animals and for which alternatives are explored, while seeking to maintain a respectful and critical dialogue when tackling “controversial and contentious topics” and allowing for different perspectives to be heard (Caine, 2012, p. 12). What is promising about humane education in this regard is that it offers the tools to tackle issues that are often omitted from formal schooling, and it challenges the implicit curriculum that normalizes exploitative relations. Environmental education is increasingly acknowledging eco-anxiety (Pihkala, 2020) and feelings of anxiety, discomfort and distress may also arise in contexts where difficult issues related to human-animal relations are addressed. The complex emotional responses to “the discomfort of ‘seeing’ nonhuman animals” such as anger, despair grief and trauma has been referred to “vystopia” (Spanjol, 2020) and could be seen as an important (yet insofar less discussed) dimension of climate emotions.

Humane education also continues to be incorporated into social work (Bretzlaff-Holstein, 2018), and a focus on intersubjective violence follows on from
a long and ongoing connection with the human-animal violence link (Arkow, 2019). Some have noted how “animal violence perpetrators are younger, and their crimes are increasingly violent” (Antoncic, 2003, p. 194). The violence link has also been used to attest the connection between humane education, character education and pro-social learning (e.g., Alagappan, 2007; Antoncic, 2003; Itle-Clark, 2020). Others too have noted the importance of focusing on intersubjective violence and argue that systemic and intersubjective violence ought to be included in environmental education research (Spannring, 2017, p. 70). This is one of the avenues through which humane education can enrich environmental education research. Animal abuse as a manifestation of domestic violence is receiving more attention (Arkow, 2019) and while these and other forms of intersubjective violence are significant, they are beyond of the scope of this study to examine in greater detail. While humane education has been widely referred to in relation to intersubjective human-animal violence (and the possibilities of gradually moving to human-human violence), broader humane education frameworks offer possibilities to critically examine forms of institutional violence through social justice perspectives.

Some animal welfare organization (and animal use industries) may frame their educational materials as advocating for “the humane treatment” of animals by focusing on a welfarist framing of animals-for-us narratives. Humane education has also been associated with the promotion of “humane” alternatives in science education. As various approaches are incorporated under the umbrella term of humane education, it may not always be clear to what extent and to what ends “empathy”, or understanding another’s feelings, are used. Even in welfarist framings of animals-for-us narratives animals needs may be introduced but done so under the pretense of “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari 2020a), which may result in simplifying animal subjectivity and further normalizing their use in food industries. In contrast, some farmed animal sanctuaries offer humane education programmes and lessons, where the focus is more on the lived realities of their residents in their current sanctuary location compared to the lived realities of their kin in animal use industries. This allows animals to be seen as individuals with their own personalities, experiences, and histories.

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10 For an introduction to the “dark side” of human-animal bonds, see Arkow (2019), and for arguments put forth for “a sociology of human-animal abuse” calling for a broadened understanding of “cruelty” beyond companion animals, see Taylor and Signal (2007).
Broader frameworks and understandings of humane education have emerged, where human-animal relations and the ethical treatment of animals is one facet within a social justice, environmental and sustainability framing, foregrounding the interconnections and dependencies of all life (Jalongo, 2014a, pp. 5–6). While humane education continues to be a broad, and perhaps fragmented field, there has been a shift away from the original anthropocentric underpinnings of the kindness-to-animals ethic to ones where animal subjectivity is more recognized and framed within broader social justice and ecological concerns. Publications from the early 1990s recognized a rift between welfare and rights perspectives (which still continues in the broader animal protection movement today), as well as a perceived reluctance at the time for environmental educators to accept humane education as a potential unifying framework (Selby, 1993). Broadly speaking there continues to be a perceived reluctance in environmental and sustainability education to take animal interests seriously. It has also been suggested that trends to move beyond the kindness-to-animals ethic to wider social justice issues and discourses of opposition, rights, and exploitation, could be seen as paving the way “for future dialogue with those working in contiguous or overlapping fields” including various social justice educational initiatives (Selby, 1993, p. 121). However, within the dominant conceptions of environmental, climate change and sustainability education, an anthropocentric focus still remains and overlooks interconnections between animal exploitation and ecological disasters, as well as the intrinsic value of other animals. Thus, humane education (and other animal-inclusive pedagogies) may continue to be seen as a special interest or “add on” rather than central to environmental and sustainability education.

The inclusion of humane education “within broader humanistic, environmental, and social justice frameworks” highlights its importance “beyond a simple “treatment of animals” model” (Arbour, Signal & Taylor, 2009, p. 136). It is this interconnected framework that emphasizes “environmental issues and the impact these numerous concerns have on all facets of the natural world” (Bretzlaff-Holstein, 2018, p. 926) that is most relevant to the focus of this study. The framework proposed by Weil (2004, 2016) and further developed by the Institute for Humane Education foregrounds “the inclusion of animals in the pursuit of a more just and peaceful world” (Bretzlaff-Holstein, 2018, p. 927). The Humane Education Coalition (2021) also adopts a broader conception of humane education, which echoes that of several humane education organizations. Through this framing a recognition is sought of the inconsistencies in how animals are treated (Bretzlaff-Holstein, 2018, p. 927). As such, humane education has been identified as having
the potential “to conceptualize, and make explicit, speciesist hidden curricula in 
schools” given its intersectional approach to social justice issues that aim “to 
challenge and prevent violence, exploitation, and negative stereotyping of other 
people as well as of animals” (Pedersen, 2004, p. 5). This model of humane 
education can be seen to address the “null” and “implicit” curriculum of formal 
schooling by directly targeting the topics that are omitted and critically examine 
the implicit values and taken-for-granted assumptions and narratives that shape 
human-animal relations. Humane education could be a useful framework for 
addressing the alarming trend that sees “students being unprepared” for their 
futures in a destructive society (Lupinacci 2019), given its focus on place-based 
learning and student-led critical and creative inquiry, which is often tied to 
community needs and possibilities.

Higher education is seen as an important space for the development of humane 
education, particularly in teacher training (e.g., Itle-Clark, 2020) and it is seen as 
an opportunity for teacher trainees to be “action-researchers” themselves (Szecsi, 
2014, p. 62). The importance of teacher education is echoed by other education 
scholars and teacher training can be seen to be an integral component of working 
towards wider educational reforms. Some have argued that humane education 
ought to be incorporated into “all teacher preparation institutions” to help prepare 
teachers themselves to be active environmental citizens “who are informed, 
responsible, creative, passionate, critical thinkers and problem solvers” (Szecsi, 
2014, p. 54). The inclusion of animal perspectives and intersectional social justice 
in higher education is seen as central to challenge given “the moral blind spots 
against animals” that are still widespread (Spanjol, 2020).

Humane education offers a complementary framework for environmental 
education and sustainability and has been recognized as having the potential to 
bridge the gap that has existed between animal-focused and environmental 
education, given its holistic approach (Saari, 2018). To test this theory, it has been 
included in higher education courses on environmental education.11 Some CAS

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11 Acknowledging the challenges of including humane education as a stand-alone course in higher education in my own teaching practice, I have included humane education in the Introduction to Environmental Education course I have co-designed and which I co-teach at the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu. Situating humane education within the broader field of environmental and sustainability education offers opportunities to introduce it to wider “audiences” and situate it within a broader landscape of environmental education. This idea stems from a “toolbox pedagogy” design that we strive for in this course, which aims to provide educators with a rich set of pedagogical tools and theoretical frameworks, from which they can select (or mix and match) approaches most suitable for their given teaching context and the topics they teach. This is seen as one strategy to overcome some of
scholars too have identified the promising role of humane education as “an inherently intersectionalism pedagogy that ensures animals do not end up as a theoretical blind spot” (Oakley, 2019, p. 28). Humane education offers an avenue or “an entry point for environmental educators” to explore animal issues and their interconnections with environmental and social justice issues (Oakley, 2019, pp. 28–29). Humane education offers a framework to explore “less exploitative ways for humankind to co-exist with nature” (Caine, 2012, p. 10). In essence, the broader framework of humane education aims to transform society “from a state of violence, chaos and fragmentation towards one of peace, tranquility and harmony” and aims to find ways for “more cooperative and convivial ways” of connecting and living with other animals, people, and the environment (Caine, 2012, p. 9). Given the various approaches that fall under the umbrella term of humane education, one particular framework has been influential in moving the field towards a wider framing, which is Weil’s (2004, 2016) framework.

4.3.2 A solutionary framework for humane education

As previously noted, humane education has come to be associated with a diverse range of approaches with a broad focus and there have been proposals for set frameworks to guide humane education practice. The so-called “new wave” of humane education can be seen to be highly influenced by the work of Zoe Weil (2004, 2016) and the work of organizations such as the Institute for Humane Education, HEART (Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers), the Academy of Prosocial Learning, as well as the Humane Education Coalition, to name a few. According to Weil (2014, p. 232), the bigger picture of education should be “to provide all children, in age-appropriate ways, with the knowledge, tools, and motivation to be conscientious and engaged changemakers.” Four elements for a humane education framework proposed by Weil (2004, pp. 19–20) include:

the difficulties in implementing environmental and sustainability education (let alone animal-inclusive pedagogies) into teacher training. Rather than focusing on one specific pedagogical framework, the aim is to explore diverse modes of teaching and learning and critically reflect on their differences and convergences, the theories and philosophies they stem from, and case examples. Students are thus given the opportunity to select ones which resonate with them and are applicable to their specific teaching contexts, while being aware of the bigger picture, including the broader socio-political context of climate justice and sustainability.
1. Providing accurate information.
2. Fostering the 3 C’s: curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking.
3. Instilling the 3 R’s: reverence, respect, and responsibility.
4. Offering positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the Earth, and animals.

Weil (2016, p. 47) highlights the necessity for interdisciplinary learning that is “organized around real world issues” and proposes a set of questions that could guide curriculum development. The proposal is aimed at K-12 schooling, but the questions are fitting for other educational contexts, including the development of teacher training curriculums in higher education. The guiding questions examine the ways in which systems could work in more effective, ethical, and sustainable ways, the possibilities for creating positive change and exploration of how we could “be solutionaries for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world for all people, other species, and the environment” (Weil, 2016, p. 51). These questions are also illuminating for taking Eisner’s (1985) curriculum dimensions into consideration and how schools themselves as important societal institutions could embody these practices.

Including animals in its interconnected focus, this model of humane education can be used to explore questions with students as to what is owed to other animals in climate change and in terms of climate justice (Pepper, 2019). Weil’s model of humane education explores ways in which schools could create learning spaces for solutionary thinking. Solutionary has been defined by the Institute for Humane Education (2021) in the following way: “Pertaining to or characterized by solving problems in a strategic, systemic way that does the most good and least harm to people, animals, and the environment.” Weil’s model of humane education explicitly positions animals as stakeholders in education and sustainable futures and such can be seen as a promising framework to guide the broader field of educational education forward. This place-based approach can offer possibilities for systemic thinking focusing on structures and implementable action, focusing less on individual responsibility, as in many instances learners may have limited resources to address complex problems (e.g., access to healthy foods). Focusing on positive solutions and actions by foregrounding achievable actions in our communities can help ease the anxiety and even desperation one may feel when confronted by the magnitude of the problems we face on a global scale.
Examples of humane education

While humane education providers offer a diverse range of educational materials, two examples of humane education lessons are briefly presented here, to explore ways in which both the dairy industry and lives of cows within that industry could be addressed through humane education. The True Price is a lesson plan by the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) that can be adapted to focus on any item. The lesson has four guiding questions: whether the item is a want or a need; what the effects are of the item on people, animals, and the environment; what systems promote support and perpetuate the time; and what could alternatives or what kinds of changes to systems could do more good and less harm? Through a critical inquiry of cow’s milk or products derived from it these questions can help uncover the webs of the AIC, the narratives that perpetuate the consumption of cow’s milk, and uncover the effects on animals, people and the environment. By critically exploring the narratives used to perpetuate the consumption of cow’s milk, the effects of industrial animal agriculture on animals, people and the planet, the taken-for-granted position of cow’s milk as a dietary staple becomes increasingly difficult to digest, just as cow’s milk itself (Saari & Gómez-Galán, 2019). Others have differentiated between “price” and “cost,” meaning that price is the monetary value paid and the “cost” is that which cannot be measured numerically, things that are ignored and “the loss of things that we did not know were important until they were gone” (Orr, 2004). Lesson plans such as this one from IHE are not only valuable resources for educators, but they also shed light on the kinds of discussions we ought to be having on a broader societal level, including with parents, which could serve as a gateway towards co-operative mobilization for structural changes and together ask the true cost of continuing a business-as-usual approach in formal education.

Another interesting lesson by IHE is Council of All Beings. In the lesson, participants are encouraged to imagine the life of an animal, or part of nature (e.g., a river, a mountain, a tree) and explore what life could be like as that being, what their environment is like, what their interactions might be with others and what they could want or need to live well and what they would possibly like to tell others. It is activities like these that offer spaces and openings to imagine ways of living together in multispecies communities. Such activities put strategies into (educational) practice that may yet appear far-fetched in other contexts, but ones that are nonetheless being discussed (e.g., rights of nature, political representation of animals, or Latour’s “Parliament of Things”). While some scholars point out that
we can never fully speak on behalf of others, these types of “exercises in empathic imagination” (Jones, 2017) can help provide possibilities for imagining and creating respectable and peaceable multispecies co-existence. They also offer opportunities to broaden conceptions of “community” and who or what could or should be considered a member of our community and whose interests matter and thus ought to be taken into consideration.

It is important to note that democratic, or collective decision-making, is not unique to humans. Other animals, such as bees, pigeons, buffaloes, and cockroaches have been said to engage in what has been described as “democratic debates” when they make group decisions (Meijer, 2019, p. 202). Yet the multispecies communities we inhabit operate through a seemingly never-ending boundary-making between who matters and according to what “metrics” (with [some] humans having the “right” to decide). It has been argued that despite our societies already being multispecies, they operate through a (limited) single-species lens where clear divisions are made “when it comes to political participation and democratic agency” as it is assumed that animals have “no interest in co-shaping society” (Meijer, 2019, p. 202.) However, there are some spaces where new visions of what peaceable multispecies communities (in a more situated sense) could exist, which are also sometimes connected to humane education (either as humane education providers or partners). Sanctuaries are spaces in which broadened conceptions of communities are reimagined and created.

4.3.3 Humane education and sanctuaries

The life-changing (and life-saving) role sanctuaries play is well summed by Gillespie’s (2018, p. 120) contemplation of “what a difference a fence can make.” What Gillespie is referring to is the difference a fence can make between Vine Sanctuary and the neighboring meat and dairy farms. On one side of the fence animals are bred and born to die and infants taken away from their mothers, while on the other side there is “a radically different understanding of animal life” as the animals in the sanctuary “have been routed out of the commodity circuit, each with their own story of how they came to the sanctuary, their care now intended to foster lives lived with as little harm to them as possible” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 120). Fences,

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12 Vine Sanctuary is an LGBTQ-led farmed animal sanctuary in the United States. Sanctuaries exist across the world and in Finland there are currently two farmed animal sanctuaries: Eläinsuojelukeskus Tuulispää and Eläinten Turvakoti Saparomäki.
concrete walls of zoos, arena walls enveloping bulls in an inescapable ring of death, or animals in circuses where human dominance and violence is put on display, or the cages in which animals are held captive in laboratories, markets, people’s homes, shelters, and factory farms are physical manifestations of the constant negotiation of “where to draw the line” between humans and other animals, negotiating which animals are subjected to what form of confinement, violence and control. Narratives of sanctuary residents (as individuals with their own interests, personalities, inner and social worlds) and of life in these multispecies communities can help critically assess taken-for-granted assumptions about animals. For this reason, sanctuaries can be seen to play an important role in animal-inclusive pedagogies.

Gillespie’s example of a fence reveals its sometimes life-saving and life-altering potential, as well as the limitations of the ways in which humans aim to navigate and control the spaces in which animals are “allowed” to reside and mediate where animals “belong” in a human world. Animals are increasingly left with smaller areas to inhabit and their presence in what are erroneously viewed as single-species human communities often met with violence, death, and persecution. Sanctuaries offer possibilities to reconceptualize human-animal relations, multispecies communities as well as challenge animals-for-us narratives. Exemplary of what (at least one kind of) multispecies “coexistence” might look like, sanctuaries offer a glimpse into what “spaces of truce” or peace (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 8) could look like, at least in the immediate future.

Some sanctuaries serve as spaces where humane education is carried out or act as important partners for humane educators in that they offer ways in which to disrupt normalized social constructions of animals as depersonalized species representatives and allow them to be seen as beings with a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). However, what this “life of their own” could look like is not always clear, and it has been argued that animals in these spaces ought to be seen as “pioneers of a just future” more so than their current role as “ambassadors of an unjust present” (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015, p. 68). Yet, in order for animals and the peaceable multispecies communities of sanctuaries to be seen as “pioneers of a just future” acknowledgement is needed that there is something unjust in the present way dominant human-animal relations are manifested. Given that violence against animals may often not be perceived or considered as violence (Wadiwel, 2015) and thus the unjust present may not appear to be unjust, some amount of significant disruption and undoing of oppressive human-animal relations is needed to acknowledge the need for just multispecies
futures (and communities). Thus, the very existence of sanctuaries, these spaces of “refuge or safety from pursuit, persecution, or other danger” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.), even with what some have seen as limitations of a “refuge + advocacy model” (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015), can serve as an avenue to examine our societies, and explore what these spaces reveal about current societies and the violence embedded in dominant human-animal relations. Furthermore, they offer avenues through which animal perspectives can be introduced into educational spaces.

This also sheds light on some possible answers to the difficulties some might have in imagining where animals “belong” if not in the taken-for-granted spaces they are currently located in. The need for and existence of sanctuaries is revelatory about the treatment of other animals in society where single-species interests dominate and mask violence and hostility as normal, natural, or necessary. If “our systems of violence towards animals” can be seen as constituting a war against them” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 3), then sanctuaries can be seen as vital spaces of peace and safety. Sanctuaries can be seen as examples of multispecies communities and offer at least starting points for imagining communities based on peaceable relations. Sanctuaries can also be seen as important spaces for humane education, and some sanctuaries offer humane education programmes and visits where interactions (if any) are done on the animals’ terms and as their choice, and they also offer opportunities for different types of narratives about animals to surface (Saari, 2020). However, viewing animals (and the “entitled human gaze” associated with it) is seen to risk reinforcing “implicit assumptions about human entitlement to confine and display animals” (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015, p. 55).

Farmed animal sanctuaries, shelters, and refuges for abandoned, homeless and abused companion animals, wildlife sanctuaries and rehabilitation shelters exist all around the world. What is of interest in this study are farmed animal sanctuaries. Gillespie (2018, p. 122) notes how farmed animal sanctuaries generally dedicate themselves to a “threefold mission of refuge, (which they often frame as rescue), education, and advocacy.” However, concern has been raised about the “aesthetic similarity between many sanctuaries and the idyllic vision of the family farm” and how this might implicitly reinforce ideas about where “farmed animal species belong” (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015, as cited in Gillespie, 2018, p. 120). The limitations imposed on residents has been summarized by Miriam Jones (co-founder of Vine Sanctuary), explaining how the aim is to strive for a life of “as free as possible” as sanctuaries too include divisions by “fences, enforced routines, involuntary medical procedures and regimes” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 137). Forms of care can therefore be seen to insist “on the uncertain ethics of “as well as possible””
Pepper (2019, p. 594) aptly summarizes how animals “have interests in life, bodily security, health, and subsistence as necessary preconditions for making choices, satisfying their desires, and living out their lives in ways that matter to them.” Sanctuaries might be some of the only spaces in which cows might have these chances of living a life of their own.

Some have noted that “sanctuaries can inspire people to dramatically change their consumption practices and to think differently and more expansively about the kinds of relationships of care that are possible with farmed animals” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 122). Others however are hesitant about the “transformative opportunities” regarding individual behavioral change (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015). Nevertheless, sanctuaries do offer opportunities to disrupt taken-for-granted animals-for-us narratives of farmed animals and cows and it has been argued that “getting to know a singular animal can cause profound disruption in how we think about and treat a particular species” (Gillespie, 2018, p. 9). Sanctuaries can open us up to ways in which we can better come to learn “with, from and for” animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420). It has been argued that focusing on animal suffering without attending to more complete versions of animal subjectivity can serve to feed “stereotypes about other animals” which are considered “necessary for the functioning of capitalism” and risk reinforcing “inaccurate assumptions about who other animals are and can be” (Corman, 2017, p. 253).

As a result, it is “far more powerful to combine representations of nonhuman animal suffering with representations of their lives outside of such states and conditions”, for example with the help of discoveries from cognitive ethology (Corman, 2017, p. 254). Residents in sanctuaries can shed light on the inner lives of cows, their social relations (Dulsaniers, 2015, p. 83) and their biographies (albeit told by others) and can serve as spaces where motherhood is not exploited, and childhoods are not stolen. Sanctuaries also allow for new ways to understand and perceive animal agency and beyond their current form of spaces of refuge and care from a violent world. Sanctuaries offer one model for “just multispecies communities” where “animals’ voices shape the communities” (Colling, 2020, p. 114). Through an “educational lens” the possibility to disrupting harmful narratives towards animals is important, given the still seemingly difficult challenge of disrupting engrained social constructions of animals. If indeed the pressing project is to undo “epistemic violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015) then sanctuaries could be seen as one space through which this could be done. Gillespie (2018, p. 17) highlights how the stories of singular animals can be meaningful in taking
seriously the experiences of these animals and can help understand the plight of animals raised and killed in the food system. There are also numerous “restorying” opportunities offered by sanctuaries, including: narratives of interspecies friendships, social lives in multispecies communities, and interspecies narratives of motherhood and childhood, which all foreground animal agency, subjectivity, and the social and emotional lives of animals.

The work of sanctuaries is often connected to community action and organizing, and narratives of the networks that work within and for the sanctuary movement can shed light on the complex “operations” involved. For example, narratives of and from Jason Bolabek from Destination Liberation can shed light on activist networks working on the “frontlines” of the sanctuary movement and how “effective alliances” are involved. In addition, related to the previously mentioned lesson example of the Council of All Beings, sanctuaries are real-world examples of how specific sites and communities are navigating through and envisioning what just interspecies communities could look like. Whereas the interspecies “co-creation” of worlds has been critiqued and can indeed be problematic, sanctuaries may offer one space through which to begin to understand how in some instances “co-creation” of common worlds might be possible, all the while mindful and attentive to the reasons why these specific sites of “common worlds” exist in the first place, namely the backdrop of a war that is being waged on animals beyond the “fences” of these spaces of much needed refuge. Given the overwhelming and sometimes seemingly insurmountable task ahead of us in broadening our understandings of community on a societal scale, sanctuaries are likely to play an important role in paving the way forward.

**4.3.4 Challenges and moving forward**

Although humane education has found important partners in sanctuaries and the framework of solutionary pedagogies (Weil, 2016) continues to be popular, the field more broadly is not without its challenges. In moving forward, it is important to understand some of the challenges humane education faces. These challenges include the naming of the field and how humane education programmes might be assessed and framed.
What’s in a name?

The name *humane* education encounters further tensions and problems given how the word *humane* is widely used as a marketing technique for animal-derived products and widely criticized as a *humane myth*. It has been noted how animal industries target schools with their own materials that perpetuate misinformation on the lived realities of animals (Antoncic, 2003, pp. 187–88). Given the co-option of “humane” discourse by the AIC, it can be difficult to dispel perceptions and establish a clear distinction from educational materials provided by animal use industries that reproduce the “humane myth” (as do the educational materials of some animal protection organizations). Therefore, the name “humane education” meets some challenges; namely the scattered and broad field it encompasses with diverse educational foci, as well as the additional challenges posed by the co-option of the term “humane” by the AIC. Beyond a welfare approach and kindness-to-animal ethic, understanding humane education in its broader application can offer greater possibilities for its inclusion for example in the field of environmental education as a strong alternative to anthropocentric approaches such as ESD. Nevertheless, despite the challenges posed by numerous diverse forms of humane education, it can also be seen as indicative of the complexity of human-animal relations and how navigating human-animal relations is a multifaceted effort.

Assessing humane education

Research into the effectiveness of humane education programmes has often relied on quantifiable measurements of empathy or attitude changes in efforts to demonstrate the viability of a programme, and the lack of measurable effectiveness in attitude changes is seen as an impediment to the wider application of humane education programmes. Assessing changes in empathy and attitudes has been considered to demonstrate the “effectiveness” of humane education programmes (e.g., Aguirre & Oribuela, 2014; Arbour et al., 2009; Daly & Suggs, 2010; Fraser et al., 2017; Fung & Zhou, 2020; Komorosky & O’Neal, 2015; Samuels et al., 2016; Szecsi, 2014; Tardiff-Williams & Bosacki, 2015). Reliance on instrumental and quantifiable measure of effectiveness can be found in humane education research still today (e.g., Unti, 2021). As the question of demonstrable and quantifiable effectiveness appears to be a recurring problem, one might question whether the premise of measuring effectiveness through instrumental measurements is the most suitable way forward. When viewing environmental education and sustainability
education programmes, their effectiveness or suitability is not often framed through quantifiable measurements concerning attitude changes and we would do well to move beyond the assessment of “measurable” attitude changes in efforts to prove the effectiveness or need of humane education programmes. Others too have previously noted the “need to move beyond assessing knowledge and attitudes alone” (Ascione, 1997, p. 72). In addition, the fragmented or isolated nature of some humane education programmes brings into question how much “measurable” impact is possible in short periods of times, thus further questioning the usefulness of measuring “attitude changes” in short-term interventions. The discussion on measuring educational “outcomes” is also connected to the broader critique of education in general, where the focus on “efficiency and effectiveness of educational processes” and “technical and managerial questions” can be seen to silence and obscure broader discussions on “the aims, ends, and values of education” (Spannring, 2019, p. 12). Thus the “empathy” and “attitude” change measurements are reflective of a broader challenge in how we understand education, which trickles down to how we might understand how, why, and to what ends a humane education (or other) programme might be “effective”.

Natural affinity?

Humane education is often framed by foregrounding children’s natural affinity to other animals (and nature). However, an over-emphasis on children’s “natural affinity to animals” has come under scrutiny (Horsthemke, 2018, p. 161) and continues to be a contested issue, as not all children are likely to be naturally interested in or sympathetic to all animals, and indifference, fear, or disgust are just some of many affective dimensions of human-animal relations, which are at least to some extent influenced by the social construction of animals. Attending to the complexity of human-animal relations instead of an over-reliance on narratives of “natural affinity” (e.g., Tammi et al., 2020; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018), a better framing could be to acknowledge how we can be “inquisitive” about animals and nature (Szecsi, 2014, p. 50), as an inquisitive interest may not always be “innocent” or “positive” (Tammi et al., 2020). In addition, it is important to be aware of the ways in which animal industries attempt to directly “manipulate” affective dimensions of human-animal relations (Pedersen, 2019b).

With a wider social justice and systemic focus found in some humane education models, a justice framing sheds light on how just relations ought not to be dependent on our personal feelings. Horsthemke (2018, p. 165) argues that “if
personal affections were the whole basis for (recognizing) moral standing, morality would be an essentially fragmented and local approach” further arguing how “one can respect and, indeed, empathize and sympathize with other beings without being fond of them.” Respect and justice ought not to be dependent on whether one has a particular fondness towards someone or something. Although admittedly, discussions about feelings and exploring why it is we might feel the way we do might be revelatory in opening discussions about associated assumptions about animals, shedding light on socially constructed narratives about them. This in turn could open pathways to disrupting these taken-for-granted assumptions and move beyond the constrictive narratives we may find ourselves bound by, opening possibilities for new ways of relating to others.

Not critical enough?

Despite some references to humane education amongst critical education scholars, some have viewed humane education with hesitancy and critique (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Horsthemke, 2018; Repka, 2019) and proposals for a critical humane education have been made (Olson, 2019). A critical humane education is said to combine humane education’s focus on critical thinking about animals, people, and the environment with critical pedagogy, which is said to bring the political nature of education into focus so students can “seek social justice through education” and it foregrounds an intersectional analysis for interspecies justice (Olson, 2019). It has been argued that humane education focuses largely on individualistic solutions to “sustainable, equitable and compassionate relations”, while critical pedagogy offers a “more systematic outlook through which students are encouraged to challenge oppressive systems of power” (Olson, 2019). However, given the broad scope of the field, some of these critiques appear to be based on a limited familiarization with the field of humane education, given that many forms of humane education precisely focus on a systematic outlook that foregrounds critical and creative inquiry through a solutionary lens (Weil, 2016) and how humane education is often rooted in critical pedagogy (Itle-Clark, 2021). However, these critiques do bring to the fore yet again the possible difficulties of navigating such a broad field, as it can affect conceptions of what humane education is (as it is many things), given that it is used as an umbrella term for numerous different approaches. Given the complexity of human-animal relations it would seem that different modes of humane education may indeed be required, and just as with the broader field of animal-inclusive pedagogies there is no single framework that fits
all situations, settings and starting points, which signals the importance of a situated and place-based framing for teaching and learning.

Moving forward

Since the field of humane education is seen to have made little progress (e.g., Unti, 2020), suggestions for possible future directions have been made. For example, Unti (2020) has suggested that future spaces of humane education could lie in zoos and aquariums, which would appear to be a highly problematic proposal given the exploitative practices inherent in these contexts. Partnering with the AIC goes against the foundational ideas of what humane education is (e.g., Weil, 2016) and would appear to be founded on problematic understandings of what constitutes “animal cruelty” and in which settings “cruelty” materializes and would take humane education on a dangerous trajectory towards normalizing animal captivity. More promising partnerships would appear to be working with shelters and sanctuaries and focusing on intersectional approaches carried out in schools and teacher training programmes. Rather than opposing one educational context over another what is more important is that they stem from a foundational understanding of multispecies compassion, justice and respect and strive to (un)learn anthropocentrism (Lupinacci, 2019) to foster respectable and peaceable human-animal relations. Because human-animal relations are multifaceted, different settings (e.g., shelters, schools, higher education) will have slightly different foci, all of which serve a purpose as we move towards multispecies understandings of our communities and societies. Thus, not every actor needs to necessarily tackle the same issue: given the scale of the challenges different animals face, it would perhaps be naïve to think that one method or one way of teaching and learning would be applicable to all contexts. It would appear more important to have a more unified understanding of the bigger picture and root causes, with specific strategies applicable to different contexts and actors. While the foci may differ, it is important that the “bottom line” is unified: respect for animals as intrinsic beings with a right to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). Just as there is no one size fits all educational setting for humane education, neither is there a one for all animal-inclusive education in general. Yet, amalgamating interests between proponents of different animal-focused educational frameworks can be seen to be a necessary step towards increasing the opportunities for wider educational reforms.
4.4 Effective alliances with and for other animals

This chapter has thus far explored different pedagogical frameworks that position animals as stakeholders in education. Given how hierarchical anthropocentrism is deeply rooted in educational institutions and animals are still largely viewed as objects of inquiry or learning tools, these frameworks have demonstrated how animals and animal interests can be better represented in educational contexts. The diverse frameworks offer ways to foreground animals in teaching and learning for “multispecies flourishing” (Russell & Spannring, 2019) and thus offer avenues to disrupt schools as spaces where (educational) violence against animals is normalized and reproduced. What these frameworks share is their broadened understanding of community, society, commons and “the public,” yet taking into consideration the situatedness of these pedagogies within the broader socio-political landscape that still views our “commons” through a hierarchical single-species lens. This would indicate that perhaps a more unified front would have better chances of getting the importance of these pedagogies recognized (and hopefully eventually implemented). In addition, when viewed from the viewpoint of mainstream hostility (Wadiwel, 2015), claims of animals and children “co-making their worlds” can be seen as insufficient to counter the inherent power relations within these violent common worlds. In addition, we find ourselves balancing between seeking to do justice to animal subjectivities and agency while seeking to re-story our relations with them in ways where “we do not force our presence and projects on them” (Spannring, 2019, p. 16).

Overall, the understanding of our communities being inherently multispecies, where all community members ought to have a right to a good life of their own, offers a guiding framework with which to infuse teaching and learning. It is this seemingly simple idea that could have profound consequences on schooling. What these different proposed frameworks also demonstrate is that understanding and positioning animals as stakeholders in their own right, and having their interests represented is not done at the exclusion of human interests, but rather that the inclusion of animal interests is intrinsically connected to environmental concerns, social justice issues and sustainable futures. All of the frameworks converge on the need to move beyond instrumental curiosity and the use of animals in education to transform teaching and learning in ways in which we can learn “with, from and for” animals (Gunnarsson Dinker-Pedersen, 2016, p. 420). In addition, they all appear to challenge interconnecting oppressions and foreground systems thinking and student-led inquiry. In fact, it could be argued that these approaches have enough
convergences between them offering valuable opportunities to build effective alliances between them to form a more unified front against current exploitative systems and work together to facilitate and create educational opportunities that could help “enact a space of peace” with other animals (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 276). Or put differently, to strive for educational settings that embody spaces of multispecies peace in and of themselves.

Proponents of each of these frameworks aptly identify how teaching and learning is a balancing act between attending to the lived realities of learners and the lived realities of the animals we strive to “stand with” and the importance of starting “where students are, not where we might wish them to be” (Russell, 2019, p. 38). In fact, the similarities between these approaches reflect many of the features proposed in some strands of environmental and sustainability education, for example, foregrounding student-centered approaches and the importance of tying education to real world issues. Critical animal-inclusive frameworks can be seen to offer valuable contributions for transformative climate change education, where calls have been made to draw insights from social justice education and nonviolence/peace education that challenge “instrumental and exploitative ‘nature as resource’ narratives” (Selby & Kagawa, 2010, pp. 43–44). Critical animal perspectives can further problematize framings of who or what are considered “a resource”, why current understanding of animals as resources is problematic (particularly in relation to discourse on sustainability), and by uncovering the different levels of violence that education (re)produces, a more coherent understanding of nonviolence/peace education might ensue.

The different frameworks explored here stem to some extent from different theoretical backgrounds, although there is some crossover between them. Whether stemming from ecocritical, posthumanist, or abolitionist theorizations, the frameworks still share many commonalities and can be seen to arrive at similar core principles, despite possible divergences in their respective theoretical backgrounds. Given that there is “no one-size-fits-all approach that works in every context” (Russell, 2019, p. 40) and the multitude of “animal issues” and human-animal relations there are to “unpack”, as well as the institutional constraints framing teaching and learning practices, we would do well in redirecting the focus to ways of effectively strategizing together for more systemic changes. Having said that, for educational research and practice to be carried out in ways that are “a sincere act of solidarity with animals” (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 7), understanding the backdrop of “our war against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015) might help us examine our own positionality and critically examine the suitability of our educational strategies.
Understanding the different dimensions of violence that may be (re)produced within and through education and viewing human-animal relations through the position of “war” might also allude to the urgency of effective alliances if transformative change is indeed what we are after.

All of the frameworks offer pedagogical strategies that can be seen to echo the principles of interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021). The different frameworks attend to the ways in which we come to lean about animals through the different dimensions of the curriculum and as such different pedagogical strategies, be they storytelling, learning to listen, empathic imagination, or investigating the true cost of our “everyday items,” all have a role to play in creating educational spaces where animals’ interests are taken seriously, thus opening avenues towards building a more peaceable multispecies co-existence. However, despite the strengths of each framework on its own, together we are stronger, particularly when up against an entrenched “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021). Each of these pedagogical frameworks offer opportunities to disrupt taken-for-granted narratives and underlying assumptions about animals and seek openings to learn “with, from and for” animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420).

What might it look like to be effective allies with and for other animals and what does our accountability to other animals ask of us as critical education scholars and educators? To be an effective ally for other animals requires us to engage in critical dialogue to find ways to effectively work together to create systemic educational change. If we are to take seriously our own calls on the urgency to transform education, advocating one specific educational framework as the solution may not get us very far, and instead we could make greater strides by focusing on the convergences between these frameworks and finding ways to “join forces”, both within animal-focused approaches as well as the wider field of environmental sustainability and climate change education. Human-animal relations and the ways in which animals are positioned and treated in society is central to, not separate from true possibilities of building sustainable futures. It could thus be argued that the critical animal-inclusive education frameworks examined in this chapter are central to the development of environmental and sustainability education. Gunnarsson Dinker and Pedersen (2016, p. 427) rightly identify how “creating a thousand tiny spaces for animal perspectives in school” could contribute to the liberation of animals. How could these thousands of tiny spaces add up to a sea of opportunity if we worked together through effective alliances?
In essence, it would appear that these frameworks converge on the importance of learner-centered and situational (place-based) approaches, opening opportunities that may create ripples that disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about animals and open up possibilities to new ways of relating to them. With a focus on systems-thinking linked with critical and creative enquiry that focuses on real-world issues and community-based learning the frameworks converge on their focus on solutions and alternatives, while leaving space to uncover and create these solutions and alternatives through processes of critical thinking, analysis and discovery. These broad pedagogical framings allow space for specific activities and practices, and they all converge on the need to broaden understandings of community and transforming human-animal relations in ways that acknowledge the intrinsic value and agency of others. Stemming from starting points that seek to disrupt hierarchical anthropocentrism they open up opportunities to critically question taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, narratives and practices and move towards more just and peaceable relations. All of the frameworks examined also offer opportunities to rethink and transform educational practice for multispecies flourishing and together could provide a strong foundation for moving to challenge the deep-seated anthropocentrism in mainstream education, including mainstream environmental and sustainability education. If we agree that there is no one size that fits all and if what we are up against is a growing machination (the AIC) that is destructive to animals, people, and nature, uniting forces and working together towards systemic change is urgently needed.

Creating new stories-to-live-by

Returning to the social construction of human-animal relations explored in Chapter 2, what are some of the pedagogical openings that could bring forth and explore different narratives about our relations with other animals? Storytelling can be a powerful way to explore the perspectives of other animals, critically examine the ways in which their interests are systematically overlooked, and it can open up spaces for actively re-storying our relations with other animals and finding (and crafting) different stories-to-live by (Stibbe, 2015). Children’s literature offers valuable openings and spaces for ecocritical inquiry (Badalić, 2019; Koljonen, 2020) and visual storytelling, including photojournalism (e.g., We Animals), short films (e.g., “we fly, we crawl, we swim” by just wondering) and documentaries (Kopnina & Saari, 2019) can be promising educational tools for creative critical inquiry and discussions about what it means to live in multispecies communities.
Visual storytelling, such as Isa Leshko’s “Allowed to Grow Old” photographs, can also be a powerful way to explore the wonder some feel at the sight of certain species having the right to grow old and live their lives.

Storytelling can serve to disrupt taken-for-granted the roles and localities forced upon animals. Individual narratives of animals and their experiences can disrupt taken-for-granted societal narratives of who animals are and where they “belong” in this world. Storytelling also involves the art of listening and some scholars have asked what we could learn if we were to listen to and respond to “diverse language systems like weather, climate, water, soils, birds, insects, fungi, forests, and other mammals and animals?” (Lupinacci, Happel-Parkins, Turner, 2019, p. 6). Others too have highlighted the importance of learning to listen (Weaver & Snaza, 2017, p. 1059) and the importance of the moments of “seemingly unguided education”, embracing how teachers, meaning “those who invite, guide, support, and steer us—can also be other than human beings” (Rautio, 2012). In addition, learning about different interspecies friendships, and exploring the everyday relations between children and animals are likely to open up a range of questions from children themselves (Tammi et al., 2020). These types of slow pedagogies, where learning to listen (to animals, children, and nature) and be with and in the world in different ways can also open up new possibilities of being attentive to others and seeing our communities in different ways.

While narratives actively construct the world around us (and might often be restricted by our language) and once taken-for-granted narratives can be unraveled and questioned through the introduction of “alternative” narratives (e.g., of animal resistance, animal bonds and cultures, interspecies friendships, and peaceable communities such as sanctuaries), they can also be disrupted and unraveled in less explicit ways, such as the art of listening. These are all central to finding new stories-to-live-by in multispecies communities and can offer significant openings for envisioning what just multispecies co-existence could look like. “New” here is used to refer to different ways of being, and what may appear “new” in dominant Western cultures may not in fact be “new” at all. In addition, we could learn a lot from animals and thus be better allies with and for them, for example we could learn from other animals how to tread more lightly on this (damaged) Earth.

Each pedagogical framework can be seen offer openings into navigating terrain that can be “unwelcoming” to say the least or even “hostile” in many ways, given the “institutional anxiety” that is evoked “by the threats to the anthropocentric infrastructure of education” (Pedersen, 2021, p. 5). However, currently these animal-focused pedagogies might still appear as a fragmented “special interest” or
an “add-on” rather than pedagogies that may indeed offer some of the solutions, or at least beginnings to seeking viable “solutions” to the problems we face. It would therefore appear that the “credibility” of animal-inclusive pedagogies and increased opportunities to break through the anthropocentric infrastructure and “speaking silences” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019) might be found in a more collective front. Given that “the animal question” may trigger resistance and discomfort, George’s (2019) framework of critical dialogue might be useful in eventually finding “comfort” in navigating this “uncomfortable” terrain of disrupting, unlearning and restorying. If animals are to be understood as stakeholders in their own right it would not mean an overhaul of the curriculum per se, rather that teaching and learning are infused with and founded upon a value framework that strives for multispecies flourishing inherent to interspecies sustainability.

The different frameworks offer several creative and promising alternatives to the “business as usual” approach of mainstream education and reflect how there is “no one-size-fits all approach that works in every context” (Russell, 2019, p. 40). In addition, the promising directions evident in some education scholarship where educators share experiences, activities and how these pedagogical frameworks are being put into practice while navigating and engaging in “pedagogies of discomfort” (Russell, 2019, p. 47) alludes to a promising direction for education research and practice. It would appear that finding ways forward and diverging from our current path of unsustainability will require embracing pedagogies of discomfort, yet it is through this discomfort and unknown terrain that could possibly lead to pathways out of our current predicament (in education).

Mapping out the occlusions and openings for teaching for interspecies sustainability ultimately requires attending to ways in which pedagogies normalize or aim to disrupt educational violence, as cessation of violence are paramount to “flourishing.” Given the rich pedagogical frameworks proposed, it would appear that it is not so much a question of how we teach and learn to live well together on a damaged Earth, but how we might find ways to implement and integrate these ways of teaching and learning more effectively. Rather than being too tightly constrained by what may appear as a search for “theoretical purity” (albeit theory is important), perhaps a “tool-box” approach of mixing and matching pedagogical strategies depending on the context, while converging on foundational principles (which, it would appear these pedagogical frameworks do), could offer pathways forward. Thinking about how education for interspecies sustainability might look, the frameworks examined in this chapter provide numerous conceptual tools that

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could be used to guide teaching practices. For example, we might begin to imagine a *multispecies commons curriculum* (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2018, p. 112), guided by an understanding of animals as stakeholders in their own right implemented through a *solutionary lens* (Weil, 2016), phenomena-based learning and critical and creative inquiry, and thus move beyond disciplinary and subject silos. Given that sustainable interspecies futures and multispecies flourishing require attending to, and disrupting violence against animals, working towards and being mindful of how educational spaces might constitute or hinder the creation of “spaces of peace” can help us navigate through the ways in which violence(s) might be normalized. As we seek to learn *with, from, and for* animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420), exercises in empathic imagination (Jones, 2017) may help us move forward to navigate animal standpoints and narratives, as we craft the urgently necessary praxis of an education for future survival (Common Worlds Collective, 2020, p. 2).

Because human-animal relations are inherently situated, different pedagogical frameworks may offer diverse avenues to include animal perspectives in teaching and learning, and what is of most urgency is that these pathways are carved out. With a clearer understanding of how pedagogies may (re)produce epistemic violence against animals, a clearer understanding of what it means to be a stakeholder and what this means in light of planetary survival and sustainable futures might help shed light on why welfare narratives (and its related *animals-for-us* assumption) do not suffice in light of the climate crises and the escalating violence against animals. As interspecies sustainability recognizes “that animals too have a right to the social, material, and ecological bases for flourishing lives, sustained over time” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, pp. 136–137), the different animal-inclusive pedagogies explored in this chapter can be seen to adhere to this foundational idea of interspecies sustainability. Key guiding principles found through a bird’s-eye view mapping of “the animal turn” in education (research) that are seen as significant for the development of an education for interspecies sustainability are summarized in the Figure 6 below.
4.5 Chapter summary

The educational frameworks explored in this chapter demonstrate the variety of pedagogical approaches already available to teach and learn in ways that respect animal subjectivity and position them as stakeholders in education. The question therefore is not so much anymore about how we can teach and learn together with other animals (as there are many frameworks and strategies), but how can these ways of learning “with, from and for” animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016, p. 420) better implemented and introduced into different educational settings. This chapter has examined the pedagogical component of an educational reform for interspecies sustainability and mapped out possibilities offered by animal-inclusive educational frameworks, finding that there are several promising pedagogical frameworks, raising the question of how we could forge pathways for their implementation. The ways in which these frameworks converge on key principles alludes to the possibility of presenting a more unified front from which...
to begin working towards broader alliances and educational reform and the can be seen to offer opportunities for teaching about and for interspecies sustainability.
5 Lessons from the field: Humane education in practice

The previous chapter examined the different animal-inclusive pedagogical frameworks, including humane education, and how these different frameworks approach teaching and learning for a just and compassionate co-existence in multispecies communities, finding substantive points of convergence between the different frameworks. This chapter seeks to explore the third sub-question of this study by examining how animal-inclusive pedagogies (namely humane education) are being implemented in diverse contexts across various geographical locations. This question is explored through semi-structured interviews with representatives from nine humane education oriented organizations, with the aim of gaining an understanding of some of the ways in which educators are already implementing, creating and paving the way for animals to be better represented in educational settings and what kinds of alliances are being built. This chapter explores what some of the possibilities and challenges encountered might be when striving to implement pedagogies that foreground animal subjectivity and tackle issues that can be considered “controversial.” It is one thing to research and debate which educational paths to take, and another to implement them. Humane educators can shed light on some of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for moving forward. As a successful educational reform ultimately relies on the implementation of new pedagogies, humane education professionals can be seen to play an important role in an educational reform as experts of some of the new ways of teaching and learning that are required.

5.1 Introduction

The Finnish Core Curriculum emphasizes cooperation with societal actors outside of schooling and diverse learning environments are encouraged (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014). Organizations and societal actors can be valuable partners for educators, researchers, and can indeed play a valuable role in the wider social justice movements that they are part of, as well as playing an important role to play in wider educational reforms. This is especially so given the difficulties of challenging and disrupting schooling from within the constraints of current anthropocentric structures and the “speaking silences in education” (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 54) appear to the norm in formal schooling. While in Finland there are organizations that offer educational services in the form of school
visits, materials and training related to environmental education and animal protection, thus far there are no organizations that encompass an integrated and intersectional approach, such as humane education. Since humane education is seen as a promising educational framework and the aim was to understand how humane education professionals can balance the interests of animals with social justice and environmental concerns, organizations from different geographical locations were interviewed.

The organizations interviewed included both larger animal protection organizations and organizations that specialize in education. Organizations specializing in education may encounter less prejudgment as educators affiliated with larger organizations who run various campaigns (using different strategies), which may affect the ways in which their educational programmes are perceived. However, an analysis of specific strategies and the ways in which organizations are perceived was not the focus of this study. Given that animal issues are largely neglected in education (Weil, 2016), organizations can be seen to provide valuable “services” to educators and play an important role in advancing animal-inclusive education. Interest in humane education appears to be increasing and efforts for collective organizing can be seen through initiatives such as the creation of the Coalition for Humane Education, which offers a platform for various organizations working in the field. Interest in the work of diverse humane education-oriented organizations has arisen from the urgent need to transform educational spaces into ones where misrepresentations of animals and animal use are challenged, and animal subjectivity and peaceable multispecies relations are foregrounded. While much has been written about humane education, and possible developments and the future of the field have been questioned (e.g., Unti, 2020), there appears to be a growing interest in the field humane education, or at least growing efforts to unify the field (e.g., Humane Education Coalition, 2021). The number of “members” in the coalition would indicate an interest in humane education in multiple countries.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the experiences as conveyed by representatives of different humane education organizations and explore what role they can play in facilitating the development of pedagogies grounded in critical thinking and non-anthropocentric framing of other animals, thus possibly advancing the understanding of other animals as stakeholders in education. The aim of interviewing representatives from humane education organizations was to gain an understanding of the experiences and strategies used by these organizations to critically explore human-animal relations with students and teachers alike. Exploring forms of educational work where change is created from outside formal
schooling can shed light on the opportunities to build partnerships and effective alliances (George, 2019). It may also illuminate how transformations and reform do not operate in a linear fashion, but instead a constant flux of actions at different levels occur interchangeably and concurrently. In addition to better understanding how organizations set their objectives and goals, insights into the partnerships they form, the main challenges met along the way could help outline possible roadmaps for educational transformations in relation to the implementation of these types of new pedagogies.

Educational reforms require expertise on “new ways of doing education,” and the expertise of humane education professionals can play an important role in the implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies, offering important insights for education research. Given the challenges of introducing “new” ways of teaching and learning in formal education, there is much hope (and high expectations) for societal actors, including nongovernmental organizations. It has been argued that while there are many “movements of education for change,” it might appear “easy to criticize the shortcomings of these movements” (Sterling, 2001). Yet this study does not seek to criticize these movements or their specific educational strategies, but rather learn from them, given that they can be seen to be “mapping paths of transition” (Sterling, 2001). Addressing and possibly challenging harmful narratives about animals can create challenges and mixed feelings amongst educators, administrators, students, and parents alike. Learning about how these challenges are navigated could help to shed light on the kinds of questions that are important to ask in future education research. First, the methodology is outlined, including the topics addressed in the interviews and information about participants. The interview findings are then presented under general themes, followed by a reflection of the interview findings and their possible implications for moving forward.

5.1.1 Methodology and research ethics

Interviews have been described as a way to “democratize opinion” as they provide insights into the observations and experiences of others, and allow us to learn about settings, places, practices or about “how organizations set their goals” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001, p. 8). Due to the widespread use of interviews to gather information, it has been suggested that we live in an “interview society” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Kuntz & Presnall, 2012; Ruusuvuori et al., 2010). Interviews have been a popular research methodology in qualitative research, and technology has opened
up further possibilities for conducting interviews (Hawkins, 2018, p. 493). The types of interviews carried out for this study were semi-structured interviews delivered online via email. Some view the possibilities of conducting interviews by email exchange as a useful qualitative research method given its flexibility (Bampton & Cowton, 2002; Fritz & Vandermause, 2017; Hawkins, 2018). Email interviews encourage “greater participation in working adults” as these types of asynchronous interviews offer flexibility as there are no set time constraints and are seen to increase access to possible participants (Hawkins, 2018, p. 494). The participants have more control over their participation, given the flexibility in terms of answering interview questions when convenient with more time for reflection before responding (Hawkins, 2018, pp. 494–495).

Previous research has found that participants appreciate the convenience of email interviews (Fritz & Vandermause, 2017) and that it is possible to “connect and establish relationships” through ongoing email conversations over time, which also allows “the researcher to clarify descriptive data, pursue further discovery, and ensure accuracy in describing the phenomena from the perspective of the participants” (Hawkins, 2018, pp. 494–495). Some researchers have opted not to send all questions at once and opted for an “ongoing” conversation, however in this case all questions were sent at once with an accompanying invitation letter to avoid “interviewee fatigue” of constant email correspondence (Brampton & Cowton, 2002). Instead of an ongoing exchange, the so-called “ground rules” of the interview emails were established directly with the participants’ input, including the time frame for answering the questions, whether they were willing to answer follow-up questions. As the participants were from different countries across the world, upon inviting them to take part in the interviews an option was given to complete the interviews only through emails with an option for an online call for follow-up questions and elaborating on the answers given in the written answers. The participants could also share any accompanying educational material or programme details they wanted.

However, there are limitations and disadvantages to conducting email interviews. Asynchronous communication through emails may lead to missed opportunities for more elaborate conversations and free-flowing dialogues that are possible in “in-person” interviews that allow for social interaction and go into more detail or follow up on interesting issues that may arise, while dialogue and interaction are missed (Salmons, 2012, 2015). In addition, online interviews through emails also miss opportunities to observe nonverbal communication and signals (Hawkins, 2018; Fritz & Vandermause, 2017; Salmons, 2012, p. 3). Written responses and the
extended time for reflection (Brampton & Cowton, 2002), however may also mean that for some respondents, email interviews are more time consuming and some participants may opt for “short concise answers” (Hawkins, 2018, p. 495). Despite these shortcomings, online interviews via email provide possibilities to reach participants anytime, anywhere (Salmons, 2012, p. 3) across different geographical locations, as well as giving the participants flexibility to answer questions at their own speed and in their own time, providing space for reflection. Given that the interview participants in this study are located across numerous time zones, email interviews as the first step were chosen to offer the participants flexibility. In addition, the focus of the interviews was not on personal narratives, but rather general experiences related to the work of the organization, and as such the missed cues in social interaction (e.g., ones that would reveal emotional responses) were not seen as too great of a shortcoming. Written responses also save time in transcription (as the responses are already “transcribed”) and as has been noted, conducting multiple interviews simultaneously offers possibilities to verify “emerging themes” simultaneously as the answers come through (Hawkins, 2018, p. 498).

Considering the credibility and reliability of the information gathered (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010) it is important to note that the interviews were carried out during the spring of 2020, during the same time that the COVID-19 pandemic was developing across the globe. This situation affected this section of the study, as follow-up interviews were not organized with any of the participants. However, despite this, the written responses were seen to provide sufficient information with which to make general observations and to respond to the objectives set out to explore ways in which animal-inclusive pedagogies are being implemented in different settings and how this is paving the way for animals to be understood as stakeholders in their own right in our communities, in education, and sustainable futures. Since this section of the study aimed to understand and observe general experiences of the organizations, sufficient information was gathered that allowed for necessary observations and analysis to be made (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010).

Despite the flexibility offered by interview methodologies and so-called “e-interviews,” it is important to note however that interviews as a methodology are not without their limitations and critique. E-interviews, in particular demonstrate significant limitations or “enclosures” given that the interview is limited to a written and distanced script and thus can be seen to “enclose and flatten the interview event” where voice, expression, interaction are excluded (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012, p. 734), even more so as there is no singular “event” to speak of.
when “interaction” is through an email exchange. Thus, the possibilities are significantly limited by the research design, given that the “transcript” and its representationalism forgoes the possibilities that may arise in the “the event of the interview” itself (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012, p. 734). Interviews in this case rest upon the experiences or personal narratives which stem from specific situations, locations and lived experiences. It is important to highlight that these interview “findings” are not taken as generalizable experiences of educators and humane education-oriented organizations, but rather as an introductory exploration into some of the motivations for adopting a particular education framework and the possible opportunities and encountered when working “out in the field” (i.e., beyond academic discussions and debates). In addition, any “findings” will of course be guided by the research design, including the invitation of the participants and the questions and topics selected.

For any substantial deductions to be made about implementing animal-focused pedagogies a much larger scope of participants, as well as more participatory methods to begin with, would be required. Therefore, the findings of the interviews are explored as a manner of “analytic induction”, meaning that the interviewees’ responses were examined to recognize possible “patterns and formulate potential explanations of these patterns” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The aim has been to explore humane educators’ experiences and understandings of their work and the field. The interviews in this case were seen to offer a glimpse into the world of implementing animal-focused education by offering interviewees openness to “in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). It is important to note the limitations of analyzing and representing interview findings, where categorization, interpretation and condensation of meaning and answers means that the interviewees answers are condensed and grouped into shorter formulations and paraphrased “into briefer statements” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018), which ultimately lends to specific social construction of situated and subjective “knowledge.” The “analytical generalization” makes no claim that the “findings” would necessarily be transferable or universal transferability of the responses “to other subjects and situations” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). As such, this is not to be taken as supposed “fact,” but rather as introductory explorations into “lessons from the field” and as an initial opening (and invitation) for further collaboration (and effective alliances) that span across academia, schooling, and societal actors, such as humane educators.
Interview topics

All participants were asked to respond to eleven questions (with an additional question for any further comments or observations the participants wanted to make). The questions that were sent to interviewees can be found in Appendix. The aim was to formulate questions that were open-ended enough to offer flexibility and space for answers. The findings are represented in a general manner without identification of the participants or organization. The findings have been divided and are presented here under the following topics:

- Aims, objectives and issues covered in an educational programme
- Main challenges encountered
- Addressing “controversial” in human-animal relations
- Assessment of programmes and “measuring success”
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Integration into formal schooling
- Future visions for organizations’ work and the field of humane education in general

Participants

There are now several education organizations specializing in humane education, offering ready-made educational materials, teacher training and professional development programmes and who work directly with a variety of partners, including schools, higher education institutions, regional councils, animal protection organizations, animal sanctuaries and other organizations. As such, humane educators and humane education-oriented organizations offer valuable insights into navigating how to build effective alliances and move forward implementing pedagogies that foreground animal subjectivity. Some of these organizations connect humane education with broader societal and environmental concerns and some also make connections to other pedagogical approaches such as social emotional learning and character education. As with any interview preparation, background research of participants was carried out (Roulston & Choi, 2018, p. 7), which helped in the selection of participants. Before reaching out to possible participants, the educational programmes of different organizations were reviewed online, seeing whether their educational framework had a more holistic approach to human-animal relations and animal issues or whether their focus was
solely on what can be considered “welfare education” (i.e., focusing on farmed animal welfare).

Reflecting on what kind of “data” would be adequate for exploring the research questions set out in this study (Roulston & Choi, 2018, p. 15), it was important to include organizations that had been working in the field for a longer period of time as well as newer organizations. What was of interests was exploring the experiences of both more established organizations, as well as younger organizations to explore the challenges they face, as well as what kind of collaborations and partnerships are being built, and whether newer and more “established” organizations have similar observations in the field and what kinds of rationale they have for choosing a humane education-oriented approach. The size of the organization was not a determining factor when looking for possible participants. Organizations range from large international organizations, organizations with established and long-running programmes, to smaller local organizations and ones at the beginning establishing their practice. It was important to include a range of organizations with the aim of mapping out experiences of educators from a variety of backgrounds and locations as well as in different stages of the implementation. Ten organizations were contacted, and nine organizations were ultimately interviewed: two organizations in Europe, two in Asia and six organizations in North America. It is important to note that many of the organizations’ work extends beyond their geographical location, as their online platforms offer opportunities to reach a wider audience. Three organizations were not solely educational organizations, but rather larger animal protection organizations with a department or section of their work focusing on education. Six of the organizations can be considered to specialize in education and are not part of larger animal protection organizations.

Representatives of the organizations were asked if they consented to having their organization’s name mentioned in this study, with the natural option of remaining anonymous. As not all of the organizations have given consent to be named in this study, the specific geographical location of each organization is not explicitly mentioned, as this would give away information that would make it easier to identify the organizations who wish not to be named, and thus pose risks of “accidental breaches of confidentiality (Wiles, 2013). The representatives who gave consent to have their organizations named are listed here in alphabetical order. These were: the Academy of Prosocial Learning, ACTAsia, AnimalHeroKids, FAADA, HEART (Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers), the Institute for Humane Education, and PETA Deutschland.
Representatives of the organizations were invited to share experiences about the focus of their educational programmes, possible challenges and successes to gain an understanding about the educational tools and strategies used by organizations working on animal issues and human-animal relationships. It is important to note that participating in the interviews did not mean that the interviewees necessarily agreed with the framing of this study nor affiliated themselves with the arguments put forth in this study (i.e., a critical analysis of educational policies, an examination of animal-focused pedagogies or the framing of interspecies sustainability as a possible unifying framework for wider systemic education reform). The participants were invited to take part in this study focusing on “animals as stakeholders in education” with the aim of understanding what kind of educational programmes the organizations facilitated, the possible challenges and successes they had encountered, the tools and strategies they use when focusing on issues and topics related to human-animal relations.

In line with research ethics and “the duty of confidentiality”, no identifiable markers concerning the respondents are enclosed, but rather a general narrative thread of analysis has been opted for and thus the findings are anonymized (Wiles, 2013, pp. 6–7). In addition, these “lessons from the field” are intended as insights into the practice of animal-inclusive pedagogies and as such seek to offer initial understandings of how animal-inclusive education research might move forward, for example by rethinking methodologies of how the “efficacy” or “success” of animal-inclusive education interventions are evaluated. It is worth highlighting again that these interviews present one part of the broader multidimensional approach of this study and the analysis presented throughout this study is not necessarily reflective of the position of the interviewees, nor their organizations. Due to the timing of interviews, the core concepts and dimensions of this study were known (namely the focus of animals as stakeholders in education and the different dimensions of analysis: policy, pedagogy, and practice), however the additional focus of adopting an interspecies sustainability framework and the focus on educational violence was solidified at a later stage.

5.2 Lessons from the field

This section outlines the main “lessons from the field” and begins with outlining the aims and objectives of the interviewees’ programmes. In addition, how they have addressed “controversial topics” is explored. It is also important to understand how practitioners in the field of humane education assess their programmes.
5.2.1 Aims, objectives, strategies

As the focus was largely on humane education organizations, it is no surprise then that the aim and focus of the different organizations’ educational programmes was largely on the interconnectedness of the wellbeing of animals, people, and the environment. One of the organizations added to this overall framing the importance of identifying the interconnections between injustices and cruelty and creating positive change. As its main focus another foregrounded all of the ways in which animals are exploited, highlighting the importance of providing accurate information to students, as it was seen that information can be excluded or misrepresented in formal education (for example information related to farmed animals). While some of the general aims were shared, specific topics and pedagogical strategies differed depending on the age-range of students, as well as educational settings and the extent to which animal protection legislation exists in specific locations. Animal-cruelty laws may be weak or non-existent and societal attitudes and urbanization (meaning less contact with nature) might affect the preconceptions and mixed feelings children may have about other animals, including being scared of them. Therefore, focusing on the importance of localized contexts alludes to how educational programmes naturally differ from one another, despite following a general guiding framework (in this case humane education). In many cases kindness and connection could be seen as primary building blocks for fostering more respectful and peaceable human-animal and human-nature connections. One of the organizations highlighted how foregrounding “kindness to all species” across all ages and critical thinking and empathy were fostered through storytelling, for example through stories of young people and the ways in which they had helped others (both human and nonhuman), as well as themselves. The work of the organizations constitutes a variety of both short-term (one-off activities, school visits, workshops) and more long-term partnerships with specific educational institutions or other entities.

All of the organizations create educational materials on a wide range of topics that fall under the interconnected dimensions of animal, human and environmental wellbeing and justice. The difficulties in implementing animal-inclusive pedagogies may be to some extent due to a lack of knowledge of different educational frameworks, and time constraints to not only find out about but then find ways in which to implement these “alternative pedagogies.” Thus, readily available materials and resources that are easily tailored and adjusted to different educational settings, can significantly increase the opportunities for the
implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies. Despite the differences in educational foci, these adjustable resources provide an important “missing piece” to educational theories and frameworks that may otherwise all too easily remain confined behind the paywalls of academic journals, the closed doors of conferences, and remain largely a matter of academic debate. Openly accessible resources and other materials can play a significant role in bridging the gap of accessibility and applicability of animal-inclusive pedagogies, thus broadening the scope and opportunity for wider educational transformations needed for educational reforms.

Given that humane education, as well as other frameworks proposed under the so-called “animal-turn,” face a significant challenge in validating or establishing their importance within the broader field of education, resource hubs that help in the practical implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies can make this challenge slightly less of an uphill battle. One of the organizations specifically mentioned how in addition to working with students and teachers, they also aim to work with parents. Since animal issues often take us into the uncertain terrain of navigating boundaries between home and school, values, habits, and beliefs, working and communicating with parents and the broader community can be an important strategy in familiarizing others to the yet unfamiliar world of humane education (and animal-inclusive education more broadly). An area of educational practice many of the organizations addressed, and which has been identified to be seriously lacking in formal education (including teacher training), is offering professional development and teacher training courses and workshops. Bridging the missing links between formulations of new pedagogical frameworks, working on ways in which they could be infused into formal education requires working in the field of teacher training, or at least building connections with schools and teachers.

Given that animal issues may come with certain hesitancy and unsureness of how to approach them with students, the representatives were asked about their strategies for tackling what might be seen as “difficult” topics. Interactive, self-paced and immersive learning experiences influenced by the Montessori Method were part of one pedagogical framework used to guide the students into topics that might be excluded from formal education, including the treatment of animals, child labor and climate change. To avoid moralizing effects, open-ended self-paced inquiry was seen as key for educational experiences to inspire discovery and connection, rather than pre-determined categorizations of good vs. bad, in order to hold space and be considerate of the backgrounds and lived realities of the learners themselves. Given that the aim of these learning spaces is not to evoke feelings of
despair or to be overwhelmed about the magnitude of the issues, which can easily leave one feeling like there is little to be done, focus on localized action and the possibilities that are attainable for the learners and what they can influence was seen as paramount. This echoes Russell’s (2019, p. 38) understanding of how “educators need to start where students are at, not where we might wish them to be.” Given the rise in ecoanxiety and other struggles in the lived realities of children, navigating teaching and learning about difficult issues, particularly with a wide range of age groups, without inducing feelings of hopelessness is important. While humane education is used to frame and develop educational materials and programmes, further pathways are seen as possible when combined with other pedagogical models and when global issues (e.g., animals in industrial animal agriculture) are tied to possibilities of localized and applicable solutions. Overall, despite some differing formulations, at the core of each of the respondents’ educational programmes was exploring, together with students, ways of living well together through respect for all forms of life and foregrounding the interconnections between human, animals, and the environment.

Given the different locations and educational settings the organizations work in, a wide range of themes and topics were included, including learning about animal sentience, living well together with companion animals, the different ways in which animals are used in different industries (including in food production, and in the fur industry), racism, sexism and social justice, child labor and human trafficking, as well as exploration of the impacts of our choices through a systemic lens. Many of the organizations foregrounded empathy and compassion, socioemotional learning, emotional intelligence, or prosocial learning as foundational principles. However, despite the wide range of topics covered in the educational materials and programmes of these organizations, dependent on the settings in which they worked, some topics (e.g., related to the consumption of animals) might not be addressed. Eisner’s (1985) different dimensions of curriculum can make itself useful here too, by not only distinguishing between explicit and implicit dimensions of the curriculum, and in some instances, this might have to be explicitly omitted when navigating new territories where animal issues may be met with reluctance, hesitancy or perhaps in some instances unwelcoming attitudes. While protecting “children’s innocence” might sometimes be motivation for this hesitancy and resistance, as found in some research (e.g., Tammi et al., 2020), the open curiosity of children and young people to navigate difficult questions would allude to children not being the ones protected, but rather the discomfort of adults in attending to these difficult questions. This leads to the
intrigue in understanding how these organizations have navigated situations in which they have addressed topics that may appear controversial or difficult.

5.2.2 Human-animal relations: Controversies and compassion

As previously noted, education researchers have identified “speaking silences” around animal issues (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019) in formal education and discussions on human-animal relations, and issues that can be considered “controversial” are often avoided. Given that humane education focuses explicitly on human-animal relations, the interviewees were asked to give an example of a topic that could be considered controversial and how they had addressed it in their work. Topics that were raised included dairy production, the interconnected social justice issues related to food systems, calculating environmental impacts of animal-derived foods in schools, the lives of egg-laying hens in industrial animal agriculture, the use of animals in the clothing industry, as well as investigating and comparing the lives of elephants in circuses vs. their natural habitat. Other examples included activities exploring the varied impacts on humans, animals, and the environment of specific common products, the ways in which animals are used for clothing, explorations of diverse human-animal relationships and the needs of companion animals. How then were some of these topics explored? Storytelling was the foundational method through which one of the organizations aims to tackle different dimensions of human-animal relations. While in many instances, stories about animals were often used in educational settings, another pathway is seen as introducing different topics through stories about (and by) children and their different relationships with animals. Storytelling can take many forms and one of the ways in which the difficulties of narrating animal experiences could be通过 children’s stories themselves and the ways in which animals are present in them and the ways in which they explore and possibly create different human-animal relations, or at least open up the different ways in which children themselves form relations with other animals.

A particular example was given about exploring the ways in which we come to learn about animals and evaluate “where we draw the line”. Students evaluated different statements relating to human-animal relations and this was seen as an opportunity for open and honest inquiry into the different feelings and attitudes we might have about different animals and the ways in which they are used and treated. Given that there might limited opportunities for these types of critical inquiries in formal education, where “the line” is often clearly drawn (e.g., through subject
boundaries and the ways in which animals may or may not be explicitly located in specific subject areas), navigating these kinds of learning environments with compassion for both animals and students and remaining open to opposing and conflicting views can be seen as one of the core competencies for educators addressing human-animal relations in their teaching. A seemingly “simple” exercise, opening up questioning to the ways in which lines are drawn between (some) humans and (some) animals in different ways already offers openings for identifying and acknowledging the different ways in which animals are valued in different ways, which then critically explores what might otherwise remain taken-for-granted, and unaddressed, social constructions.

Echoing through the respondents’ answers regardless of the topics they gave examples of was the importance of creating spaces where students have opportunities and are encouraged to view different situations from various points of view and share their own thoughts and feelings about what they have discovered. Rather than entering teaching and learning situations with ready-made answers to complex situations and issues that affect humans, animals, and the environment in numerous ways, learning through inquiry and coming to one’s own “conclusions” was seen as important. A prevalent theme in most respondents’ answers was the importance of open-ended questions and inquiry-based approaches, where students can come to their own conclusions on whatever topic is explored, alluding to the complexity of the topics covered that span across the interconnections between human rights, environmental protection, and animal wellbeing (or rights). If critical and creative inquiry and student-led learning processes form a large part of the educational approaches, how do the organizations assess their programmes and do their assessment approaches resonate with those found in much of the research on humane education?

5.2.3 Assessment of programmes and “measuring success”?

Research on humane education programmes has often highlighted the need to measure the “success” of these educational projects, for example through “measurements” of empathy or other markers of attitude changes. How should humane education programmes and other educational “interventions” “measure” their “impact” and what is it that is being “measured”? In response to how organizations have measured the success of their programmes, two organizations specifically mentioned how formal evaluative methods of humane education programmes have been missing from the field. Other issues that emerged from the
interview answers included the difficulty of attempting to measure so-called “success” or “efficiency” in statistical ways, given the interconnections between the issues many of these programmes tackle, as well as the wider landscape of social change and social movements these educational programmes (and organizations) are located within. One of the indications of “success” considered the rising numbers of schools ordering educational materials and requesting school visitors to come speak on a particular topic, as well as in the case of the organizations offering on-site activities, a rising number of schools wishing to visit their site was seen as an indicator of increased interest. Surveys and evaluation forms from participants were reported by several organizations as ways in which workshops and courses were modified based upon feedback given. In addition, two organizations described their use of informal feedback measures such as anecdotal evidence. For example, meeting students after time has passed and hearing about specific projects or talks that had inspired them to pursue studies or professions related to some of the issues they had learned about. Other organizations reported more formal assessments in the curriculum, the results of which have been reported at national educational forums and conferences. Two organizations also specified the use of external evaluators and consultants to assess specific programmes, some of which had been reported to be published in academic journals.

Overall, a variety of forms of assessments were outlined, ranging from informal anecdotal feedback, written feedback, to more structured surveys and feedback forms, as well as external evaluators and consultants. None of the organizations however mentioned empathy measurements as a means of assessing the success of their programmes, which begs the question whether researchers are asking questions that are adequate to attend to the ways in which humane education is practiced and whether a broader idea of “success” could enhance ways in which researchers focus on humane education programmes. In addition, if what is sought (through animal-focused pedagogies, such as humane education) are ways to learn to live with others in more compassionate and just ways, how could such endeavors be statistically measured in the first place? It would appear that attitudinal change evaluations to prove the value of ways of teaching and learning may be missing the point or asking questions that short-term programmes cannot answer, thus setting the scene and outcome as already one where humane education would appear lacking due to the inability to “measure” empathy levels or attitude changes. Thus, it would appear that what is needed is a critical evaluation of questions asked in educational research, as we seek to move towards ways of teaching and learning
for more peaceable, just and compassionate multispecies co-existence, and whether the questions we ask are impeding or moving us forward on this path.

5.2.4 Opportunities, challenges, and future visions

Setting sights on future directions of the field of humane education animal-inclusive pedagogies more broadly, it is important to understand some of the strategies for building collaborative partnerships. In addition, the challenges interviewees have faced can shed light on pathways forward. From the perspective of broader educational reforms, it is insightful to learn how humane educators view the possibilities of integrating humane education into formal educational settings.

Collaborative partnerships

One of the areas of interest was finding out what kinds of partnerships and collaborative actions these organizations undertake to begin to map some of the interconnecting networks through which animal-focused pedagogies are being promoted and implemented. Some of the organizations reported that they work in collaboration with other educational organizations to create joint projects or with other educational organizations to offer distinct training events and workshops and that they test and develop methods. Several organizations reported working with higher education institutions (colleges and universities) or other professional training institutes, while two organizations also highlighted working with city councils or city departments of education. Extending networks across education institutions and city officials necessarily entails tailoring how the educational frameworks are framed and communicated, requiring a certain flexibility in seeking ways to make connections with local interests and concerns.

Some of the organizations work in collaboration with higher education institutions, both national universities, as well as one organization working internationally with a range of institutions. Beyond institutional collaborations, one of the organizations has built a partnership with a farmed animal sanctuary and the creation of materials which are specific to farmed animals, who are often addressed in detrimental ways in formal education settings. Those who reported direct collaboration with schools, maintained how connections were made to the issues that schools and their respective communities find important, highlighting the importance of situated and place-based approaches. While the majority of organizations had a specific network with whom they work with, one of
organizations mentioned having no specific partner institutions in order to be available to as many audiences as possible and focused on sending out educational materials to schools and educators who order it each year. Having no set partnerships in this instance was seen as offering flexibility and being able to reach a wider audience, as well as a sign of independency.

**Challenges**

In general, many of the services offered by the organizations are free for participants. One organization explained that one their main challenges was that visits were expected to be offered for free, a delineation from the general trend in how educational programmes and materials are generally offered for free. Other noteworthy challenges included lack of and competition for funding, and two organizations noted how taking the organizations work forward was challenging due to lack of resources (e.g., marketing resources) or lack of volunteers.

In addition, because of the amount of work involved, some felt that sometimes it may seem that there is little to show for the amount of work being done. Given that humane education is not well known everywhere, some saw the novelty of the field as a challenge, with a large focus of the organization’s work focusing on laying the groundwork and introducing humane education to the wider public and field of education.

Constraints within formal education was (unfortunately unsurprisingly) a common challenge each of the organizations faced, regardless of how long they had been working in the field. Both governmental or regional restrictions and the formal curriculum were mentioned as challenges. In addition, reference was also made to the difficulties posed by the ways in which lobbyists present a challenge, as animal industries publish teaching materials targeted at schools. However, identifying this obstacle and the possible prejudices and preconceived attitudes parents and other may have, creating education materials based on information from credible sources was mentioned as a strategy to make humane education materials more approachable and useable. Related to addressing difficult issues, one organization highlighted how their open approach and open-ended learning environments allow students to decide for themselves the extent to which they want to engage with the issues. As a result of this student-led approach, the organization reported few complaints or challenges, their main challenge being the suitability of their teaching and learning strategy in different settings to which they had been
invited to participate. To overcome this challenge, creating a virtual version of their immersive and interactive learning environment is planned.

In addition to the different collaborations that have been built, working to offer open resources, reliance on competitive funding, and not always being independent means that compromises need to be made, including one respondent mentioning the need to accept that sometimes the work of the organization is interpreted in different ways. Other difficulties included bureaucracy and pre-conceived ideas that may exist about nongovernmental organizations and their work. In addition, the overall climate of disregard for animals (and animal issues) was also seen as a challenge, a challenge which organizations such as humane education organizations can be seen to be laying the groundwork for overcoming. Acknowledging the already heavy workloads most teacher have, framing humane education in a way that it is not seen as a burden, or another “add-on”, where possible, aligning humane education with pre-existing curriculum and standards was mentioned as a way to increase the chances for its implementation.

Integration into formal education

Responses as to whether integration of humane education in formal curriculums was seen as a possibility were mixed. Some of the respondents found it unrealistic, given the structural challenges found in formal schooling, including governmental control over the curriculum, and concerns were raised about how current education systems may not, in their current forms, be real-world focused enough. For humane education to be integrated into formal education, wider systemic changes and cooperation between education administration and schools were seen as crucial. However, connecting humane education with other issues, including environmental education, already included in some curriculums was seen as a possible bridge for better integrating animal issues into formal schooling. Integrating animal issues through environmental topics, which might be more widely already included in teaching, was seen as a possible pathway to teaching and learning about animals.

Given the constraints of formal schooling, some saw private schools as offering more flexibility and openness to trying out new educational approaches, integrating new ideas into teaching and learning, and thus were seen as offering more opportunities for collaboration. Yet, the resources and marketing necessary for such partnerships to be built was seen as a challenge. Higher education was also seen by some respondents as a more viable pathway into formal education, where the integration of humane education into higher education could serve as a first step.
and gateway into formal education more broadly, although connecting even with higher education institutions was seen as a challenge by some.

While each of the respondents had found pathways through which to collaborate and work with educational institutions, overall, integrating humane education into formal education was seen as unrealistic or at least challenging, while despite the seemingly insurmountable task, some of the respondents did mention that integrating humane education into formal curriculum was a goal which they aspire to in the long run. These systemic transformations were seen to be connected to a broader reform in values in the field of education that would need to happen. This again alludes to broader educational reforms that are needed, given that several pedagogical frameworks have already been proposed and are implemented in different settings to varying degrees.

Future visions

The interviewees were asked about the visions for the future of their organizations’ work, as well as for the field of humane education in general. Where the organization’s work centered on changing location (e.g., visiting schools), hopes of establishing a center or site where students and schools could visit were seen as the next hoped for step, as this was seen to allow for different types of activities to be carried out. However, funding was seen as main issue for establishing a center or site, which could depict and be seen as spaces of hope. Others highlighted plans to broaden the scope of their work beyond their current location by broadening the scope to include their region (beyond current city), for example, while others foregrounded plans about recreating current location-based learning activities online to reach more participants. The importance of connecting humane education with other related pedagogical frameworks and practices was raised, as this could lead to greater recognition of humane education by bridging it with practices that educators may already be more familiar with, such as social emotional learning (SEL). Many of the organizations have worked extensively to create educational resources, and for many organizations it appeared that the next stages of work would focus on ways to popularize and spread awareness of the availability of these resources for these resources to be used more widely. One organization highlighted their ongoing work to create a signature pedagogy to train future humane educators. In reference to future directions of the field of humane education in general, the respondents expressed hope for the field to receive wider acceptance amongst educators in hope of more educators themselves becoming “humane educators” and
wider implementation of humane education in teaching. Overall, the confidence and belief in the opportunities offered by “doing education differently,” in ways that foreground animal standpoints, the interconnections between our lives and others and the natural world, navigating these relations and complex issues with compassion, respect and openness are perhaps some of the glimpses of hope we need that education can be more peaceable, more sustainable, more compassionate, and more just. Overall, what we can learn from these “lessons from the field” is that teaching and learning to live well together on a damaged Earth (Common Worlds Collective, 2020) is likely to take many forms, constituting different combinations of pedagogies which are practicable and suitable for different settings. These relational approaches may sometimes vary in scope and method, but they share a foundational principle of working towards more peaceable, just and compassionate multispecies communities.

5.3 Reflections and moving forward

It would appear that despite the difficulties in navigating anxieties related to “the animal question” in education, forming collaborative partnerships and introducing humane education to different educational settings when these models of pedagogy may not only be unfamiliar and unknown, but are also faced with suspicion and (if and when connected to the broader animal advocacy movement), it appears that many of the organizations, both newer organizations currently laying the groundwork for humane education, as well as more established organizations that have been working in the field for a longer period of time, have found pathways to connect, integrate and adapt humane pedagogies to localized contexts, community concerns, and in doing so built teaching and learning contexts where “the animal question” is not necessarily seen as a separate issue, but central to and interconnected with other facets of education and indeed our everyday lives. What could we learn from their experiences? While there has been much debate on how to move forward with animal-focused pedagogies in education research, given the required flexibility of adapting animal-focused pedagogies with other pedagogies (e.g., social emotional learning) and in some instances steering clear of specific topics, the complexity of animal-focused pedagogies is not something that merely one pedagogical framework will likely be able to attend to. Thus, it would seem that rather than striving for “theoretical purity” in education research, we might do well exploring the different pathways available, while maintaining and working towards the visionary transformative changes that have been widely acknowledged
to be necessary. Systems thinking and cultural competencies (i.e., starting where the learner is at and taking into consideration the lived realities of the students) were seen as key components of teaching and learning strategies. Given that one of the main concerns about moving forward and whether systemic change through integration into formal schooling was largely seen as unrealistic or challenging lends to the idea that effective alliances are needed for systemic change and how “the animal question” is not simply a question for educators to grapple with.

What became evident was the openness for conversations about difficult topics that many educators may shy away from, or which might be subject to silencing, as opening up to discussions about human-animal relations may often take us into “uncomfortable” and unknown terrain. Yet, it has been noted that children are often open to and initiate what might appear at first hand to be “difficult” complex, or ethically problematic questions which some feels are not “suitable” for young people, leading to the common conceptions of childhood innocence and the need to be protected. However, by avoiding and turning away from “difficult” complex discussions, are “adults” reality protecting children (even when they themselves initiate these questions and conversations) or are we protecting our own comfort zones, knowing if we leave the safety of “the known” we may enter uncharted territory? This raises the question—why is it that “anxieties” arise when “the animal question” is raised? Why so anxious, so uncomfortable? Perhaps if we opened ourselves up to this uncharted territory, we might get closer to finding ways of moving towards a more peaceable co-existence that is required for planetary survival.

Limitations of the interviews

The limitations of conducting e-interviews include the lack of interpersonal contact, where other communicative situations would have allowed for follow up questions and additional information to be given “in the moment”, thus falling short in the ways in which interviews could serve better as “process-based, intra-active events”, rather than static concepts reliant merely on the “data” of a transcript (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012). In addition, the focus of this study continued to develop after the interviews had been carried out, and had interviews been carried out at a later stage, the interview questions and possibly methodology (to allow for more interactive “in-person” interviews) may have been amended. Another limitation of this part of the study is the limited number of respondents. Given the broad field of humane education, more respondents could have been included to better understand the
practices carried out. Additionally, given that the contexts discussed focused on children and other animals, any future research would serve well to include the active participation of children themselves (see Rautio et al. 2021 for discussion on participatory research methods and democratization of research in multispecies communities).

While the evolving nature of this study is reflective of the emergent processes of qualitative research (Wiles, 2013), it has also resulted in limitations of the interviews which were carried out before the guiding principle of interspecies sustainability had been solidified. Due to time constraints, follow-up interviews were not possible to build upon the written answers of respondents. However, as the interviews were included as one dimension of a multi-angle approach, they can be seen to serve as a foundational stepping-stone to further in-depth research on transformative change by societal actors such as humane educators.

Looking ahead

Education organizations can play an important role supporting teachers and other educators by addressing the limitations of educative possibilities in formal education through the provision of ready-made materials, workshops and training. They can also play a valuable role in wider systemic changes to educational systems given their experiences and expertise in building collaborative partnerships and working in different education settings. Therefore, they can play an important role (and indeed already are) in addressing the gap in education where animals are omitted or misrepresented in formal education. Further opportunities for the development and implementation of animal-focused pedagogies can be found in collaborative partnerships between education researchers and societal actors such as humane educators. Educational organizations, such as humane-education oriented organizations, can be valuable partners for educational research, which has generally been criticized for having little impact on educational practice (Pine, 2009, p. 3). As a result, it has been argued that combining and connecting educational research and practice “is essential if any genuine progress is to be achieved in addressing compelling, complex, and significant issues in education” (Pine, 2009, p. 3).

Others have argued that “by creating a thousand tiny spaces for animal perspectives in school, education will, in the long term, not only contribute to the liberation of animals from harmful human interference with their lives, but also liberate itself from destructive practices and regimes” (Gunnarsson Dinker &
Humane educators can be seen to be creating multiple ripples across different educational spaces where animals are no longer be omitted, but foregrounded. The creation of these thousands of spaces could eventually lead to a sea of opportunity, but it raises the question as to how we could work together in a more unified way to create stronger ripples. If what we are up against is indeed a machination of the AIC and while the “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) poses limitations in formal education, fragmented interventions, albeit promising and important, might not suffice on their own. Therefore, what is needed to strengthen and unify our efforts is to create a systemic front or alliance against the systemic challenges both by education scholars and humane education organizations.

The multitude of actors already working “in the field”, such as the organizations interviewed for this study, elucidates to the diverse actors already working for animal-inclusive pedagogies that strive to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about animals in efforts to create more peaceable human-animal relations. This illustrates that viable educational frameworks and strategies are already available and being implemented in a multitude of contexts, where animals are not side-lined, but foregrounded as stakeholders in education and as members of our multispecies communities. In addition to the other animal-focused education frameworks presented in Chapter 4, humane education organizations are valuable partners when working towards effective alliances for educational reforms and can play an important role as education “specialists” required for the wider implementation of these “new” ways of teaching and learning. By working with and learning from educators and organizations, a bigger, more expansive pedagogical “tool-box” can be built, as strategies and methods, success stories and challenges are shared, possibly opening up opportunities that may otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Learning from and working with educators working in different settings can also shed light on the spaces of peace or moments where a more peaceable multispecies co-existence can be imagined. As organizations work directly with educators; city and regional officials, as well other networks of organizations, and children and young people from different backgrounds have valuable expertise to share, given the occlusions that restrict animal-inclusive pedagogies in formal education. They offer some new ways of “doing” education (Malone & Truong, 2017, p. 8) which may currently be difficult to infuse into formal education settings, showing how and where they could be and are being implemented, and the challenges they face could be a site for effective alliances and collective...
strategizing to move ahead with the wider transformations urgently needed. They also allude to the realities of how a coherent framework might be envisioned in education research, when we begin to put it into practice.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter explored some of the experiences and strategies used by humane education organizations, and these “lessons from the field” are intended as lessons to help map pathways and collaborations as they move forward. While promising pedagogical frameworks exist, understanding how they could be (and are being) put into practice, learning about the opportunities, challenges, and successes of educators working in different settings can help envision how a more systemic implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies could be worked towards. Possibilities for wider educational reforms will require and largely benefit from education experts such as humane educators, who are paving the way for the implementation and recognition of animal-inclusive pedagogies. Humane education organizations can play an important role in bringing about wider educational transformations, given how they are crafting spaces for animal subjectivities and narratives to be centralized rather than side-lined in educational spaces. Working with and learning from societal actors, such as different educational organizations, can be seen as an important focus area in working towards transformative change, given the constraints of working within formal education. Now that educational policy (see Chapter 3), pedagogical openings (see Chapter 4) and practice (see Chapter 5) have been examined, the question remains: where do we go from here?
6 Towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability

This study has sought to explore how we could move towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability where animals too are understood as (educational) stakeholders. Lamentably, there appears to be a continued “ambivalence about education and schools” (Noddings & Lees, 2014, p. 1) and this study has sought to foreground the importance of education in the wider transformations that are required to understand and position animals as members of our multispecies communities. If, as Wadiwel (2015) soberly suggests, we can be seen to be at “war against animals”, how might we move forward in crafting “spaces of peace” with other animals and what is the role of education in this pursuit? Wadiwel (2015, p. 296) foregrounds the importance of “narrating animal resistance”, which could be seen as one part of a wider restorying project of human-animal relations that is needed. This “project on undoing epistemic violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 296) inherently involves disrupting and moving beyond animals-for-us narratives (re)produced through education and attending to the ways in which education “produces profoundly unsafe realities for animals” (Pedersen, 2019b, p. 8). For cows, schools can be seen to play a particularly significant role in creating and maintaining these unsafe realities through their connection to the dairy industry. As previously mentioned, school milk schemes play an important role in perpetuating and normalizing the commodification of cows and schooling can thus be seen to play a key role in narrating a specific form of existence for cows and maintaining and (re)producing epistemic violence against them through the ways in which specific types of knowledge are produced, circulated, and contested (Gillespie, 2018, p. 22) in schooling. Schools in this case are also connected to “hotspots of violence (Wadiwel, 2015) by helping to maintain the dairy industry and may in some instances create spaces for intersubjective violence against cows through farming and framing programmes.

Seeking to move towards spaces of peace ultimately begs the question posed by Wadiwel (2015, p. 272): “Why is it that we cannot imagine a world where we do not kill and hurt animals?” This seemingly simple (or some might say naïve) question becomes ever more perplexing in light of why it is that we cannot imagine more peaceful worlds with other animals, even when planetary survival depends upon it. Here it feels important to note that while responsibility for violence against animals and the ongoing “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011) can all too easily be diffused and obfuscated, some argue that we “have all created and are
creating the conditions in which omnicide is inevitable” (Celermajer, 2020), although some undoubtedly have played and continue to play far greater roles.13

To say that we are at war against animals is no exaggeration, given that “by almost any metric or angle we adopt (annual numbers of land and sea animals killed in farming, the rate of species extinction/genocide, the profits, and processes of the trade in exotic animals, or simply hearing stories about individual animals), the escalating levels of violence animals are subject is undeniably obscene” (Deckha, 2020, pp. 163–164). Formal education and schools can be seen as one more “battlefield” in which this war is sustained, but they could be an opportunity to serve as spaces where peaceable relations are fostered. Yet, as Wadiwel (2015, p. 281) asks: “If everyone believes we are at peace with animals, how might we signal the presence of war around us?” Similarly, if business-as-usual appears to be our continued response to planetary crises, how might we signal, or effect the (seemingly) radical transformations that are needed within and beyond education? Or as Pedersen (2021, p. 2) aptly asks: “What is the responsibility of, and what can education achieve in omnicidal times?” Indeed, given the resistance encountered when it comes to letting go of our entitlement and “attachment to violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 272), it would appear that even with planetary survival depending upon letting go, education rather continues to implicate children and young people in these violent systems and practices, which have been demonstrated to be destructive to our “common worlds” and its human and nonhuman inhabitants.

This study has sought to explore some of the occlusions and openings for transforming education as we continue down a path towards “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019), and has used an interspecies sustainability framework (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al. year) as a possible opening for understanding animals as stakeholders in sustainable futures as members and inhabitants of this damaged Earth. More precisely, this study has explored the occlusions posed by educational policies and the “anthropocentric infrastructure” (Pedersen, 2021) they help construct and uphold, as well as possible pedagogical openings for rethinking education and teaching and learning for multispecies flourishing. The animal-inclusive pedagogies examined in this study could open pathways for finding and creating new stories-to-live-by (Stibbe, 2015) for a more just and peaceable multispecies co-existence on a damaged Earth (Common Worlds Collective, 2020).

13 This study is situated in the Global North, more precisely Finland, and when speaking of the creation of conditions where omnicide, or eco-annihilation, it is important to note the serious imbalances between where and how these omnicidal conditions have been created and how the effects are felt unequally.
Given the limitations found in formal education, “lessons from the field” were sought through interviews with humane educators on how they have introduced and infused humane education within different educational contexts and geographical locations, with the aim of beginning to sketch out an initial roadmap for moving forward in educational practices.

Ultimately, to speak of “flourishing” in multispecies communities requires addressing and attending to the epistemic, systemic and intersubjective violence that underscores dominant human-animal relations and the ways in which this violence are normalized and (re)produced through education. To disrupt the (educational) violence against animals, this study has explored how animal-inclusive pedagogies might converge on foundational principles and pedagogical strategies to work towards a more unified approach and thus strengthen the opportunities for pedagogical openings that foreground multispecies flourishing and animal subjectivity. If what we are up against is indeed a growing machination (the AIC) and a business-as-usual approach to education, how might we build a stronger alliances with and for animals amongst animal-inclusive educators in order to present a more unified front and thus perhaps propel greater changes in the broader educational landscape, including environmental and sustainability education.

By conceptualizing different dimensions of (educational) violence and the ways in which schools serve as spaces where violence against animals is reproduced and normalized, this study has explored the challenges and opportunities for transforming schools into “spaces of peace” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 8), which is a necessity if claims to sustainable futures made by education are to be taken seriously. If a just and sustainable future can be seen to begin “where exploitation ends” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 137), interspecies sustainability could offer a promising framework from which to begin building “creative and critical policy alternatives” that are required for “healthy policy ecologies” in education (Stratford & Wals, 2020, p. 1). However, promising frameworks which are attentive to interspecies justice are not enough in themselves and given the complex policy landscape within which educational policy is constructed, disrupting taken-for-granted sustainability and animals-for-us narratives in various contexts are needed. Including animals in education is not merely a “pedagogical problem” left for teachers and students to navigate. Animals in education is a much broader endeavor and the possibilities for creating spaces of interspecies peace in schools are connected to school culture, including consumption, as well as the broader socio-political landscape.
Social narrative theory (Baker, 2006; Harding, 2012) was used a backdrop from which to begin to navigate the interconnections between the social construction of animals and the ways in which these “realities” are created and circulated through different personal and collective narratives. Disrupting the taken-for-granted animals-for-us narratives that flow through and are reinforced in education and through educational policies is no easy feat given the “institutional anxieties” in education, which are particularly “evoked by threats to the anthropocentric infrastructure of education” (Pedersen, 2021, p. 5). It is this anthropocentric infrastructure that obfuscates and normalizes violence against animals in conjunction with the collective narratives that circulate through education and through which “the animal” is socially constructed. In addition to the importance of narrating animal resistance (Wadiwel, 2015), particularly in educational settings we may need a broader project of narrative disruption and restorying. Envisioning pathways out of these hostile relations requires narrating alternative relations and communities that already do exist, such as the peaceable multispecies communities of sanctuaries. Disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions and social constructions of animals, such as cows as “milk machines,” we need openings for “alternative” representations and narratives of animals.

The current “political impotence” and impasse has been the result of an underestimation of the challenges we face in “avoiding a ghastly future” (Bradshaw et al., 2021). The shortcomings of current conceptions of sustainability are evident in the growing recognition of environmental degradation, extinction crises, biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, the climate crisis, and increasing exploitation of other animals. The likelihood of future pandemics following COVID-19 serves as another alarming reminder about how transforming exploitative human-animal relations is central to building just and sustainable futures. At the core of building sustainable and just futures is the recognition that we are member of multispecies communities, requiring us to expand our notions as to who belongs to our (planetary) community. By recognizing other animals as members of our communities, as intrinsic beings with a right to a life of their own (Policarpo et al. 2018) and understanding the interconnections between our lives (and future), this study has proposed interspecies sustainability (Bergmann, 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016; Rupprecht et al., 2020) as a possible unifying framework for identifying and amalgamating intersecting interests to build a just and sustainable future. Given the definitional haziness of current conceptual tools that are used as foundational principles to guide us in building a sustainable future (and the violence against animals they explicitly and implicitly rationalize), new conceptual tools are
required to help move towards an interspecies sustainable future that ultimately requires a truce and creating “spaces of peace” (Wadiwel, 2015).

**Children and other animals as stakeholders in sustainability**

Responding to the urgent calls to find ways to live together on a damaged Earth (Common Worlds Collective, 2020) fundamentally requires disrupting the normalization and (re)production of *animals-for-us* narratives in education and the epistemic, institutional, and intersubjective violence that underscore these narratives and related (educational) practices. The “new ways” of teaching and learning for multispecies coexistence require dismantling violence and moving towards pedagogies and school cultures that foster peaceable relations. A foundational principle of interspecies sustainability could give more coherence and integrity to the current “definitional haziness” of sustainability discourse. Such a reform would ultimately mean changes to school food, educational practices, and the curriculum, thus transforming education necessitates not only pedagogical rethinking and transformation, but a critical analysis and transformation of the policies and frameworks that guide institutional and pedagogical practices. In other words what is needed is a multidimensional approach including (but not limited to) both legislative and pedagogical changes. What then could an educational reform for interspecies look like and what are some of the necessary steps for such a reform?

This study examined the challenges posed by current educational policies guided by *animals-for-us* narratives and definitionally hazy SD and sustainability. Through a CPA different dimensions of educational policy were explored to examine how the current educational policy landscape significantly contributes to the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011), in which animal use remains a (largely unquestioned) constant. Pedagogical opportunities were mapped out though a birds-eye view of the “animal turn” in education research, which can be seen to offer promising developments in pedagogical practice. However pedagogical know-how is not enough in and of itself and thus representatives of humane-education oriented organizations were interviewed to map out the challenges and opportunities of implementing animal-inclusive pedagogies. Each of these research aims is connected by how animals could be understood as stakeholders in education, and each will be reviewed in this chapter.

In relation to educational transformations, a “spectrum of change” has been proposed to assess ways in which learning engages with sustainability, which range from *no change, accommodation, reformation*, and *transformation* (Sterling, 2001).
Whereas in the current impasse we seem to find ourselves in, an interspecies sustainability framework could help us move towards reformation (critical reflective adaption) and transformation (creative re-visioning) (Sterling, 2001). Similar transformative guidelines have been proposed by Bergmann’s (2019, p. 22) “levels of engagement” with animal protection in her interspecies sustainability framework where striving for transformational change ultimately requires attending to the “flourishing of animal agency and justice, animal physiological and psychological integrity” and respect for “animal cultures and knowledge systems” (Bergmann, 2021, p. 4). A framework of interspecies sustainability could help educational policy and practice to move towards the “creative re-visioning and transformational change (Sterling, 2011) and moving beyond the current business-as-usual, which “is no longer an option” (Common Worlds Collective, 2020, p. 10).

Interspecies sustainability can also help us move towards collective strategizing and pathways towards the transformative changes, beyond the current limiting (and destructive) welfare narratives and accommodatory responses guided by SD, which no longer suffice. Transformative change in education for sustainability requires engaging with and the adoption of a sustainability framework that is attendant to our multispecies communities and understands and positions animals as stakeholders in their own right. As such, interspecies sustainability might offer pathways to “recuperating our damaged common worlds together, even if only partial recuperation is possible” (Common Worlds Collective, 2020, p. 9).

The shortcomings (and violent consequences) of current conceptions of sustainability and SD have been widely recognized and proposals for alternative frameworks have been made, most recently interspecies (or multispecies) sustainability. An interspecies sustainability framework could help us overcome some of the “definitional haziness” of current dominant conceptions of sustainability and rethink what active environmental citizenship entails in multispecies communities. This study has sought to clarify the notion of what being a stakeholder (in education) could and should entail, given the worrying trend in some animal-focused education research where animal interests may be superficially represented, yet easily dismissed. School (cow’s) milk schemes help understand the location of schools in “regimes of violence” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 99) and the ways in which children are implicated in these systems of violence. The ways in which we would come to learn about cows and where they supposedly “belong” is often strictly situated and confined by narratives related to “food education” or “nutrition education,” where oppression and commodification are
normalized and the socio-political construction of cows as “milk machines” is reinforced. References to cows and other “farmed animals” are for the most part located within welfarist narratives that reinforce the implicit positioning of these animals as resources. Welfare and nutrition education broadly consist of censored, simplistic and romanticized “farm to table” narratives, which rest on the narratives of animals-for-us. Welfarist narratives of animals can be seen as problematic not only because they legitimize violence and commodification, given that it is based on the assumption that humans are morally entitled to keep, trade and kill animals (Peters, 2016, p. 10), but is also problematic as it is a key component of our current path of unsustainability and “eco-annihilation”. Others have rightly argued how animals and children, as “diverse beings in their own right, having a life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018, p. 205) require transformations of the ways in which “the social and the societal” (Tammi, Hohti & Rautio, 2020, p. 1) are understood and power relations and their effects critically examined and challenged. Children and other animals are not voiceless, as some might suggest, but rather both are silenced. Children and other animals become connected in ways that are detrimental to animals, children and the natural world, for example though the “common violent worlds” they come to share through school milk schemes. What spaces are children and young people being afforded in narrating their own relations and future, of restorying their own lives and their relations with others? Returning to the notion of learning to listen (Snaza & Weaver, 2017) would apply here to listening to children, animals and being attendant to the ways in which both are silenced and subsumed into violent worlds not of their own making. Re-envisioning the community and “the social” requires attending to the ways in which hierarchical anthropocentrism has been used to rationalize these relations, and disrupt them.

**Multispecies flourishing through “spaces of peace”**

Wadiwel (2015, p. 8) proposes that constructing spaces of “truce” and “moving beyond the war on animals” requires “developing new forms of connection, friendship, topography, love and living-together that have been previously unimaginable.” This would, according to Wadiwel (2015, p. 8) “lead to reconstruction of the human/animal binary in ways which might recognize multiple non hierarchized difference.” Given that these spaces of truce or peace are “necessarily relational” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 8), how might we begin to navigate and create these spaces within and through education, while remaining mindful of the
broader backdrop of hostility and oppression, which are at the center of our current path towards eco-annihilation? Humane education and other animal-inclusive pedagogies can be seen to offer openings for imagining these new types of connections, friendships, and ways of living together and imagining ways of moving towards interspecies sustainable futures.

Education and schooling can either continue to reinforce and reproduce different forms of violence against other animals, jeopardizing legitimate possibilities of building a sustainable and just future, or transform to play an active role in building the necessary “spaces of truce” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 8) and peaceable relations for “multispecies flourishing” (Russell & Spannring, 2019, p. 1140). Education and schooling can thus play an active role in facilitating necessary transformations or can continue to play its current role in significantly impeding them through the ongoing “curious silence about animals” (Oakley et al., 2010, p. 97). These “curious silences” can be found in both education and dominant sustainability narratives and this silence is particularly evident in relation to animals exploited in food systems. Formal education is not the problem, but rather “an accomplice in a larger process” of planetary decline and the answer is not more education, but more so reconfiguring and disrupting the current modes of education to stop more of the same education (Orr, 2004). Educational reform for interspecies sustainability is as much a project of reparation and transformation, and it has been argued that “no generation has ever faced a more daunting task” given the damage that has been done and the impending inequalities and crises that are likely to worsen (Orr, 2004).

Since education is not static, how can we as researchers and educators respond to current challenges and offer cohesive alternatives. This study aligns itself with the proposition that in order to build the effective alliances we need, “winning arguments and proving truth” may be ineffective for “long-term processes of social change” (George, 2019, p. 174). In this light, social narrative theory (Baker 2006) and narratives, stories (Stibbe, 2015) and framing can provide some tools from which to critically explore different taken-for-granted assumptions and “commonly accepted truisms” (George, 2019, p. 169). Given that we might agree on “a set of facts” but interpret and understand them in different and sometimes conflicting ways (Baker, 2006, p. 67), critical constructive dialogue might open up possibilities to not only diffuse conflicts, but “create alliances that pave the way to cooperative existence” (George, 2019, p. 170). How then do we work towards these effective alliances and with whom? Given the different dimensions (policy, pedagogy and practice), the idea of systemic coherence might lend itself useful in mapping out
possible pathways forward, as it refers to the different levels of change that are “as far as possible mutually reinforcing” (Sterling, 2001). If we have a vision of where we want to be headed, with convergence on key foundational principles, working towards change through different dimensions “with connection, wholeness and synergy” (Sterling, 2001) could open possibilities for more systemic changes that are in needed. Let us first explore what effective alliances could look like in building “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020) within and beyond education.

6.1.1 Towards “healthy policy ecologies” with interspecies sustainability

If we can be seen to be at “war against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015) and education constitutes a space within and through which our violent relations with other animals are sustained and legitimized, educational policies (and their connected practices) can be seen as additional tools in the arsenal of weaponry against animals. For example, the curriculum can be seen as a significant tool of epistemic violence that helps socially construct “the animal” and (re)produce knowledge systems and narratives that normalize and rationalize hierarchical and oppressive human-animal relations. Given the rise in discussions of political representation of animal interests and the search for ways to challenge and transform systemic institutionalized violence, educational policy and practice are key areas to challenge and transform harmful practices and beliefs. Educational spaces, practices and policies also have the possibility to create “spaces of truce” where peaceable relations with others, both human and nonhuman, are fostered. Given the anthropocentric policy processes it is not surprising (albeit no less disconcerting) that the interests of animals are excluded from education policy, which is guided by the anthropocentric belief that animals are resources for human use. Given that the political sphere (and society at large) “is founded upon a primary exclusion of nonhuman life” that “continually generates violent divisions between human and animal both within and without the political sphere” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 28), it is imperative to find ways to unravel these divisions to move beyond “single-species anthropocentric decision-making” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 294). It has aptly been noted how a “socially responsible sustainability begins where animal exploitation ends” (Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016, p. 137). It has been argued that radical transformations of industrial food production and education must occur in tandem, as “neither system can exist without the other to reinforce it” (Repka, 2019, p. 1000).
Environmental education has been criticized for overlooking hierarchical anthropocentric power relations, excluding a critical analysis of the human use of animals (which is central to ecological crises), as well as excluding some animals, such as so-called “farmed animals” from their focus. Animals and transforming human-animal relations are central to (not separate from) education for a sustainable future and necessary “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals, 2020). Interspecies sustainability could offer avenues to explore how animal interests could be taken seriously and shape decision-making in and beyond educational spheres, as well as support strategies that attend to multispecies flourishing. It would appear that at present there is a particular window for interspecies sustainability to enter the broader debate and discussion around concerns over the directions of education and the limitations that have been found in the current understanding and implementation of “sustainability” in education (Mykrä, 2021). However, disrupting dominant anthropocentric narratives of sustainability and “restorying” sustainability from an interspecies justice perspective is likely to be an uphill battle, given that if animals were to be taken seriously as members of our multispecies communities, it would mean opening up discussion on the “disarmament of human sovereignty,” meaning “successfully seeking to ameliorate and remove sources of human intersubjective, institutional and epistemic violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 294).

This study has explored different interconnected dimensions of educational policies: sustainability, consumption, and curriculum. Given the multifaceted networks in which education decision-making takes place, accountability and responsibility can easily be obscured, leaving educators and students to bear the brunt of the paradoxical educational setting laid down by inconsistent anthropocentric policy narratives that severely damage any conceivable effort to build an interspecies sustainable future, and which have violent and deadly consequences for billions of animals. This study set out to explore how animals are positioned (and thus affected) by various educational policies and how we come to learn about and relate to animals, in this instance cows. Cows play a particularly central role in schooling in Finland, given the long history and continued practice of heavily subsidized and marketed daily doses of cows’ milk. Cows are also exemplary of the difficulties on a societal level in imagining where certain animals “belong” in our societies (and the inherent power relations embedded in the self-proclaimed human right to decide on belonging and exclusion). Where do cows “belong” if not on Old MacDonald’s jolly farm where she happily “helps us” make cheese, milk and butter? Crafting new stories-to-live-by requires disrupting these
taken-for-granted assumptions or “truisms” that circulate through different narratives in and through educational spaces, children’s media, policies, and beyond and attending to the problematic omission and misrepresentation of animals in policies, which normalize violence against them through their positioning as resources for human use.

Despite promising developments in the debate over interspecies justice, political representation of animal interests and the growing field of animal law, education and educational policy has insofar been largely overlooked. Greater attention ought to be paid to educational policies in the broader “project” of the political representation of animal interests in efforts to pave the way for multispecies flourishing. It has been argued that the role of law “in effecting social change may be comparatively modest” (Deckha, 2020, p. 164). To this one might add that any field on its own is likely to have a modest effect. However, social change in alliance with movements across the fields of education, animal law, sustainability and beyond could be strengthened through a broadened multidimensional understanding of the policy landscape through a mapping of the connections between educational policies (in all their diverse forms) and the broader policy landscape, including sustainability. Broadened multidimensional “mappings” are already taking place (e.g., Celermajer et al., 2020) and demonstrate a promising trajectory, in which education too has an important place.

This study started out with an explicit focus on animals, however the serious implications the different educational policies have on children and young people became increasingly apparent. There have rightly been calls for children and young people to be positioned as environmental stakeholders in their own right (Barratt Hacking et al., 2007) with intergenerational justice being foregrounded (e.g., Abate, 2019; Sanson & Burke 2020). Taking intergenerational justice and children’s rights seriously, and moving beyond mere lip service requires a shift towards interspecies sustainability and broadened understandings of intergenerational justice as an interspecies endeavor. Understanding “stakeholders” in a sustainable future requires an understanding of “children as full participants of society”, instead of “being situated in their own micro worlds, waiting rooms, or margins” (Tammi, Hohti & Rautio, 2020, p. 1). In addition, multispecies childhood studies, broadens these understanding of stakeholders by questioning who has a right to childhood (and thus motherhood, familial and social relations) and why is it that we (humans) have a right to decide.

School milk schemes served as a case study to foreground the lives (and deaths) of animals in the AIC and to explore how framings of sustainability are used to
justify further violence against animals. Framing cows (and other animals) in education, the “common violent worlds” of children and cows under the rubric of school (cow’s) milk schemes commodify both cows and the children who are positioned as, and socialized to be, future consumers of cow’s milk. Dulsaniers (2015) has aptly questioned how is it that humans have been “enticed down a path” of cow’s milk consumption despite the “cultural, climatic, digestive” obstacles (and one might add social justice and animal oppression “obstacles”). The continued expansion of the “milk regime” and the intensified violence and control over animal bodies is a prime example of how schools play a particular role in the AIC, given how children and schools are used to maintain the dairy industry through the continued flow of cow’s milk through schools and schoolchildren. While the consequences are significantly different for cows and human children, their fates (indeed all of ours) are shared in so far as school milk schemes are one of the ways in which we are driven towards “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019). The calls to take school food seriously (e.g., Weaver-Hightower, 2011) ought to extend beyond education research, as transforming the school food practices that are currently implicating children in a destructive food systems and “the animal economy”, for example through the incessant protection of the dairy industry through school milk schemes.

Education grounded on anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability creates a paradox in which children and young people are supposed to strive for ecological or sustainable environmental citizenship, but are required to do so in a fraudulent landscape, which is bound by collective silences and inconsistencies given that educational institutions are intrinsically embedded in the very networks that are known to be at the center of unsustainability: the AIC, shaping and strengthening the “anthropocentric infrastructure” of education (Pedersen, 2021). The definitional haziness of sustainability and the difficulties in its implementation (Mykrä, 2021) could be seen as an opening for the necessary discussions on what is being sustained by current dominant conceptions of sustainability (and particularly SD). If current conceptions of sustainability justify schools to remain as spaces in which and through which violence against animals and the natural world is normalized and justified, this opens questions related to the broader societal debate as to where we want to be headed and what our visions are for a sustainable future. Rather than understanding “sustainable futures” as an abstract distant concept it should be inherently situated in the present. Building healthy policy ecologies requires attending to the ways in which the “anthropocentric infrastructure” of education (Pedersen, 2021) is upheld, thus requiring an approach that embodies a
commitment to interspecies sustainability. Given the constraints posed by the educational policy landscape, what are some of the pedagogical openings for teaching and learning from multispecies flourishing?

6.1.2 Pedagogies for interspecies sustainability

If education can be seen to create “profoundly unsafe realities for animals” (Pedersen, 2019a, p. 8) through epistemic, systemic and sometimes intersubjective violence against animals, and the possibilities for disrupting and undoing these violence in education are constrained by the institutional structures, practices, and policies founded upon hierarchical anthropocentrism (reflective of the wider socio-political landscape), ways to move without reverting to forms of epistemic violence seem limited. Education has been recognized as one of the institutions where contesting and transforming hegemonic anthropocentrism has proven to be difficult (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016; Lupinacci, 2019; Pedersen, 2010a; Russell & Spannring, 2019) and urgent calls have been made to find ways to live together on a damaged planet (Common Worlds Collective, 2020), yet attending to the violence underpinning human-animal relations continue to be confined by collective “speaking silences” that “simultaneously work to obfuscate and perpetuate animal oppression” (Gunnarsson, Dinker & Pedersen, 2019, p. 54). The need for critical approaches to “the animal question” in education is evident, given recent trends that seemingly justify the continued exploitation of animals under the guise of “sustainability” (e.g., Wolff et al., 2018) and the shortcomings of education for SD (e.g., Pedersen, 2019a). What then is required from us to disrupt their collective silences in educational settings and build effective alliances that could “pave the way to cooperative coexistence” (George, 2019, p. 170)?

There are several avenues through which these silences could be disrupted by attending to different dimensions of the curriculum. Pedagogical tools are fundamental for any educational reform. The pedagogical opportunities offered by the different educational frameworks explored in this study elucidate the various possibilities there are to represent animals in education in ways that disrupt violent and exploitative relations and social constructions of “the animal” by foregrounding animal subjectivity and their rights to a good “life of their own” (Policarpo et al., 2018). Some educational spaces are already crafting out spaces in which new stories-to-live-by can emerge and exploring ways to live together respectfully on a damaged Earth (Common Worlds Collective, 2020). Just as narratives of animals-for-us are circulated through these different dimensions, so
too can they be disrupted through them. The level of explicitness of confronting the issues at stake will vary depending on the sphere in which action is taken, for example an explicit stance is necessary on a policy level, while more relational and situated approaches may be required on pedagogical levels. Eisner’s (1985) different dimensions of curriculum can be a helpful tool to examine the explicit, implicit, null, and extracurricular dimensions of education in different contexts which might rationalize and (re)produce (educational) violence against animals and hierarchical anthropocentrism, as well as the different dimensions through which disruption of that narrative and restorying might be possible.

A mapping of the “animal turn” in education research and different educational frameworks that have been proposed demonstrate how these approaches have significant commonalities and thus illustrate how an effective alliance in the form of a more unified front could help elucidate in a more coherent and credible way how animals and transforming human-animal relations are central to (not separate from) the fields of environmental, sustainability and climate change education (as well as formal education in general). While there are discrepancies between some of the frameworks, most notably perhaps the frictions between posthumanist conceptions of “common worlding” and abolitionist stances of “leaving the animal alone,” they do not necessarily (and should not) foreclose opportunities to build a more coherent and unified alliance to represent animal interests in education. Rather than omit animals and our exploitative relations with them from their focus, these educational frameworks shed light on the multiple ways in which animals could be, and are, positioned as stakeholders in educational practice. Through these frameworks, oppressive narratives, beliefs, and practices can be critically examined and challenged and the intrinsic value of animals identified, and their interests represented in ways that can create teaching and learning spaces that foster multispecies flourishing. Whereas reverence, compassion and respect for nature and some animals (e.g., “wildlife”) are a common focus in environmental education, so-called farmed animals may be seen to be located outside conceptions of the natural world with difficulties envisioning where they “belong” in our society if not on Old MacDonald’s farm.

The animal-inclusive pedagogies examined in this study offer ways in which educational spaces could be designed through a framework of learning “with, from and for” animals (Gunnarsson Dinker-Pedersen, 2016, p. 420). “Exercises in empathic imagination” (Jones, 2017) offer windows through which to work towards crafting new stories-to-live-by for multispecies flourishing, where animal perspectives could be better infused and included in education. According to
Pedersen (2021, p. 6) “the effects from opening education to ‘the question of the animal’ may have revolutionary potential” given that it “disturbs prevailing anthropocentric mindsets and conventions in educational practice and theory.” Solutionary pedagogies (Weil, 2016) propelled by empathic imagination (Jones, 2017) as a way of learning with, from and for animals (Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2016) could take us closer towards a building more peaceable and just “multispecies commons.” This study has not sought to propose another “new” pedagogical framework, but rather it seeks pathways in how the various already proposed promising frameworks could be implemented and integrated into formal education in wider systemic ways and how they each offer valuable conceptual tools and principles for an education for interspecies sustainability. In addition, as these frameworks already converge on key foundational ideas brings in the question of how to form a more coherent and cohesive alliance between them, if indeed systemic educational changes are sought.

Effective alliances within and beyond animal-focused education can strengthen this revolutionary potential, as we begin to balance “visionary and practicable” (Sterling, 2001) aspects and map our way forward in building an education for interspecies sustainability. While calling for a more unified approach to animal-focused pedagogies, navigating how different pedagogies might “join forces” to effect systemic change and to amalgamate some of the differences between them, a useful guiding principle might be found in Wadiwel’s (2015, p. 287) proposition that “action in the war against animals must be thought carefully to avoid enacting other forms of epistemic violence” and in turn be mindful of how we might seek to teach and learn in ways that undo, instead of reinforce, the circulation of different forms of violence within and through educational practices. Yet from an educator’s perspective, it may be difficult not to be implicated in forms of epistemic violence against animals when working within the confines of formal education, given the constraints posed by institutional structures. For this reason, working with and learning from organizations and other societal actors working in educational settings is imperative.

If we agree that “business as usual is no longer an option” and that we need to “radically reimagine and relearn our place and agency in the world” in order to build an “education for future survival” (Common Worlds Collective, 2020, p. 2), it is essential to attend to and disrupt the ways in which epistemic, systemic, and intersubjective violence against animals is sustained and normalized in and through mainstream education. In order to move towards “learning to become with the world” (Common Worlds Collective, 2020, p. 11) and strive for multispecies
flourishing and survival on a damaged Earth, disrupting violence against animals and our “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari, 2020a) that fuels and normalizes these violent relations is fundamental. Thus, the sometimes dreaded “animal question” is ultimately a “human question” and the uneasiness is inherent to undoing the myths of human exceptionalism and disrupting “developmental logics” and hierarchical anthropocentrism that have been used (and continue to be used) to silence children and other animals. Not only is a whole-school approach needed to radically reimagine education as a whole, but broader societal transformations are required. While these radical transformations seem all too distant, and formal education remains within its anthropocentric constraints, how might we move forward working with and learning from societal actors to transform educational spaces and who are already showing that a different education is possible.

Moving beyond the confines of subject-specific classifications of the world and moving towards phenomena and place-based learning through the lens of a *multispecies commons curriculum*, meaning what we share with our human and nonhuman neighbors, might open spaces for learning to listen and acknowledging the multiple modes through which “learning” takes place; including beyond language. Moving towards a multispecies commons curriculum would thus hold space for situated and embodied modes of learning, while remaining attentive to animal “voices,” which we can seek to decipher through *exercises of empathetic imagination* (Jones, 2017). Perhaps, through empathic imagination we could try to understand the many stories animals too have to tell. Envisioning pedagogies for interspecies sustainability holds a great deal of promise when examined through the windows opened by the different pedagogical frameworks examined in this study. A holistic *solutionary lens* in seeking to do the most good and least harm (Weil, 2016) might indeed hold the revolutionary potential needed for the transformative changes we need, particularly when coupled with an array of pedagogical allies. While significant occlusions remain in formal education for these “new” pedagogical openings, inspiration for further action can be found from those who are paving way for animal-inclusive pedagogies across different educational spaces.

### 6.1.3 Learning from and organizing with societal actors

If we agree that new ways of teaching and learning for peaceable multispecies co-existence are required, then we most likely are to agree that these new ways of teaching and learning need to be implemented across a variety of educational
settings and contexts. It is one thing to theorize about educational transformations and transformational pedagogies, and perhaps another implement them, given that education has been recognized as one of the institutions where contesting and transforming hegemonic and normalized hierarchical anthropocentrism has proven difficult (e.g., Gunnarsson Dinker & Pedersen, 2019; Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016; Pedersen, 2010a; Russell, 2019; Spannring, 2017). Thus, the third aim of this study was to explore the experiences of some humane-education oriented professionals working “out in the field” to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges they face in creating spaces where animal subjectivity is foregrounded. Given the limitations in implementing animal-inclusive pedagogies in formal educational settings, educators outside of formal education, including educational organizations (such as humane education organizations) play a key role in advancing, developing, and implementing animal-inclusive pedagogies. Learning with and from them these societal actors could help to navigate avenues for the implementation of pedagogies that are respectful of animal perspectives and could be possible in formal education.

Given the multifaceted nature of an educational reform for interspecies sustainability, humane education-oriented organizations, as well as other educators play a fundamental role in the alliances that are needed. Humane education-oriented organizations and educators can also be seen to have a significant role to play in the wider educational transformations required, given their expertise in implementing humane education in a variety of settings and their experiences in building effective alliances in their current work. Working with and learning from these (and other) practitioners, about their alliances and pedagogical strategies can help in carving put pathways towards wider educational reforms. Given that “alternative” ways of educating, of thinking, doing, and acting differently, “may be found both outside and inside the places officially designated at schools” (Noddings & Lees, 2014, pp. 1–2), humane education-oriented organizations (and others) are likely to play a significant role in advancing these pedagogies both within and outside of formal education.

Challenging oppressive representations and positioning of other animals requires us to work towards ways that acknowledge and respect, not deny and obscure, animal subjectivity in and outside of education and navigate the tensions between speaking on behalf of others. Sanctuaries play a key role in disrupting dominant conceptions about animals, as learning about the lives of individual animals (and the conditions under which their kin continue to be exploited) can change not only how we see the animals themselves, but their kin too (e.g.,
Individual narratives can thus disrupt narratives and social constructions that have been accepted as “truths”. Sanctuaries can open possibilities to find new stories to live by (Stibbe, 2015) by opening possibilities to imagine what peaceful multispecies coexistence could look like, where animal subjectivity and agency is foregrounded, and their individual narratives play an important role in challenging and transforming taken-for-granted narratives of their kin. Sanctuaries can play a role in disrupting assumptions about animals as depersonalized “species representatives” and objects for human use. Our understandings of motherhood and childhood and who has a right to childhood and motherhood can also be disrupted, while shedding a critical light on the practices that exploit the motherhood of some species, such as cows. Sanctuaries and what they reveal about our society can open up numerous possibilities for inquiry about the right to bodily liberty, the lines we draw between humans and animals and to what effects, as well as envision what multispecies communities founded on respect and non-violence could look like.

This study has aimed to address what appear to be missed opportunities for moving forward and effecting change, by foregrounding the importance of education and schooling in the wider socio-political transformations needed for animals to be considered as members and stakeholders in our (planetary) community, society and in sustainable futures. If we agree on disrupting animals-for-us narratives, we would do well to pay greater attention to the ways in which dominant modes of education and schooling currently (re)produce, normalize, and rationalize “our war against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015). Working at the crossroads of different disciplines, including education, multispecies childhood studies, sustainability and CAS is not without its challenges. Grappling with the multifaceted nature of the issues at hand can make it seem that with each layer and connection “uncovered,” the problems at hand appear direr, and too complex to solve. Yet it is in this dismal situation that both the necessity of, and opportunities for, effective alliances become more apparent.

This study has sought to shed light on the importance of strategizing for a more unified front amongst animal-focused education scholars. Given the strong pedagogical foundations that have already been built it is no longer so much about how to teach (as we now appear to have ample pedagogical frameworks and tools), but rather how to better integrate and implement them into teaching and learning, including how to integrate them within the wider field of environmental and sustainability education, where it appears (some) animals have been either left as an afterthought or no thought at all. In addition, this study has sought to shed light
on how tackling violence against animals is central to any conceivable effort in moving towards sustainable futures and as such, animal issues and transforming oppressive human-animal relations should be seen to be central to, not separate from, the future of environmental education.

6.2 Evaluation of current study

In hindsight, the challenges as well as successes of a study become clearer. The challenges of study are explored in the following sections, including the difficulties of navigating positionalities and linguistic terrains as a (CAS) researcher. In addition, possible directions for future research are explored.

Navigating linguistic terrain, audiences, and positionalities

This study arose out of interest in and concern over animals in education, and at the beginning of the study different conceptual tools were considered. Initially debating between the use of “ecodemocracy” or “sustainability” as a guiding principle, while ultimately interspecies sustainability was selected, given the centrality of “sustainability” in the educational debate (and curriculum) in Finland. Thus, it was seen as an appropriate conceptual bridge to begin to foreground animals in sustainability narratives and it offered possibilities for unifying promising pedagogical frameworks. Interspecies sustainability offers avenues for alliance building, and this study has sought to explore how it might help us move beyond “business as usual” and the impasse of educating for sustainability in multispecies communities. However, given the ways in which the very concept of sustainability can be understood differently and the problematic nature of universalizing discourses on “sustainable futures,” entering the precarious terrain of “sustainability” is not without its challenges. Yet “sustainability” is not leaving societal narratives or discourse anytime soon, on the contrary, the recent proliferation of this now omnipresent buzzword make it a discussion and debate CAS scholars and educators ought to be a part of.

Given that sustainability and particularly SD have been widely critiqued, and there is concern over whether sustainability as a concept “has the political depth” to effect changes to power relations and structures (Stratford & Wals, 2020, p. 6), and it would appear that different conceptual tools are required. It would seem that interspecies sustainability could at least serve as starting point and invitation for dialogue around the climate crises and sustainable futures that have so far too
readily side-lined and ignored the need to transform oppressive human-animal relations and interspecies sustainability (Bergmann 2019, 2021; Probyn-Rapsey et al., 2016) which could play a significant role in “the development of new ideas about sustainability and education” and in doing so could serve as parameters through which to begin to map out ways of working towards “paradigm-challenging policy forms” (Stratford & Wals, 2020, p. 7).

Linguistically this study navigates through uncertain terrain. Situating this study framing dominant human-animal relations “from the viewpoint of war” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 273) may appear controversial or implausible to some, yet the lived realities of animals, the hostility, violence, and death on unfathomable (and growing) scales and intensity would posit that this is indeed the case. In addition, it would appear, despite much discussion and debate on sustainability and the climate crises it appears that we generally continue to pursue an education “as if there were no planetary emergency” (Orr, 2004). It would appear that “business as usual” of education (and beyond) is closely linked to the safe slumber of a collective cognitive dissonance that remains around our use and oppression of other animals, our unwillingness to confront these violent realities brought on by our self-claimed “anthropocentric entitlement” (Arcari, 2020a). However, while the framing of war and violence are helpful in navigating the terrain of animals in education and can be used to interrogate the shortcomings of dominant sustainability frameworks, this does not presuppose that such framing would be as fitting in pedagogical practice.

Given the contested nature of the “sustainability” discourse, framing a study using interspecies sustainability may pose its own challenges, given that in navigating linguistic and conceptual landscapes one might run the risk of “using the wrong linguistic map and confuse the matter even further” (Arcari, 2020a, p. 341). In addition, the “interspecies” (or “multispecies”) concept can be critiqued, given “their implications in forms of classification and ontologies of separateness” (Celermajer et al. 2020, p. 11). It is thus with slight hesitation, but determined hope, that interspecies sustainability has been used as a conceptual tool to navigate pathways towards teaching and learning for multispecies flourishing, in efforts to seek ways to restory human-animal relations in ways that may pave ways towards a more just multispecies co-existence on this damaged (and dying) Earth. The language choices are closely connected to my positionality as an educator-researcher-advocate and balancing each “role” or “position” is a precarious balancing act which involves navigating each “role” and how they might effectively intersect. In speaking about or “for” other animals, navigating how to speak of
nonhuman motherhood and child-mother bonds across linguistic maps where familial relations, emotional lives and cultures are strategically and linguistically erased and obscured, brings into question whether to speak of a calf or child, udders or breasts, milk, or breastmilk. These questions sit uneasily with the balancing act of writing to broader audiences and attempting not to fall into reproducing epistemic violence against animals.

Seeking to “speak to” different audiences, including the broader environmental education field and CAS remains a tricky balancing act, as CAS audiences welcome more explicit discussions on animal exploitation, while the broader environmental protection field may be more “welcoming” of more subdued approaches. As a result, some overview of human-animal relations may appear repetitive to (some) audiences, while it may be new to others. In addition, as an educator, I understand the constraints within which teachers in formal education work (having been in, and continue to be, in that position myself), and I acknowledge the difficulties posed by disrupting the ways in which animals are currently represented and used in educational spaces and how in many instances welfare narratives may (currently) indeed be the one of the possible pathways when discussing so-called “farmed animals.” It is thus that I have aimed, despite critically examining the current state of education, to critique in solidarity with educators and students, who I see are at the frontlines of navigating a difficult terrain. I wanted to learn from humane educators, who work at the center of these challenges. Thus, navigating the relationship between research and practice is enveloped in questions of what is desirable (a vision) and what is currently feasible in practice.

Usefulness of a multi-angle approach?

While a multi-angle (or multidimensional) approach has served as an initial mapping, giving a birds-eye view of the complex terrain of animals in education in efforts to identify connections and thus formulate systemic solutions, it can also be a tricky balancing act. Seeking to cover such vast ground through a horizontal lens involves the risk of some findings remaining thin. Yet despite this, a horizontal analysis has allowed me to identify important intersections, relations, and connections, providing groundwork for further in-depth analyses to be carried out as a result (but which have remained beyond the scope of this thesis). These connections and relations are important to identify, as education represents one part of the climate crisis puzzle. Aiming to address a broad range of interconnected issues can lead to merely “scraping the surface” of complex issues, given the
limited space and scope for deep-diving into each issue at hand. As a result, aiming for a birds-eye view has limited the depth of the analysis and understanding of the intricacies of each issue, whether that be a profound analysis of one specific policy and its interconnected documents, or a deep-dive into one of the several educational frameworks presented in this study. In addition, focusing on school (cow) milk schemes and the exploitation of cows means that other animals and the webs of violence and exploitative practices are left unattended to in this study. Focusing on cows is not to imply that other animals lived experiences are any less important, neither does this study aim to be an example of “single-issue” campaigning, rather cows were selected as a case example because of their central (yet often overlooked) role in formal education.

In addition, balancing between global and national policies, navigating different pedagogical frameworks, and interviewing educators from outside the geographical location of this current study might appear inconsistent. However, through seeking to learn about the experiences and practices of humane educators across different locations, and given, that humane education is currently not practiced in Finland, is meant to allude to the pedagogical opportunities beyond the scope of current state of affairs. However, given the limited scope of interview participants, this study makes no claim to universalize the experiences of the respondents, but reiterates that these are “lessons from the field,” which have served as introductory explorations into the experiences of educators working in different educational settings and geographical locations, each grappling with “the animal question” in education in different, yet often similar, ways. By learning from and working with educators across formal and informal settings and different locations, we might be able to better “map out” further alliances and share strategies, and success stories, and learn from each other’s experiences and in this way, pave ways forward together. While the current state of education and schooling is critiqued in this study, this is not meant as a critique against teachers and students, but rather an urgent critique of the institution of education and the systems in which it is embedded. Throughout this study, the research has been guided by the question as to how one can be can be an effective ally for and with animals, as well as children and the educators, who are all implicated in the “hostile terrain” of disrupting hierarchical anthropocentrism in education. Given the magnitude of the issues we face (of which this study has only begun to scrape the surface), what are some of questions and avenues that could be further explored?
Suggestions for future research

Diverse opportunities arise from working at the crossroads of different disciplines and there are numerous opportunities for future research. For example, childhood studies could benefit from multispecies perspectives on the social construction of childhood and questions of interspecies’ rights to motherhood and childhood. Exploring educational futures from an interspecies sustainability perspective could help work towards educational reforms that offer just and responsive opportunities to the dire state of current affairs as opposed to a “business-as-usual” approach. The nascent field of political ecology of education (Lloro-Bidart, 2015; Meek & Lloro-Bidart, 2017) could be a particularly promising field of exploration through which to further explore the possibilities of an interspecies sustainability framework. The fundamental need to reimagine different relations, education, politics, friendships, and ways of living within our “multispecies commons” have widely been called for (e.g., Celermajer et al., 2020; Meijer, 2019; Orr, 2004, 2009; Pedersen, 2021; Russell & Spannring, 2019; Wadiwel, 2015). Continuing this project of reimaging a “new politics” for a multispecies commons requires that education is no longer left as an afterthought, and perhaps that some of the questions asked in education research might broaden their focus and embrace alliances (particularly concerning debate around pedagogical frameworks). In general, it would appear pertinent for greater attention to be paid to interspecies sustainability across disciplines and this study has aimed to contribute to the importance of an emerging field of “critical sustainability studies” (Bergmann, 2021) through the application of interspecies sustainability in educational research.

Working with teachers and young people through, for example participatory action research, could help build “a culture of collaborative enquiry” (Pine, 2009, p. 27), and serve to bridge the gap that still exists with (some) education research and education practice. More specifically, working with educators on how animal-inclusive pedagogies could be better implemented would be important and greater attention to teacher training is warranted in future research. In addition, participatory research with children and young people offers promising trajectories forward (see, e.g., Rautio et al., forthcoming), as research on the situated everyday relations in multispecies communities can shed light on how we might move towards more peaceable multispecies co-existence (and offer a refreshing “bottom-up” perspective as opposed to a “top-down” perspective). Furthermore, it is important to highlight how organizations, such as humane education organizations, could be promising partners in education research and the crucial role they play in
advancing the implementation of animal-inclusive pedagogies and creating change. Bridging the theory-practice gap might also help guide the questions asked in education research, particularly in relation to the ways in which “the effectiveness” of pedagogies are assessed and moving beyond attitudinal measures could help move humane education research forward. Overall, interdisciplinary and cross-movement collaboration could open different (promising) pathways working towards sustainable and just multispecies coexistence and systemic change.

### 6.3 Where do we go from here?

In order to envisage where we could go from here it is important to understand how we have arrived on our current path towards “eco-annihilation” (Abate, 2019) and how it is that this path of unsustainability continues to be sustained. Whatever name one might choose (ecocide, omnicide, eco-annihilation), it is clear that we are living in “paradoxical and perilous times rendered more so by a deficit of vision” (Orr, 2009, p. 10), characterized by accommodatory responses rather than reformative change that would be propelled by a transformative vision (Orr, 2004). To a considerable extent this accommodatory path of “business as usual” is sustained by not only to some extent by the belief that technology and “green” economic growth will save us, but the unwillingness to acknowledge that transforming hostile human-animal relations ought to be central to the transformative vision needed. When speaking of an educational reform for interspecies sustainability it would perhaps be more suitable to speak of reforms in plural, given the numerous transformations that are required, both within and outside of education, and the different and numerous crises that are faced (ones that are unequally caused and felt).

Multispecies flourishing and conceivable efforts to build an interspecies sustainable future require seeking “to ameliorate and remove sources of human intersubjective, institutional and epistemic violence against animals” (Wadiwel, 2015, p. 294). Disruptive and (re)constructive strategies work in tandem, through narrative disruptions spaces become open for restorying and reimagining what peaceable multispecies relations could look like. Disrupting and moving past the occlusions and barriers posed by the educational infrastructure requires pedagogical openings and strategies, but it is also dependent on broader societal shifts and transformations, thus educational reforms of the kind needed “in omnicidal times” (Pedersen, 2021) can be seen as a multidimensional endeavor and only some of the dimensions have been preliminarily mapped out in this study.
While navigating the complex landscape of interspecies justice and interspecies sustainability is no easy feat, it is a necessary one in order to build “healthy policy ecologies” (Stratford & Wals 2020) within and beyond education. Attending to the violence that underpins our relations with animals is central to any conceivable effort to build sustainable futures and is a prerequisite for respectful co-existence on a damaged Earth. Education and schools could serve as “spaces of peace” (Wadiwel, 2015) and foster peaceable relations with animals and nature or continue to play their role in the “politics of unsustainability” (Blühdorn, 2011), implicating children and young people in the practices served. Building critical and creative policy alternatives requires tackling the root causes of our current path of unsustainability, namely hierarchical anthropocentrism. This study has sought to explore how interspecies sustainability could serve as a foundational principle guiding institutional practices and decision-making required for the demanding task ahead in seeking ways for a just and peaceable multispecies coexistence.

The transformative opportunities offered by the educational frameworks examined in this study demonstrate already-existing tools for teaching and learning differently for a more peaceable multispecies co-existence, by foregrounding animal interests in education and thus fostering multispecies flourishing (Russell & Spannring, 2019). Yet pedagogical know-how, although vital, is not sufficient in itself, rather the implementation of this pedagogical knowledge is central to the educational reforms needed, requiring greater attention and disruption to the foundations and structures of education and schooling. Given the ambitious task of an educational reform that challenges taken-for-granted anthropocentric conceptions of sustainability and animals-for-us narratives, effective alliances (George, 2019) within and beyond education are necessary and have been called for in other fields too (e.g., Abate, 2015, 2019; Fitzgerald 2019). This study has sought to serve as an introductory exploration for moving towards an educational reform for interspecies sustainability and how animals could be understood as stakeholders in education and sustainable futures. It has also sought to serve as an invitation for an interdisciplinary effective alliance for interspecies sustainability, where schools would ultimately constitute spaces of interspecies peace, not vehicles and spaces of violence.

Attending to the role of schools as spaces through which violence against animals is reinforced and rationalized requires disrupting the position of schools in the AIC. One way to do so, and for which effective alliances are needed, is to stop the flow of cow’s milk through schools (and children), a scheme in which both animals and children are commodified (cows as “milk-machines” and children as
future consumers). There are opportunities for schools to “lead the way” in working for an interspecies sustainable futures by disrupting the AIC (which some schools have already done). How then do we move from despair to action? Stemming from growing recognition of the shortcomings of the current path of unsustainability and the apparent lack of a coherent systematic approach to challenge the strong-hold of the AIC in formal schooling, it would appear that to adequately respond to our own calls (as animal-focused education scholars) and the calls of numerous others on the urgent need for educational reforms, collective organizing and strategizing are needed to disentangle the webs of the AIC in schools, for example through the cessation of the flow of cow’s milk through schools.

While environmental educators have long formed networks and coalitions, animal-focused education appears to be missing such collective organizing that could adequately represent the growth of the field and foreground the importance of representing animal interests in education. This could be one avenue through which to work to ensure animal interests could be better represented in education. Two examples of broader alliance building or organized networks in animal-focused education can be seen in the Common Worlds Collective and Humane Education Coalition. Given that animal-focused education in its different “forms” (e.g., ecocritical pedagogies, common worlds pedagogies, critical animal pedagogies, humane education) already converges on many key points, this alludes to the opportunities for building a more unified coalition for us to be effective allies with and for animals in efforts to create transformative change. Such a unified alliance could open opportunities for constructive dialogue with other networks and actors, such as those that foreground sustainability and environmental education (still predominantly from an anthropocentric perspective). If seeking a more peaceable multispecies co-existence on this damaged Earth is deemed “radical”, while continuing to sustain the unsustainable leading to our peril is “normal, natural, necessary”, how might this story of living in “omnicidal times” (Pedersen, 2021) end? Freeing ourselves and other animals from the confines of the destructive stories we are embedded in and the “knowledge” constructions that are wrought with violence and used to silence others might open space for the creation of better, more peaceable stories, which we all have a role in narrating, and perhaps by learning to listen—those silenced voices will be heard.

How might we move from despair to hope? It has been said that hope “comes from doing the things before us that need to be done” (Orr, 2004). With this in mind, and to conclude, it feels appropriate to return to the notion of solutionary (Weil, 2016) and reflect, how we could better adopt a solutionary mind-set and frame our
research and practice accordingly. Students and young people are already practicing active environmental citizenship by mobilizing and demanding change (Fridays for Future). So, how could we work together with them? Is it not about time we joined them and organized a coalition, an effective alliance, for **interspecies sustainable futures**, within and beyond education? What could we achieve if we worked together as if “our house is on fire” (Thunberg, 2019), because it is. This study began, and ends, with what can be seen as clichés: recounting the crises we face, reciting the mobilization of the Fridays for Future movement and Greta Thunberg’s calls for change. Yet, it is beyond belief (and often beyond words) how we continue to carry on with “business as usual” (not only in education) at the expense of billions of animals, children, and indeed planetary survival. It is thus with trepidation (and some glimpses of hope) that this study has sought avenues for effective alliances through which we could craft pathways for a more just and peaceable multispecies coexistence.
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Appendix

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the educational work of your organisation?

2. What are the objectives of your program?

3. Is there a specific educational framework or approach that you use? Why have you chosen this framework?

4. What issues/topics does your programme focus on and why? How did you select these issues/topics?

5. Do you work directly with educational institutions? How have you established partnerships with educational institutions?

6. What have been some of the challenges and how have you overcome them when working with educational institutions and/or other third parties?

7. Can you give an example of how you would address issues in human-animal relationships that may seem controversial to some people (e.g., animals in the food system)?

8. How have you measured success of your programs?

9. What kind of feedback have you received about your programmes (from students, teachers, parents, school administrators, others)?

10. Do you see a possibility of issues/topics your programme focuses on being integrated into the formal education system? What do you think would need to happen for this to be possible?

11. What are some future visions for your work and how do you see the field developing?

12. Please feel free to add any additional information.
188. Louhela, Helena (2019) Sexual violence: voiced and silenced by girls with multiple vulnerabilities

189. Ameir, Mwanakhamis (2020) Supporting active learning teaching techniques through collaborative learning and feedback in Zanzibar, a challenging educational context

190. Sutela, Keita (2020) Exploring the possibilities of Dalcroze-based music education to foster the agency of students with special needs: a practitioner inquiry in a special school


192. Haapakoski, Jari (2020) Market exclusions and false inclusions: mapping obstacles for more ethical approaches in the internationalization of higher education


194. Sirkko, Rikka (2020) Opettajat ammatillisina toimijoina inklusiota edistämässä

195. Kiem-Junes, Hel (2020) Associations of social skills and social support with well-being-related outcomes at work and in higher education: heart rate variability, engagement, and burnout

196. Viitasaari, Markku (2020) How to deal with the syntonic comma in music education?: recognition, preferences of usage, and utility

197. Matengu, Marika (2020) Towards just pre-primary education in rural Namibia


199. Sobociński, Marta (2021) Patterns of adaptive regulation in collaborative learning: a multimodal methodological approach


201. Pellikka, Anne (2021) Pre-service primary school teachers’ teacher identity development in the context of science education

202. Koivuniemi, Marika (2021) Student interpretations of their self-regulated learning in individual and collaborative learning situations

203. Kokko, Marjut (2021) Kohti uudenlaista opettajautua: yhteisopettajuus edistämässä opettajien yhteistyötä ja inklusiota koulussa

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