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SUSTAINABILITY AND JUSTICE: FARM ANIMALS IN RURAL TOURISM AND LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Abstract

Farm animals are virtually ignored in tourism studies concerning sustainability and justice. This study argues that this conflicts with animal ethics and is a missed opportunity to reflect on sustainability and justice in tourism. It adopts an ecofeminist care ethics perspective and conduct an autoethnographic research about farm animals considered "silenced" individuals belonging to a marginalised group in rural tourism. The case is used to discuss farm animal justice and identify some lessons about sustainability and justice in broader terms, more precisely about the power-responsibility link, some major obstacles, possible change agents, and the time horizon for broad radical improvements. This study highlights the potentials and challenges of autoethnography to gain insights about marginalised groups and extract lessons relevant to broader topics.

Keywords: sustainability, justice, animal ethics, care ethics, rural tourism, autoethnography

1. Introduction

The way sustainability is discussed and practiced in tourism has severe limitations in terms of justice for animals, and alternative views and practices are needed. The treatment of animals in tourism varies depending on the species and the contexts, and different approaches to animal ethics and justice are adopted in the literature (Fennell, 2012a; Fennell/Sheppard, 2021). For example, some studies adopt an animal rights position (e.g., Fennell, 2012b) and others use ecofeminism (e.g., Yudina/Fennell, 2013). A few scholars discuss the latter in relation to sustainability (Bertella, 2019; Usui/Funck, 2021) and justice (Fennell/Sheppard, 2021; Shaheer et al., 2021). Recently, a post-humanism approach has been proposed to explore animal issues in tourism (Guia, 2021; Kline, 2021). These studies share an underlying criticism about the way sustainability and justice are understood and practiced, namely as a domain of interest exclusively focused on humans. This indicates the opportunity to use the case of animals to explore less anthropocentric and more just views on sustainability in tourism.

Discussions about farm animals, sustainability and justice are almost absent in the tourism literature. The category of farm animals comprises various species that are employed

for agricultural purposes. In tourism, such animals are used to enhance gastronomic, cultural, educational, therapeutic, and entertaining experiences, and are considered resources contributing to economic and socio-cultural sustainability (e.g., Lordkipanidz et al., 2005; Barbieri 2013; Daugstad/Kirchengast, 2013; Hassink et al., 2017). Among the increasing number of tourism and leisure studies that take a critical stance on the conceptualisation and treatment of animals as mere resources for human use, only a minority explores the case of farm animals other than equines (Yudina/Fennell, 2013; Venegas/López, 2018; Bertella, 2018, 2021; Mognard, 2018; Prada-Trigo, 2018; Tully/Carr, 2020a, 2020b, 2021). Among such studies, justice is not discussed in depth.

This study argues that the case of justice for farm animals deserves attention not only from an animal ethics point of view, but also because it helps us reflect on sustainability and justice in broader terms. Investigation into the treatment of farm animals, who are completely dependent on humans, can offer points of reflection on the treatment of "the others" who, for different reasons, don't have the power and/or possibility to express and argue for their perspective on the tourism experiences by which they are influenced (Lockwood, 1999; Donovan, 2006). Moreover, it can be hypothesized that farm animals are conceptually placed in between the human and the natural world, and therefore farm animal-human relations can be interpreted as indicative of our relationship with the natural environment (Myers/Saunders, 2002; Vining, 2003). Thus, discussing the case of farm animals in tourism can help uncover challenges and potentials for rethinking sustainability, social, and ecological justice.

This study used an ecofeminist care ethics perspective, and asked: How are farm animals treated in rural tourism? What can be learned about sustainability and justice from the way farm animals are treated in rural tourism? This study adopted an autoethnographic approach to explore rural tourism in an Italian area where the sector is partly controlled by some regulations aiming to promote sustainability. This study's contribution is threefold. The first and second contributions build on the theoretical reflections presented in the next chapter: this is the first tourism study that deeply discusses farm animal justice, and it answers the call by Jamal and Higham (2021) about less anthropocentric approaches to sustainability and justice in tourism. The third contribution regards the chosen methodology, which is explained in the third chapter and concerns the potentials and challenges of autoethnography to explore tourism experiences involving animals as marginalised "silenced" individuals, and to extract lessons on broader topics, which, in this case, are sustainability and justice.

2. Literature review

This chapter starts by presenting the main tenets of ecofeminist care ethics, with particular attention to aspects relevant to sustainability and farm animal justice. Then, it presents how sustainability is discussed in rural and tourism studies, and what role farm animals have in such discussions.

2.1.Ecofeminist care ethics, sustainability, and justice

Ecofeminism is a useful perspective for studying sustainability and justice. Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s from feminism and environmentalism and consists in a set of discourses that share a critical view on power and a rejection of dualisms (Buckingham, 2004). Such dualisms are relevant to sustainability and justice, and concern the relations between diverse groups of people, for example men and women, as highlighted by early ecofeminists, and between humans and non-human beings and entities, particularly nature

(Adams/Gruen, 2014; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2014). From its origin, ecofeminism has been concerned about environmental and social justice (Gaard, 1993; Adams/Gruen, 2014). Ecofeminists advocate for a departure from the utilitarian view of nature as a pool of resources for a privileged group of humans (Buckingham, 2004; Shiva/Mies, 2014; Cross 2018). Ecofeminism proposes a worldview rooted in the values of care for others, including human and non-human beings, and solidarity (Buckingham, 2004; Shiva/Mies, 2014).

The way ecofeminists, especially those adhering to the care tradition, discuss animal issues is particularly suitable to explore the case of farm animals. One of the tenets of ecofeminism is the relevance of connections and interdependence among beings (Tronto, 1987; Gilligan, 1995; Noddings, 2013). The idea of interconnectedness is applied to critically consider our relations with animals, which are often characterised by unbalanced power relations and human dominion (Donovan, 2006). In line with other animal ethics positions, ecofeminists consider animals as sentient beings that deserve moral considerations. What is peculiar about ecofeminism is the emphasis on fundamental respect towards individual animals that, in practice, is translated into responsibility and caring behaviour (Gaard, 1993; Donovan/Adams, 2007; Gruen, 2015). Based on this central role of showing respect and care, some ecofeminists consider the use of animals for food as the ultimate form of oppression, and advocate, when practically feasible, for a vegan lifestyle (Curtin, 1991; Gaard, 2002). This position is particularly suitable for discussing the treatment of farm animals who, in many cases, are bred, raised, and killed to be consumed as food.

Few scholars have discussed the potential of an ecofeminist care ethics perspective for rethinking justice in tourism. Such a possibility is explored by Camargo, Jamal and Wilson (2016) who note that there is a gap in sustainable tourism research and practice concerning justice towards communities that are heavily influenced by tourism but whose members' voices are not represented. The same authors present ecofeminism as a new sustainable tourism paradigm that can truly promote the host communities' well-being (Jamal et al., 2013). Similarly, Jamal and Camargo (2014) propose a joint ethics of justice and care characterised by virtuous guiding principles for tourism developers, policy makers and marketers, and call for actions emerging through participatory approaches that can compensate for the missing cultural link between justice and sustainability. The key aspect of responsibility characterising ecofeminist care ethics is highlighted by Jamal (2019), who considers the political dimension of responsibility in relation to structural injustice, which, according to the author, is widespread but often ignored by tourists.

The potential of applying ecofeminist care ethics to justice is relevant to animals in tourism and can lead to important broader considerations. Some tourism studies have applied ecofeminism to explore the involvement of animals (Fennell, 2012a, 2015; Yudina/Fennell, 2013; Yudina/Grimwood, 2016; Winter, 2020), and, among these, Shaheer et al. (2021) focus explicitly on justice to investigate animal welfare destination boycotts, making the role of political responsibility in promoting improvements evident. Fennell and Sheppard (2021) also focus on animal justice and use a scale of justice according to which care ethics is linked to deep justice. The latter is described as fundamentally different from lower forms of justice, which aim to minimise suffering or reassure tourists about animal conditions without investing in real improvements. Instead, deep justice is characterised by bonds of attachment with individual animals, respect, love and responsibility, and implemented by people working to better the life of the animals. Such understandings of animal justice are also discussed by Kline (2021), who frames ecofeminism in the broader perspective of post-humanism. She suggests that the dominant behaviour towards animals in tourism, which is capitalising on them, "correlates to other forms of abuse, oppressions, and injustices" (p. 195) towards marginalised individuals and groups.

The considerations presented by Kline (2021) accord with what is argued by the current study, which is that discussing farm animal justice can give us the opportunity to reflect on justice in a broader sense. This is also in accordance with other studies, for example Vinnari, Räsänen, and Jokinen (2013), suggesting that the way people value animals can be indicative of their underlying belief systems and orientation towards justice. This study builds on the aforementioned tourism studies (Jamal et al., 2013; Jamal/Camargo, 2014; Camargo et al., 2016; Jamal, 2019) that adopt a care ethics perspective. In line with the animal welfare study by Shaheer et al. (2021), the current study expands on the proposal presented in several contributions of the edited book by Rickly and Kline (2021) and in the study by García-Rosell and Hancock (2022) to view animals in tourism as workers and include them among the relevant stakeholders of tourism. Such inclusion underpins the view of farm animals as representatives of the "the others", meaning the individuals and groups involved and influenced by tourism whose perspectives are usually silenced.

2.2.Rural sustainable tourism and farm animals

Considerations about farm animals are almost absent in the debate about sustainability in rural tourism. The 1994 special issue of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* highlights the challenges and benefits of rural tourism by regarding the local communities and suppliers, tourists, and environment (Bramwell 1994). The link between sustainability and animals is commented on explicitly by Sharpley (2003), and this is in relation to the possibility of zoonosis that could compromise the sector. More recent rural tourism studies investigate sustainability in relation to various aspects, including regional development strategies, alliances, and business models (e.g., Hjalager/Johansen, 2013; Cunha et al., 2020; Sharpley, 2020). The few studies that mention farm animals in rural tourism consider them in relation to the production of local food and their potential to attract tourists (e.g., Lordkipanidze et al., 2005; Daugstad/Kirchengast, 2013). Thus, in tourism studies about rural tourism sustainability, farm animals are hardly mentioned, and the few considerations made in their regard tend to follow the logic of animals as resources.

A slightly stronger link between sustainability and farm animals can be observed in some rural studies. Buller and Morris (2008) note that farm animals are viewed either as threats or vehicles to sustainability, depending on how the livestock is managed, especially when it comes to the resources the animals need, and on different emphasis posed on the socio-economic and the environmental dimensions of sustainability (Buller/Morris, 2008; Evans/Yarwood, 2008). Some rural studies consider animals as targets of sustainability by including animal welfare in the sustainability discourse (Buller/Morris, 2003, 2008; Buller et al., 2018; Losada-Espinosa et al., 2020). Still, this way of linking sustainability to farm animals is framed in human terms as a form of marketising animal welfare, i.e., a business opportunity to market products and destinations as animal-friendly (Miele/Lever, 2014).

Among the forms of rural tourism considered relevant to sustainability is agritourism, which concerns farms producing food and offering hospitality services to tourists (Phillip et al., 2010). What makes agritourism potentially sustainable is its embeddedness in the local context, particularly its characteristics of offering various activities across sectors, employing the local workforce, contributing to short supply chains, relying on self-financing especially in the start-up phase, and being attractive for a variety of segments (e.g., Di Gregorio, 2017). This is especially true for countries, for example Italy, were the agritourism sector is regulated by law (e.g., Lupi et al., 2017). The value created in the agritourism business model is usually

understood as experiential value for tourists, economic and socio-cultural value for farms and the local community, and related conservation benefits for the rural landscape.

In reflecting on the beneficiaries of agritourism as an oft-cited sustainable business model and adopting an ecofeminist care ethics perspective, the unjust treatment of the animals becomes clear. There is no evidence in the literature that agritourism businesses differ from the dominant trend observed in rural tourism of animals being considered resources with value that is instrumental to human needs. To the author's knowledge, only one tourism study has discussed the rejection of the view of animals as resources by some agritourism operators (Bertella, 2018). This one study uses an institutional entrepreneurship perspective to present farmers as change agents promoting a new form of morality that, potentially, can contribute to the emergence of a new type of agritourism. Apart from this study, also in agritourism humans in different roles (owners, managers, employees, partners, local community members, customers, tourists) are beneficiaries, while the farm animals are resources.

3. Methodology

This study adopted an ecofeminist perspective and applied autoethnography to answer the research questions concerning the treatment of farm animals in rural tourism and what can be learned about sustainability and justice from such case. Few studies discuss the methodologies relevant to explore animals in tourism. Among these, Bertella (2022a) adopts an ecofeminist perspective and discusses some studies that reflect on methodologies that can be adopted when animals are conceptualised as subjects (e.g., Danby et al., 2019; Haanpää et al. 2019; Bertella, 2021). Then, she identifies three relevant approaches to explore the animals' perspective on tourism experiences: a fictional approach, a multispecies mixed approach, and multispecies ethnography. Autoethnography is discussed in relation to the latter approach, and is exemplified with reference to the involvement of animals as co-researchers (e.g., Nottle/Young, 2019), and in relation to egomorphism, i.e. the exploration of others' inner worlds through the adoption of a 'like me' approach (e.g., Wilkinson, 2018). Autoethnography plays an important role also in the narrative approach adopted by Tomassini et al. (2022) to explore wildlife sanctuaries. Such study is inspired by posthuman "thinking with" methodologies (e.g., Haraway, 2016; Horau/Kline, 2022) and based on the collaboration of two scholars with two people with first-hand experience about wildlife in sanctuaries.

I chose to combine authoethnography and the latter approach, which consists of collaborating closely with people with relevant first-hand experience, to explore the case of farm animals. Such choice was supported not only by the aforementioned studies, but also by Ellis et al. (2011) who argues regarding autoethnographers immersing themselves in the stories of wounded individuals to give science a larger role in making the world more just. Autoethnography is grounded in a relational ethics of care (Ellis, 2007; Ellis et al., 2011), and "the heart of autoethnography is connections" (Bochner, 2017: 79): connections between our cognitive capacities and our emotions, and connections in relation to the individuals whose stories we want to tell. Such a relational approach fits this study's perspective, making autoethnography particularly relevant to explore the issue of justice for farm animals. Due to my limited familiarity with farm animals, I considered useful to rely on a close collaboration with people with first-hand experience about farm animals, especially rescued ones. Such collaboration is explained in the following paragraphs, just after some considerations about the selection of the context and the case.

Due to the emphasis on sustainability in the regulation of the rural tourism sector by national and regional laws, which limits the use of the denomination "agritourism" to farms whose incomes derive primarily by agriculture and secondarily by tourism, Tuscany (Italy) was selected as a relevant context (e.g., Randelli/Martellozzo, 2019). Several of the typical food products of Tuscany that are used to market the destination and are sold to the tourists are animal-derived (for example, cheese and meat), making the case of this region particularly relevant to investigate farm animals in tourism. An online search allowed for identifying an agritourism business that belongs to an association of sanctuaries for animals. Contacting a farm withs a prominent focus on animal well-being was considered a good way to enter the field without exposing myself to the emotional distress that can derive from investigating possible unethical phenomena (Kline, 2018). This is particularly important in relation to the chosen research methodology, autoethnography, which is about producing meaningful knowledge grounded in personal experience through thick descriptions of relational practices, values, and beliefs (Ellis et al., 2011). This study's fieldwork consisted of a three-day visit to the selected agritourism business and its surroundings. During this period, I stayed at the farm, visited the surrounding area, engaged in several conversations with the owners, and met the animals.

About the data collection and the way research is communicated, autoethnographers employ various methods and write about their lived experiences to evoke reflections and emotions, engage the readers, and bring them inside the stories that are told (Ellis/Bochner, 2000; Ellis et al., 2011; Bochner, 2017; Bochner/Adams, 2020). Journaling, discussed as particularly valuable in some tourism studies based on relational methodologies (e.g., Scarles/Sanderson, 2016; Stinson et al., 2022), was adopted as a reflective practice to deeply explore my lived experience. During the fieldwork and for the following four days, I kept a journal to note down the reflections and emotions provoked by the visit to the agritourism business and the surrounding area. Such journal entries provided the data that, supplemented with additional data gained through a semi-structured interview with one of the owners of the agritourism business a few weeks after the visit, were employed to develop an autoethnographic story. This story, which is presented in the Findings chapter, was written in the first person and, to engage the readers, a picture of one of the main characters was included. The first and the final draft of the story were read and discussed with one of the farm owners to ensure that the reported direct speeches were in line with her thoughts and that framing the story in terms of justice was in accord to the ideals of the sanctuary.

Openness and reflexivity were important aspects of this study's methodology. Ethically-relevant issues were discussed with the agritourism business. To create trust through similarity (Fontana/Frey, 2005; MacDonald/Montford, 2014), I disclosed to them my adherence to veganism based on some cues on their website that indicated that they were vegans, too. Openness was maintained in the writing of this paper to meet the requirement of reflexivity (Gilgun, 2010). An important feature of autoethnography is that researchers elaborate on their lived experiences and put their most intimate thoughts on paper (Bochner, 2017; Edwards, 2021), something that requires introspection, which is the basis of reflexivity. Reflexivity considerations are also considered vital by some scholars, including scholars discussing sustainability, to ensure transparency about the values on which researchers' positions rely and, presumably, are influenced by in terms of ethics and spirituality (Grunwald, 2004; Knaggård et al., 2018; Bertella, 2022a, b, c). The literature review in this paper presented my ethical position (ecofeminism), and the use of the first person in the autoethnographic story presented in the Findings chapter highlights the fact that what has been reported are my feelings and reflections.

4. Findings

The muddy soil is still iced from the low night temperature, and the weak December sun is appearing from behind the hills. I put on my jacket and walk towards the fence where the animals are kept, a few metres from my apartment at the farm.

I arrive at the fence and look around. Ludovica and Diego, the young couple owning and managing the agritourism business, are feeding the animals. With them is Umberto, Ludovica's nephew. Coming from such a big town as Rome, he looks enthusiastic about visiting his aunt for the weekend. He runs around in a pair of oversized gum boots, opening and closing the fence gate and petting the animals.

The animals. I have seen their pictures on the agritourism business website, and now I'll meet them in person. Ludovica has promised to tell me their stories. I imagine that this visit will reinforce my view about the unjust way animals are often treated in agriculture. It will shatter completely the dreamy picture of the idyllic rural life on the countryside, which the locals are so proud of and use extensively to sell the destination to tourists. The Tuscan countryside landscape is famous worldwide for its soft hills, vineyards, olive trees, and small farms. For sheep grazing on the grass, scattered in green and yellow fields. I'm looking forward to meeting some of these sheep.

Frida is the first sheep I meet. "When Frida arrived at the farm," Ludovica explains, "she had a bad eye infection, and she just had a stroke that left her mouth half paralysed. Her life was terrible … the farmers wouldn't spend money and time to heal her … so we took her. We contacted a veterinarian … such vets, you know … those who work with farm animals, have a different approach to the animals than the ones working with pets. They lack the competence and the experience to heal sick animals. They can give heavy medicines, like antibiotics, but at one point they just put the animals to sleep … when the costs are too high, or the animal is old. It's not easy to find good, professional help when it comes to farm animals' health. Some vets are happy to work with us because they have the chance to learn how to heal the animals. So … Frida was lucky to come to us!"

While listening to Frida's story, I look into her eyes (fig. 1) and wonder how she would tell her story.

Fig. 1. Frida (Source: La Tana del Bianconiglio)

Ludovica continues: “We would like to rescue more animals … but it costs to take care of them: food, veterinary expenses … time! It’s true that the sanctuary can attract some visitors, and we somehow use it to profile our products, like on the labels that mention our respect for the nature and the animals, but still … the costs are high. If we were living closer to a town, we could have relied on more volunteer work, which would have helped.”

My attention is captured by some goats. I’m impressed by their beauty, their shiny fur, and their lively eyes. More sheep and some goats are approaching, slowly and carefully. Ludovica tells me about their stories. Most stories are about mothers who give birth to lambs and kids, one after the other, for all their life. This is their “job” at the farms: they are “*fattrici*”. Martina, Eva and Dina, now living at the agritourism, were such animals. After many pregnancies and births, these animals’ bodies can’t take it anymore and are considered “*a fine carriera*” (at the end of their career). There is no retirement from such a “job.” “*A fine carriera*” animals are killed at the farm or sent to the slaughterhouse where they enter the “*catena di smontaggio*” (disassembly chain) that turns their bodies into meat products. This is also how the lives of many male animals end. This can happen when they are still very young and it had been the destiny of Merlino, Dina’s lamb who, luckily, was rescued in time. Lambs are needed so that sheep produce milk that is used to make *pecorino* (cheese), but they have little value as their flesh is rarely consumed compared to years ago and almost only during Easter festivities. In the logic of the agribusiness, lambs are often considered waste.

“We come from Rome,” Ludovica explains. “Since we moved here, we have learned quite a lot about the way farms are managed. Small farms are rarely very small, at least in this area, and they keep quite a lot of animals. They aren’t as people imagine, at least when it comes to how animals live. Sadly … it is in the logic of the business. I’m not saying that farmers like it … but … as a matter of fact, the animals must produce something that has an economic value, otherwise … they are a cost that the farmers don’t want or can’t afford to have. Sometimes, we are asked by the farmers to take the animals that they can’t use. If we can rescue them, we do it, but we don’t buy them … that would create a vicious circle. Some animals are just left to die. I have seen with my own eyes the graves where sometimes the animal bodies, including those of the young animals ... those not even registered, are disposed. Of course… this is far from the eyes of the tourists … You can’t imagine the horror! From far away, these farms look idyllic … if you get close … well… that is another story. Some have the certification of agritourism or organic farms ... suggesting a form of respect for nature … but … where is the respect for the animals?”

I leave the fence, petting the head of Diana, a gentle pink pig. Ludovica tells me that Diana was the smallest and weakest of 12 piglets born at a farm, and she was given to her by the farmer as he was sure that she couldn’t survive. I spot another pig, pink and black, inside a smaller fence. Ludovica explains to me that her name is Senia. She is a *cinta* breed pig and she doesn’t get along very well with the other pigs. Senia’s story is quite dramatic. Some years ago, the local newspapers reported her escape from a truck on its way to the slaughterhouse. People were moved by her story and the association of animal sanctuaries took responsibility to find her a safe place. I observe Senia: she seems very calm and quiet. I can’t imagine her fear during the escape from the running truck.

I spend the rest of my days at the agritourism business and visiting the surrounding area. I don’t meet more animals, but I see that their flesh and the cheese made from their milk are included in the menus of the local restaurants. The waiters casually ask if I want cheese on my pasta. I think about the cruelty hidden behind such a kind question. I think about Frida, Martina, Eva, Dina, and Merlino. An expression comes into my mind: the banality of evil. Unjust, sometimes cruel acts are not committed and supported by “monsters,” but by normal people. Ludovica was particularly clear about this point: the farmers treat the animals as they do to satisfy the expectations of the consumers and the tourists. Farms must appear as nice, safe places to the tourists, who want to relax in the countryside and taste local foods, including meat and cheese that the farmers produce following the profit logic. I ask myself what extent the local people and tourists know stories like the ones I was told by Ludovica: whether they know them and decide to ignore them, whether they are just fine with them, or they really don’t know them. Such stories are well hidden behind the nice landscape illustrated in the postcards and in the menus inviting people to taste *pecorino* and *cinta*. I wonder how many Martinas are behind the *pecorino*, and how many Senias behind the *cinta* of the restaurants I have visited in these days.

Before leaving, I chat with Diego while choosing the organic products I want to buy to bring home: pasta, oil, and legumes. He tells me about the difficulties they are meeting to install solar panels. The local rural landscape is part of the cultural heritage, and regulations don’t allow solar panels for aesthetic reasons. I think that such a way to regulate the landscape is anachronistic and even hypocritical, just like the idyllic picture of rural farming where humans and animals live in harmony.

To my surprise, a few days after my visit, I find out that I had seen one of the animals living at the sanctuary before my visit. Some months ago, my cousin had found a sheep lying motionless at the edge of the road. There were no farms close by, and she took the sheep to a

veterinarian. The sheep died after giving birth to two lambs, who were named Gianni and Lapo. My cousin filmed the lambs and shared the video on social media, asking for help to find a place where the lambs could live. She eventually contacted the association of animal sanctuaries, and then Ludovica and Diego, who took them in. Sadly, Gianni didn't make it, but it was a relief to know that Lapo now lives at the sanctuary. This episode left me with some hope: sometimes, people who care find a way to meet each other and improve the lives of some animals. Maybe it is true what the saying says about the only way to save the world, which is saving one person at a time. It could be said that the only way to realize a more just rural tourism industry is improving the life of one animal at a time.

5. Discussion

To explore how farm animals are treated in rural tourism and what can be learned about sustainability and justice from such case, this chapter starts by discussing justice for farm animals as it emerges from the presented autoethnographic story. This discussion relies on the ideas presented in the literature review, namely the ecofeminist care ethics and the scale of justice proposed by Fennell and Sheppard (2021). Then, it identifies four lessons about sustainability and justice in broader terms, namely: the necessary ethical dimension of the power-responsibility link, the existence of major structural obstacles to justice, the possible role of entrepreneurs as change agents, and the long-time horizon for broad and radical improvements.

5.1.Farm animal justice in tourism

The findings help expand on what emerged from the literature review about how animals are considered and used in rural tourism. The scholarly contributions from the tourism and rural studies literature show that animals enter the tourism sector as resources and/or workers (e.g., Miele/Lever, 2014; Rickly/Kline, 2021). The present findings confirm such conceptualisation for farm animals. More precisely, the way farm animals are sometimes conceptualised and treated can be described by comparing them to machines: they are kept alive until their lives can lead to some economic gain. Some examples are the sheep of the story: they are "*fattrici*", mothers giving birth and producing milk continuously. When the animals' productivity decreases, or is not there in the first place as in the case of the lambs, the animals are considered to be commodities (meat products) or waste. All these conceptualisations (machine, commodity, waste) are diametrically opposite to the ecofeminist ideals of care and respect (Donovan, 2006; Donovan/Adams, 2007).

Such conceptualisation and treatment of farm animals can be related to no or shallow justice as discussed by Fennell and Sheppard (2021). The case shows that there is some awareness by the farmers about the possibility that some of their behaviours can provoke suffering for the animals and, presumably, this is part of the reason why they sometimes ask to the agritourism business functioning as a sanctuary to take some animals. Still, the economic logic dominates, leading to a factual denial of animal sentience, in contrast with all animal ethics positions (Fennell, 2012a). Such oversight is accompanied by the image of an idyllic rurality about animals living in harmony with humans, and this serves the commercial purpose to sell the destination to the tourists as well as the agricultural products to the consumers. This relates to the shallow form of justice discussed by Fennell and Sheppard (2020) concerning reassuring the tourists about animal welfare without any real commitment to it. The case suggests that the life of farm animals in non-industrialised farms is not as often

imagined and depicted, and such farms are not completely discontented from the industrial food system as they are subject to the same logic.

The findings uncover some extremely cruel behaviours towards farm animals. Although the findings don't indicate how spread such behaviours are, the severity of their cruelty, for example let an animal suffer from a curable disease as Frida's eye infection, is such that it would be morally wrong to underestimate them or dismiss them as exceptions. These behaviours are against animal welfare regulations, but the findings suggest that the system is not able to capture possible episodes of noncompliance. The findings report also about few possibilities of improvements for the animal conditions in general, as demonstrated by the limited competence and experience of the veterinaries in relation to farm animals, which also suggests a certain injustice across species. Such dark aspect of the rural sector, including agritourism as well as farms producing food targeting tourists, can be described referring to a lack of justice (Fennell/Sheppard, 2021) and a rejection of one of the core tenets of ecofeminism, which is the human responsibility to care for the animals (Gaard, 1993; Donovan, 2006; Donovan/Adams, 2007; Gruen, 2015).

It is because of such lack of protection from suffering that associations such as animal sanctuaries operate, and especially when, as in the case of this study's agritourism business, they have a tourism component, can pave the way for a more just rural tourism. The finding show that the perspective of the people involved in such associations conform the main tenets of ecofeminism (Gaard, 1993; Donovan, 2006; Donovan/Adams, 2007; Gruen, 2015). This was apparent in the way the animals were treated at the agritourism business: despite the numerous challenges due to the necessary resources in terms of money and time, the animals received good care and were clearly considered unique individuals deserving respect. These owners have many communalities with the entrepreneurs of the agritourism business investigated by Bertella (2018), and, belonging to a non-profit network focused on animal well-being, they can be described as pragmatic visionaries. What they practice is the kind of deep justice discussed by Fennell and Sheppard (2021), which in this specific case, is also evident in their choice to adopt a vegan profile for their business, as supported by some ecofeminists (Curtin, 1991; Gaard, 2002). Doing business and including the animals as beneficiaries is a form of political responsibility in response to the structural injustice (Jamal, 2019; Shaheer et al., 2021) of the agritourism sector, where animals are viewed and treated as machines, commodities, and waste, as evident in the terms and expressions "*fattrice*" and "*a fine carriera*".

5.2.Lessons about sustainability and justice in tourism

This study has argued that the case of justice for farm animals has important potentials for reflecting on sustainability and justice due to their complete dependence on humans and the perception we can have about them being in between the human and natural worlds. The discussion presented in the previous section about rural tourism shows that the treatment of farm animals is not homogenous, including shallow and deep justice as well as no justice at all. To extract lessons from such case, the position advanced by scholars such as ecofeminist Donovan (2006) and tourism scholar Kline (2021) can be adopted, and farm animals can be considered as belonging to the category of "the others," meaning those individuals, groups, and entities usually not represented among the main and most influential tourism stakeholders.

The first lesson is about power, responsibility, and ethics. This study cautions that power imbalances can easily lead to unjust treatment. Although this is not very surprising, the

present study and its findings about the unjust treatment of farm animals are particularly valuable in warning about the danger of loosening the concept of power from the one of responsibility. From an ecofeminist perspective, power leads to a higher degree of responsibility to care for "the others" (Gaard, 1993; Donovan/Adams, 2007; Gruen, 2015). This implies the moral obligation of the privileged stakeholders to develop tourism in a way that also leads to benefits for those stakeholders that, for some reason, are not directly involved in tourism development and management. To be just, sustainability cannot be freed from its ethical foundations, and, in ecofeminist terms, such foundations concern responsibility and solidarity (Buckingham, 2004; Shiva/Mies, 2014).

Another lesson is about some major obstacles to justice. This study confirms that injustice can be caused by a combination of factors, and some of them are structural (Jamal, 2019). The findings about episodes of farm animals experiencing cruel treatment warn us that the sector lacks the necessary procedures and structures to capture episodes of noncompliance to the extant regulations. Realistically, improvements will not be promoted by the main actors of the sector who, presumably, are aware of such limitations but also interested in maintaining the status quo as changes might threat their position. One exception, as illustrated by this study and in line with the study by Bertella (2018), concerns entrepreneurs who are new to the sector. As outsiders, new entrepreneurs can be particularly critical and promote social changes to the advantage of marginalised individuals and groups, overcoming structural obstacles through collaboration with actors engaged in justice issues, for example from the non-profit sector, as in the investigated case.

Other major obstacles to justice are cultural limitations. Being rooted in traditions, some of which are an integral part of the heritage constituting a destination's attractiveness, cultural obstacles are extremely difficult to overcome. The use of farm animals as food is emblematic in this sense. Another example from the investigated case is the emphasis given to the conservation of the traditional rural landscape, which is prioritised in comparison to the use of greener forms of energy with negative consequences for both the environment and future generations. In their discussion about justice from an ethics of care perspective, Jamal and Camargo (2014) report on a missing link between the concept of sustainable tourism and justice. This study suggests that such a missing link could be inherent to tourism, meaning that the cultural heritage sold to tourists is itself a limit to progress in terms of sustainability and justice. This can be commented on by arguing that to rethink sustainability in more just terms, tourism actors, including practitioners, tourists and scholars, must critically consider their cultural assumptions and values. The risk for not doing so is to reproduce injustice, turning sustainability into a conservative practice more focused in safeguarding appearance in line with traditional practices than building a better future.

Finally, strictly related to cultural heritage as an obstacle to justice is a further lesson concerning the time horizon for improvements. In the investigated case, it is evident that improvements in animal justice will occur neither fast nor broadly, and this is recognised and accepted by the owners of the agritourism business functioning as a sanctuary. This is a very bitter lesson as the consequence of slow progress is the suffering of numerous individuals. Focusing on the natural environment and justice for future generations, such a slow tempo might be catastrophic, severely compromising the quality of life if not the survival of humanity (Higham et al. 2021). Nonetheless, such a lesson has a slightly brighter side. Through hard work, the farm owners made their agritourism business a just place for the hosted animals. Doing so, they improved and saved the lives of some individuals. Although this might be a small consolation, such entrepreneurs acting as change agents can be perceived as role models and, ultimately, they can speed up the overall process for a more just tourism industry.

6. Conclusions

This study discussed how farm animals are treated in rural tourism, and what can be learned about sustainability and justice from it. This discussion was undertaken from an ecofeminist care ethics perspective and informed by the findings of a case of rural tourism in Tuscany (Italy) that was explored by adopting autoethnography and collaborating closely with people with first-hand experience about rescued farm animals. The findings suggested that the treatment of farm animals can vary considerably, from cruelty to deep justice. Confirming and expanding on the existing literature, the findings showed that farm animals in tourism are sometimes treated as resources, workers, machines, commodities, and waste. Some of these treatments markedly conflict with the notion of animal sentience and point to the need for improvements. In ecofeminist terms, such improvements should be based on an underlying respect for the individual animals, as showed by the owners of the agritourism business functioning as a sanctuary. Considering farm animals as a marginalised group, this study reflected on sustainability and justice in broader terms. These reflections concerned the necessary ethical foundation of sustainability, the structural and cultural obstacles to justice, the potentially important role of new entrepreneurs, and the long-time horizon for broad radical improvements. Most of these reflections confirm what has been discussed in previous tourism studies about sustainability, justice, and entrepreneurship. What this study emphasises is the communalities among unjust situations occurring at the expenses of different marginalised groups, within and across species, the underlying origin and mechanisms. Such emphasis is meant to provoke self- criticism in those scholars who fail to identify the root of unsustainability, and possible solutions, in the way we relate to the "others", which, particularly relevant in the light of major challenges such as climate change, include non-human animals and entities.

This study contributes to the sustainability and justice debate in tourism by exploring less anthropocentric theoretical and practical approaches. Theoretically, it built on previous works about ecofeminism and justice. Such a perspective helps frame tourism sustainability and justice in relational terms regardless of the nature (human, non-human) of the involved actors, and emphasises the aspect of responsibility. This study argued for the importance of broadening the meaning of responsibility by including the need to question mainstream thought and traditions. This is essential for rethinking the future of tourism and avoiding the reproduction of some practices that are neither sustainable nor just. The definitions of sustainability and justice must be open to new interpretations in accordance with progress and knowledge. With reference to the case on which this study focused, the progress in our knowledge about the sentience of animals must not be ignored. Similarly, the scientific evidence about the ongoing climate crisis and its consequences must be at the basis of the necessary focus on environmental sustainability and intergenerational justice.

From a practical point of view, it is the author's belief that change towards more justice in tourism can be driven by individuals and groups acting within the sector. The turning point depends on such agents' capacity to involve others (in this case: farmers, tourists, consumers), who might be critical to mainstream practices, but unaware of alternatives or worried about acting differently due to economic and/or social consequences. Supportive actions in this sense are those that emphasize the feasibility of alternative tourism practices. As tourists/consumers and academics, we can choose just products/services when available, ask for their inclusion in the local tourism offer, and make relevant stories visible through academic and non-academic communication channels. This might lead to more

attention paid to justice in tourism, pressure to structural changes and, eventually, improvements.

Still from a practical point of view, the approach that emerged in this study as fruitful to promote a renewed way to "do justice" is about entrepreneurship. Such a potential role of entrepreneurs is in line with the literature about social and institutional entrepreneurship. Following the example by Bertella (2018), this study argued that the social component of the entrepreneurial business models co-existing with the pro-profit component can go beyond human communities and include non-human beings. This study showcased the possibility of considering the animals as beneficiaries of the value created by tourism businesses fuelled by the combination of a vision about a more just world for animals and a pragmatic approach to incremental changes. Future studies could focus on tourism business models that include non-human beings among the beneficiaries and explore how the shift of the animals' role from resources to beneficiaries affects the other components of such models, such as costs, revenues and partnerships, and to what extent and how these models can contribute to broad changes for the sector.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the scant literature about how to explore animal issues in tourism from an ecofeminist perspective. This study's focus was justice, and the animals' experiences and their implications in terms of justice were mediated by my and the carers' perspective. Using the researchers' lived experience and relying on a close collaboration with people with long and relevant first-hand experience, autoethnography was useful to make the hidden lives of marginalised individuals (the animals) more visible. It is important to note that autoethnography doesn't claim to represent the perspective of the investigated individuals, but rather reports the researcher's point of view. This indicates the high subjectivity of this methodology and can require, in addition to reflexivity, some precaution. Firstly, this study, although striving to explore the farm animals' experience, is humancentric. Future ecofeminist studies about animal justice could be based on a fieldwork that goes over a long time and adopts the shadowing techniques (Quinlan, 2008) by following closely the daily lives of tourism operators, and on disruptive methods to make-kin with the animals (Haraway, 2016) by experiencing their lives in person, when possible, or through art- and/or technology-based approaches that facilitate a full-immersion in the animal world. This would facilitate a deeper understanding of the context and the creation of stronger relations among the researcher and the researched (the animals), in line with the relational approach advocated by ecofeminists.

In addition, my perspective was the one reported and my ethical position towards animals was similar to that of the owners of the agritourism business functioning as a sanctuary. On the one side, this helped build trust and facilitate the data collection and the collaboration when developing the narrative. On the other side, such homogeneity of views could have prevented the emergence of critically important aspects. To avoid this, future studies could apply a collaborative autoethnographic methodology as the one adopted by Shepherd et al. (2020) in their study about contested spaces in tourism. This alternative approach can be particularly important for issues where there are considerably divergent views about what is right and what is wrong, as is often the case for justice issues in relation to non-human beings and entities.

Regarding the latter and reflecting further on this study's methodological contribution, it is important to note that the possible emergence of an emotional bond between the researcher and the researched can be a challenge, maybe the major challenge, for the adoption

of autoethnography to investigate topics regarding marginalised groups. My deep engagement, characteristic of autoethnography, related to both the farmers/care givers and the animals, and was amplified in this study by the specific topic (animal justice) being value-laden and potential controversial. Such engagement allowed me to reflect deeply on the investigated case and elaborate some considerations that go beyond the case of farm animals in rural tourism. Practically, such engagement resulted in my adoption of one of the animals living at the farm (Dina), consisting in contributing to the costs for her stay at the farm and paying regular visits. This engagement and the consequent emotional bond that can emerge between the researcher and the researched can be a fruitful window into the marginalised individuals' lives and help develop effective narratives. At the same time, such emotional bond can expose the researchers to distress, as noted by Kline (2018) about investigating animal issues in tourism. It is my experience that such distress can occur during the fieldwork, and this influenced my choice to explore the case of farm animals in collaboration with people running a sanctuary. Distress can also occur in the final phase of the research, when sharing the results with people holding different views. This potential distress can be a major challenge because it can limit the researchers' willingness to conduct and disseminate their research results and, consequently, preclude potential advancements in the theory and practice of tourism.

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