Heterotopia, Radical Imagination, and Shattering Orders

Manifesting a Future of Liberated Animals

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Chapter 1
Sites of Vegan Placemaking

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Chapter 1

Sites of Vegan Placemaking

A Celebration of Multispecies Alliances at the Borderlands

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In the video artwork *New World Order*, Hayden Fowler depicts a surreal forest of leafless trees animated by a group of heritage-bred chickens preening on a branch, scratching the scabby ground, or slipping under the tree roots into underground burrows. Their unusual plumage is markedly different from their domesticated kin, increasing the eeriness of the already post-apocalyptic atmosphere, and thus even further destabilizing the expectations of viewers. The monochromatic, hazy backdrop is meant to evoke a post-human environment in stark contrast with the bright hues and deceitful idyllic scenes of conservation estates, where 'nature' is kept in stasis with proofed fences by self-elected human protectors. Situated at the convergence of dystopia and utopia, Fowler builds a narrative of nonhuman survival immersed in a landscape where a new ecology takes shape, where a desire for resilient living gives rise to imagined alternative paradigms (Fowler, 2015, p. 247).

Immersed in a similar – but greener – atmosphere, I experienced the same feeling of alienation mixed with wonder as I was walking through a forest in the Dominican Republic, near the Laguna de Oviedo. Unexpectedly, I ran into a group of cows lying down or grazing in the shadow of trees. While the only trace left of humans was the plastic and garbage surrounding the patch of grass, which echoed the post-human ambience of Fowler's video, my physical presence enhanced the possibility of mutual familiarization and collaborative participation in the making of our shared world. I quietly sat down at a distance, hoping that my presence wouldn't disrupt their tranquility and, most importantly, that they wouldn't perceive me as a threat. I had heard with great awe of the semi-feral cows at VINE Sanctuary living in the forest at the outskirts of the pasture, largely avoiding contact with humans; yet, this encounter, in a non-surveilled space, felt even more extra-ordinary.[1] Three cows paused their grazing to look at me (Figure 1.1). Apparently, they lived on their own terms: no ear tags, no marks of ownership. And the younger cows were bonded to their feeding parent. As our gazes met, I envisioned them as a free community that responded uniquely to their own needs and interests, without having to subdue to any forced spatial boundary. For a moment, I forgot that just that same morning I had seen several small trucks on the roads, each transporting three or four cows, most likely to slaughter. As if existing out of time, this

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Figure 1.1 *Reciprocally Seen*. Photograph by the author (2019). ⏎

unexpected encounter generated speculative *ruminations*, leading to shared dreams of embodied hope and imaginative leaps into vegan placemaking.

In solidarity with the group of cows who helped shape this vision of liberation, in this chapter I celebrate concrete conceptualizations of community building rooted in vegan practices of care and kinship that translate speculative visions of multispecies justice into practice through embodied, relational, and sustained engagement with and within the place they inhabit. More specifically, I look at generative sites of collective liberation, from (micro)sanctuaries to gardening and foraging initiatives, where multispecies relations are intentionally recalibrated through multidimensional and decolonial acts of resistance. I argue that the selected case studies, by not settling for incremental change, offer creative and effective models for ways to bridge the fragmentation between eco-social movements. To radically tackle systemic oppression, it is in fact crucial not only to overcome intersectional approaches that have yet to reckon with anthroparchy and internalized speciesism but also to go beyond a single-issue lens and welfarist practices undermining the pursuit of collective liberation – especially within circles devoted to animal rights.[2]

Thus, while shedding light on the enduring complexities, apparent at each of the study sites, of operating within a neoliberal and capitalist framework as well as the underlying tension between a private property mindset and land sovereignty, including the entanglement of domesticated animals in extractive land practices, I propose to examine these liberatory sites through the methodological potential of the borderscape notion.[3] In other words, instead of conceiving the border delimiting the outside limit of these sites as a barrier, by embracing its permeability, the plurivocal and trans-species resistance taking place within these enclosed spaces turns into an opening toward what Catherine Oliver defines as "a politics of the possible" (p. 29). After all, farmed animals have been re-negotiating borders and teaching us about their porous qualities – both physical and epistemic – every time they transgress them by escaping from their forced confinement. To fully grasp this shift in framework, it is also vital to acknowledge that beyond being sites of hope and triumph, these are also sites of continued pain and trauma. This entails avoiding the replication of flawed binaries, such as a strict inside/outside, or romanticizing on the concept of 'safe haven,' both failing to recognize the political struggle and process of cultural rewiring happening in these liminal spaces. Sitting at the edge of these pockets of intentional solidarity, far from being marginal, provides a privileged perspective to witness the emergence of new orders based on multispecies alliances that reclaim spaces historically taken over by normative hegemonic forces.

The Farmed Animal Sanctuary: Upholding a Multispecies Body Politics

A first example of a space where alliances across species lines have the potential to flourish is the sanctuary for farmed animals. Sanctuary work has long been praised as a practice of contestation that explores a radically different kind of socio-spatial relationship with farmed animal species. Besides the liberatory opportunities sanctuaries provide by generating a space of potential autonomy, self-actualization, and social transformation, they also must deal with limitations inherent to our current conceptualization of what a sanctuary is. For instance, these sites often struggle with the reinscription of the same modes of interaction they subvert, such as the restriction of animal freedom to the spaces of the sanctuary.[4] In fact, expanding on the concept of territoriality, the practice of sanctuary becomes particularly troubled within a settler colonial context. As a consequence of these power dynamics, the act of guaranteeing refuge for species forcibly imported by settlers, such as cows, inevitably means upholding a single-issue cultural battle that has yet to come to grips with the privilege of the settler position and its complicity in maintaining hegemonic power structures.[5] Moreover, the replication of a barn model surrounded by fences represents an additional clash between settler ideas about private property and Indigenous communal relationships with the land and nonhuman relatives. In fact, fences helped institutionalize the collective recognition of private property, thus making them a neocolonial marker of land appropriation.[6]

The term 'sanctuary' itself also deters a full epistemic recalibration of nonhuman animals due to the "coexistence of the ideas of conservation and captivity in the semantics of the word" (Fusari, 2017, p. 150). It is true, for instance, that the term ‘sanctuary’ is often times applied to conservation parks and protected areas for so-called wildlife; yet they still rely on selective breeding and other control strategies that erase individual needs and agency in the name of population management. As a result, the risks of (internalized) paternalism remain widely spread, a mentality that is deeply tied to saviorist narratives and happy rescue stories of weak, voiceless sanctuary-seeking agents in need of humans to survive. Sanctuaries also often present as didactic farms, due to the centering and prioritization of human comfort in the spatial design (i.e., clear paths for humans to walk on, approaching residents through fences, and subjecting them to the public gaze in ways that replicate the experience of individuals held captive for human entertainment). Because of the blurred definition of sanctuary space, the term has also been appropriated for marketing purposes by zoos. In this case, the permeability of the border has been exploited by hegemonic forces, leading to an insidious rhetorical homogeneity that precludes drawing a clear distinction between sites where nonhuman animals reside to be protected and sites where they are kept for anthropocentric gain.

To challenge these problematic limitations and to push back against the dominant ideologies pressing at the borders, it is essential to confront mainstream apolitical positions that, by calling for “a gentler capitalism” (Dauvergne & LeBaron, 2014, p. 3), remain entangled in violent structures of power.[7] A concrete example of a subversive sanctuary model that intentionally draws on transformative ideas working against colonial, neoliberal, and capitalist premises is Agripunk, a self-proclaimed multispecies collective in opposition to all forms of discrimination.[8] Nestled in Val d’Ambra, a valley located in the Italian region of Tuscany, Agripunk was founded in 2015 on the premises of an intensive turkey farm owned by the Amadori Group, a company specialized in the systemic breeding and killing of chickens and turkeys for human consumption. After two years of documenting sanitary and economic irregularities, the founders of Agripunk managed to shut down the farm and its permissions were revoked, depriving the owner of the possibility to start a new operation in a different location. Prior to being owned by Amadori, the property had been besieged by the SS and Nazi soldiers, as documented by the current human residents Desirée Manzato and David Panchetti, who see it as their duty to keep the land free by holding space for those who wish to begin a new life.[9]

As proof of this purpose, the sheds and auxiliary facilities have gradually been converted into shelters where all those bodies across species that have been historically discriminated against can flourish as accomplices in their fight for autonomy and self-determination. By intentionally opposing the reification of bodies not conforming to supremacist standards, emergent subjectivities are offered a home to heal. The commitment to creating a safe(r) space for individuals of all species is tangible through visual cues as soon as you walk through the gates of Agripunk: the outside walls of the sheds are covered with murals by local artists, the kitchen door is strewn with stickers about veganism and inclusive hospitality, the communal restroom displays a wooden gender-free sign. Spotting one of the animal residents resting, without any expectation of labor, under a graffiti that calls for the abolition of oppressive classifications, is a recurrent scene that perfectly embodies the subversive optics of this space (Figures 1.2 and 1.3).

The choice to preserve the row of seven sheds and to continue to operate within the dominant western paradigm of the barn model, in this circumstance, represents a powerful act of cultural memory. In fact, recasting the architectural form without erasing the signs of its history of violence is a testament to resilience and survival that reminds us of Hartmut Kiewert's pictorial worlds of the *Animal Utopia* series. 'The valley that resists' is the slogan that echoes across the plain and that is commonly used to describe the spirit of the place. The name 'Agripunk' itself epitomizes the philosophy of rebellion at the core of the project and its constant disruption of dominant agri-cultural practices affecting precarious lives across species. The very existence of this site debunks the idealized notion of rural life so deeply tied to the Tuscan countryside, an imaginary that Italy has strategically fabricated to export products of violence worldwide through neocolonialist and

Figure 1.2 Sanctuary sheds featuring liberatory murals offer shade for nonhuman residents. ⏎

Figure 1.3 The mural was made by Italian band Pensieri Oltre and reads: Beyond Definitions, Classifications, Differences (Photograph by the author, March 2023). ⏎

nationalist marketing strategies masked under the rhetoric of the Slow Food movement or the myth of peacefully grazing animals in pastures.[10]

In response to this strenuous process of liberation, the whole ecological web reclaims space to recover: the land can heal from the devastating effects of intensive farming, while wildlife can find refuge, including from the hunters who populate the area. Unfortunately, while the land remains in the hands of the son of the farmer who ran the turkey farm operations, the risk of eviction hangs ominously over the Agripunk community. To overcome this lingering threat, the crowdfunding campaign *#agripunkbenecomune* (Agripunk Common Good) was created both to raise public awareness of their site-specific regenerative project and to promote community fundraising. The world they exemplify breaches through the borders of the sanctuary grounds every time they physically carry their message at events across Italy. Yet, the multispecies liberatory model they propose struggles to take root elsewhere. In order for it to transcend the borders of normativity imposed by dominant systems, which include national borders, it is essential not only to collectively strengthen transnational coalitions that are inclusive of non-anglophone struggles but also to ensure that social movement groups refrain from acting in isolation from each other. At the same time, it is also necessary to consider alternative strategies that question the western barn model as the unique spatial arrangement for engaging in relationships with more-than-human survivors of exploitation. The microsanctuary movement was founded as a response to these needs.

The Microsanctuary: Reframing Interspecies Co-habitation

Over the past decade, the microsanctuary movement has risen in the attempt to allow individuals who don't have access to land to still rescue more-than-humans in need with the resources available to them, no matter how limited they may be, whether that is a rented apartment or a suburban home with a garden. Operating at the borderscape of the culturally constructed opposition between urban and rural landscapes, this model of interspecies relationships is explicitly and intentionally intersectional, in that it positions speciesism in conversation with colonialist, capitalist, racist, and patriarchal systems.

In discussing the use of the term 'micropolitics' in Deleuze and Guattari, Jane Bennett refers to it as "a realm of activities that have public effect – that help to shape the tenor of collective life – but which do not fit into the traditional paradigms of political action" (2004, p. 51). What makes micropolitical tactics particularly effective, then, especially in the area of grassroots organizing, is the preference for direct action strategies and anti-institutional predispositions. In the context of microsanctuaries, besides creating more physical space for more-than-human animals in need of safety and lifetime care, their transformative potential lies in the broadening of the semantic borders of the term 'sanctuary.' According to one of the founders of the movement, Alastor Van Kleeck, this shift takes place by embracing a more holistic framework that centers sustainability as the core principle of all its operations (2022). This means making the most out of the resources available in the present moment in terms of one's abilities, finances, and spatial arrangements. As a result, the potential of crafting multispecies alliances is not limited to large farm properties but can effectively operate in a variety of places without the huge capital required to run a traditional sanctuary. The smaller scale dimension of this project, which can be limited to the cohabitation of a human caregiver and a more-than-human individual in need of shelter, creates opportunities not only to provide extensive individualized care, especially for disabled individuals, but also to build familial bonds with species normatively not considered companions. While care is provided to a wide range of species, from rats and rabbits to fishes, the individuals who most commonly find refuge in microsanctuaries are farmed animals, especially chickens. For a chicken to live in an urban setting without serving human interests means challenging not only exploitative husbandry practices but also the history of commodification of so-called backyard chickens. Obviously, it is crucial to avoid secluding the individuals who reside at microsanctuaries into the category of 'pet' due to the ties of this taxonomic label with the concept of property, which is inseparable from its colonial and racial implications.[11]

It is true that the anthropized context of our geographies inevitably restricts the freedom of the rescued individuals, especially their freedom of movement. Yet, chickens quickly adapt to living indoors by modifying their behaviors, for instance, as Heather Rosenfeld suggests, by dustbathing on blankets or on indoor dustbathing areas or by perching on furniture, which contributes to creating the best conditions for their subjectivities to thrive (2023, p. 176). Regardless of their capacity to adapt to human-centered built environments, it is important to emphasize that the humans committed to this process of liberation must also deal with structural barriers and intergenerational trauma caused by the same systems of power oppressing our nonhuman kin. An epistemic shift mindful of the interlocking, geographically embedded forms of social marginalization affecting individuals across species, is thus the key to valuable multispecies alliances rooted in interdependence and mutual care. Among the movement's greatest strengths is its potential to challenge speciesist zoning laws that segregate farmed animals outside of urban borders, which echo xenophobic immigration policies implemented at national borders. It is precisely at this borderscape that (il)legality is questioned and new cohabitation norms take shape (Chang, 2022, pp. 232–237). To further subvert cultural expectations, rescued individuals participate with their human accomplices at events and protests, thus becoming active members of their own liberation and forging imaginaries of multispecies communities existing beyond pastoral settings (Figures 1.4 and 1.5).

These moments of interspecies solidarity in urban settings trigger the well-known "out of place" cultural concern theorized by Philo and Wilbert (2000). In fact, more-than-human animals challenge their preassigned role in the eyes of society even just with their bodily presence in unexpected locations. Of course, the likelihood of also endangering human and more-than-human safety through these subversive acts is not excluded. The risk of eviction, just to mention one potential threat, remains a possibility, thus reminding us of the ways in which structural barriers, such as the maintenance of a system of private property alongside lack of access to housing, obstruct multispecies liberation. To counter these risks, the movement relies on a network of shared knowledge and strong systems of care, ranging from mental and emotional support to tips on animal care. Additionally, to tackle structural inequalities, the Microsanctuary Resource Center offers grants directed specifically to people of the global majority in support of their rescue work.[12] To further dismantle the human–animal binary and the aforementioned structural injustices kept unchallenged by the isolation of social justice movements, let us imagine multispecies microsanctuaries that welcome also human individuals in need of shelter, counting on solid networks of resistance defying national borders, a strategy that increases the chance for transformations activated at the local level to spread globally. Yet, in order to fully recognize and dismantle the overlapping vectors of oppression and privilege limiting

Figure 1.4 Corey & Human Allies holding signs with messages rooted in a multispecies intersectional framework at the Midwest Animal Rights March (Photograph by Kelsey Atkinson, 2018). ⏎

access to land and fueling both animal exploitation and systemic discrimination of human-disenfranchised communities, the problem must be viewed alongside issues of food justice.

The Farm: Cultivating Transformative Change

While veganism and food sovereignty share the common goals of eradicating systemic oppression and achieving environmental justice for all, food movements and the politics of animal liberation tend to remain disconnected when an intersectional antispeciesist lens is not adopted. For instance, radical visions of food sovereignty assume that nonhuman animals will remain in place as commodities and sources of value. An example of this disconnect can be found in the approach employed by La Via Campesina, an international, multicultural movement giving a global voice to the 'peasants' who feed the world. As delineated in their 2021 brochure, the term 'peasants' is meant to include "people who till the land to produce food, the fishers, the pastoralists, the farmworkers, the landless, the migrant workers, the Indigenous people rural workers" (La Via Campesina, 2021). Raising nonhuman animals for food, hunting, pastoralism, and fishing are all practices that

Figure 1.5 Helen & Hana Low posing for a picture at the Cleveland Pride March (Photograph by Kelsey Atkinson, 2018). ⏎

disregard the sociopolitical issues that accompany the fight for animal liberation. Any claim of living in ‘harmony with nature’ while relying on these practices is inherently based on anthropocentric interests, especially in Eurocentric contexts. Similarly, local food projects based on community support and mutual aid operating outside or on the fringe of the capitalist food system tend to leave unquestioned the normalization of beekeeping and chicken farming masked under the label of ‘sustainability.’[13]

Equally problematic are initiatives grounded in eco-vegan principles that fail to integrate social justice concerns into their initiatives. As an example, the contemporary urban garden movement tends to promote environmental sustainability and economic development that often increase displacement pressures on local residents, a process that Kenneth Gould and Tammy L. Lewis define as “green gentrification” (2017, p. 23). Likewise, the roots of permaculture, in both vegan and non-vegan settings, are largely appropriated by mainstream western science without honoring Indigenous peoples who are the primary keepers of this knowledge.[14] Both practices are in fact based on land ownership in public/private spaces and are thus inherently intertwined with (neo)colonial ideologies, even when serving in the best interests of more-than-human animals.

The same failure to enter into solidarity relationships with Indigenous sovereignty struggles can be observed within vegan initiatives, such as the absence of a decolonization commitment in the action plan of the Vegan Land Movement, a crowdfunding campaign started in the UK and aimed at buying farmlands at auctions to ‘rewild’ them. In its Constitution, the founders appoint Earth as “the designated beneficiary of the VLM. All use of land held by VLM CIC (Community Interest Company) must benefit local ecosystems and its inhabitants” (Vegan Land Movement, 2024), where the word ‘inhabitants’ refers only to nonhuman animals, thus excluding the possibility of the co-production of landscapes through a relational framework. Additionally, access rights to humans are limited and ‘taken on a case-by-case basis’ as a strategy used by those in power to leave ecosystems undisturbed. While this approach may benefit the life of the nonhuman species who live within these spaces, it continues to reproduce a counterproductive nature-culture dualism and to perpetuate the notion of the human population as a homogeneous group, equally responsible for environmental damage. At the same time, despite the will to free these spaces from human presence, the exertion of governance power limited to a group of human individuals actually reinforces it, especially with the added layer of land dispossession.

A possible real-world solution to this problem is proposed by law professor Karen Bradshaw, who presents the proposal of “an interspecies system of property” (2020, p. 3) advocating “for folding animals into our existing system of property law, giving them the option to own land just as humans do” (2020, p. 1). In addition to reinforcing once again ownership ideals that impede Indigenous communities from reclaiming stolen land, this approach, clearly grounded in white, western environmentalism, is also rooted in pervasive welfarist tactics, which the same author admits do not promote systemic change:

> [I]t [the proposal] does not serve to free chimpanzees from cages or free cattle destined for slaughter. . . . Under my conception, wildlife has the land it needs, but people can still eat a burger or swat a mosquito.
>
> (2020, pp. 4–5)

A land initiative that incorporates consistent anti-oppression principles is Liberation Farm, a site of intersectional struggle founded in 2020 in the Catskill Mountains of New York. Here, cultural values and identities are radically being shaped, (re)negotiated, and contested. The founders, Nadia Muyeeb and Omowale Adewale, tend to the land by growing organic vegetables, mainly beets, while also running community events ranging from skill-building workshops to agri-therapy and outdoor camping. This project’s potential for radical change lies in the choice to make Liberation Farm an “unapologetically Black space” (Liberation Farm, 2024) where the violent erasure of the history and culture of the Black diaspora is recovered and, in turn, where independent self-determination can thrive in an environment removed from white surveillance. By making this clear statement of purpose, the aim is to create an intentional space for Black healing capable of promoting a significant cultural transformation.

This approach, crafted specifically to decentralize white supremacy, also invites a deep reframing of the politics of safety, which involves coming to terms with the weaponized ideals of safety tied to a biopolitical tendency of the social group in power to deploy mechanisms of social control. On an institutional level, such mechanisms might include redlining practices, police militarization, or even Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives that display tolerance on the façade and use a colorblind rhetoric, particularly within white vegan circles.[15] They might also include biosafety measures in 'livestock facilities,' which are implemented to designate activists attempting to disrupt operations as domestic terrorists. In discussing the need for Black-women-only spaces, Patricia Hill Collins writes, "safe spaces rely on exclusionary practices, but their overall purpose most certainly aims for a more inclusionary, just society" (2000, p. 110), thus confirming that the generative tension sustained at the borderlands inevitably reverberates throughout the social fabric.

Another pioneering trait of Liberation Farm is the intentional unearthing of the link between operating farmland and eating plant-based foods through a decolonial framework, which helps "establish cultural boundaries for Black people to thrive and share communion" (Adewale, 2022, pp. 16–17). Mindful also of the need to shift from capitalist-colonialist food systems to harvesting practices based on an intimate knowledge of landscapes, the very existence of Liberation Farm promotes a new geographic, ecological imagination that acknowledges the repercussions of local actions on a global sphere. Despite the dedication to community building and the hard work of tending to the land, Liberation Farm was recently forced to move due to a sudden eviction notice, once again revealing the contemporary perpetuation of land dispossession as well as the constant risk of infiltration by oppressive forces pressing at the border of heterotopic spaces.[16] As a consequence, Liberation Farm has relocated to a much larger plot of land in South Kortright, New York. While this moment of transition, charged with grief for the loss of the land, is unfolding in real time as I write, the future holds vibrant hope for the propagation of the revolutionary principles that Liberation Farm embodies. Similar land reclamation practices, instilled with principles of multispecies justice, can be observed in the actions of Mariposas Rebeldes, a collective that adopts a place-based approach to radically transform agro-industrial food systems.

The Forest: Foraging Our Way to Collective Liberation

In Rita Wong's poem *Recognition/Identification Test*, two columns of words are placed in specular opposition: a list of names of herbaceous plants, flowers, and trees is juxtaposed to a list of familiar corporate brands. Magnolia/macDonald's, cedar/sony, pansy/nestle (2007, p. 32). Besides criticizing the foundations of modern society and its dependence on corporate power and consumerist ideology, the poem reproduces the nature-culture dichotomy on the page as a warning of the widespread estrangement from the natural world. This distance has been historically reinforced through colonial displacement and extractive systems, which contributed to the loss of ancestral knowledge tied to the land, including Indigenous and Black food practices. In particular, foraging has a long history of oppression and criminalization enacted through racist anti-foraging laws used by white settlers to force the assimilation of disenfranchised communities and to eradicate free food supplies. As food lawyer Baylen J. Linnekin explains, after the Civil War, Southern plantation owners forcefully and systematically restrained foraging rights to chain newly freed individuals to plantation work; similarly, foraging practices of Indigenous peoples were made illegal in treaties signed by Indigenous tribes and the federal government outlining, among other things, access to gathering and, thus, to the land (2018, pp. 1011–1013). These legal dynamics and colonial power relations are reinforced today through the normalization of property laws that allow private landowners to bar foragers. As a testimony of the continued enactment of these legal instruments of control, in her documentary, *Foragers*, Jumana Manna narrates the criminalization of herb-picking cultures in occupied Palestine, which also chronicles the will of Palestinians to maintain their foraging traditions as an act of resistance to Israeli legislation and its attempts to further alienate them from their land (Manna, 2020).

In direct contrast to settler-colonial logics, the Queer, Trans Indigenous, and Latinx collective Mariposas Rebeldes has a committed mission to restore relationships to the land, imagine alternatives to capitalism, and promote food autonomy through cooperative agriculture.[17] The group initially gathered in Israel Tordoya's backyard garden in Muscogee (Creek) land, also known as Atlanta (USA), which they managed collectively by practicing a non-hierarchical organization. As part of their efforts to re-establish Indigenous foodways, they embraced a process of botanical decolonization by adopting a resilient agricultural approach that long preceded European settlements and involved the cultivation of crops such as corn, squash, and beans – also known as the 'Three Sisters' – that rely on each other for their survival. As the land modeled a system of growth based on mutually beneficial cooperation, the collective grew into a refuge for historically subjugated individuals to thrive. The overall operation of Mariposas Rebeldes was however temporarily uprooted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Tordoya's landlord evicted them from their home, suddenly producing a condition of displacement-induced housing insecurity during a global health crisis. Yet, the collective faced this transition by continuing to organize through itinerant gatherings, even creating their own line of corn-and-bean tempeh, a high-quality vegan protein that they named MaripoSnax (Gómez-Upegui, 2021; Reign, 2021).

Following a successful fundraising campaign, Mariposas Rebeldes was recently able to acquire a forested 1/3-acre lot in the South Atlanta forest, a corridor rich in fruit and nut trees, perennial herbs, and flowers. As part of the process of land reclamation, the purchased land was renamed Bosque Itzpapalotl (Obsidian Butterfly) in honor of the patron deity of the collective, whose transformative iconography animates the spirit of the group. The location was previously used as a tire shop, now demolished, and would usually be considered in a 'state of abandonment.' However, as Gilles Clément reminds us, the term 'abandonment' itself embodies a utilitarian anthropocentrism, which discards anything that is not linked to human activity and "of use" (2011, p. 278). The area, in fact, brims with more-than-human vibrancy and the plants that are normatively considered ‘weeds’ or ‘invasive,’ such as privet and ivy, are here welcomed as migrant plants who enhance the land. This space is thus an opportunity for mutual regeneration and exchange based on principles of ethical foraging that inherently reject the violent restraints of domestication. Ultimately, the plan is to expand their urban gardening project into a food forest and community kitchen that would support the community with high-quality, nutritious food, specifically nuts, and other nutrient-dense high-calorie foods, even in the face of market shortages and climate emergency.

By attending to the unpredictability of foraging, the Mariposas are molding an example of a symbiotic and decommodified way of living that “stray[s] into the peripheries of capitalist production” (Tsing, 2015, p. 24). Yet, the intention is to go beyond ethical veganism and instead, to build political solidarity that supports systemic change; in the words of Abundia Alvarado, the co-founder of the collective, “we’re trying to be more creative. We’re interested in the abolition of the gender binary, capitalist farming, extraction and private property” (Alvarado & Fischer, 2023). As a result of conceiving social justice within a relational frame, liberation is inherently achieved for all those communities across species that experience exploitation and oppression caused by these interconnected systems. In line with this spirit, the Mariposas are currently involved in the collective struggle to defend the Weelaunee forest to stop the construction of a police training compound, referred to as ‘Cop City,’ as well as of the largest movie soundstage in the world commissioned by the massive film company Blackhall Studios. The consequences of these development projects are devastating, from drastically increasing gentrification and police force to wiping away the liveliness of the forest. But even more troubling is the perpetuation of monopoly capitalism combined with a militarization mindset, which caused the murder of forest defender Tortuguita (Manuel Paez Terán) during a raid of the Stop Cop City encampment on January 18, 2023. While the repressive containment strategies adopted by institutionalized powers are not only relentless but also fatally violent, emerging out of the borderlands is a revolutionary initiative that is paving the way for queer Indigenous futures rooted in relational ecologies of belonging.

Conclusions

The case studies examined in this chapter offer concrete visions of multispecies alliances that honor the intimate relations between liberation movements that are often insufficiently recognized and even actively negated: social and environmental justice struggles are necessarily also multispecies struggles, and vice versa.[18] In the profusion of hopeless, apocalyptic narratives, these projects set the course for futures rooted in social justice that are inherently ecological, and multidimensional. While dynamics of privilege operate differently within each site, and the histories of oppression they carry differ substantially, the change they propose is intentionally structural and systemic. Because of their disruptive nature, these initiatives all struggle in various ways for existence while resisting the constant threat posed by systems of domination violently pressing at the borders to uphold the normative status quo. But what they represent is actually more than resistance; it is imaginative power, community resilience, and radical relationality. At the same time, they illustrate the cultural and social benefits of achieving collective healing through a decolonial praxis that is mindful of how privilege affects power dynamics based on somatic, social, and ethical markers. While these liberatory sites inevitably rely on border systems to create safer territories, the recalibration of the epistemic and cultural compass extends beyond physical borders. Like scattered flames of resistance that cannot stay confined, these models have the potential to spread and be replicated, of course without neglecting to make adjustments according to the historical and socioeconomic specificities of place.

While I have hereby centered the entanglements of liberation struggles on land, unique challenges arise when the questions raised in this chapter are extended to oceans and sea dwellers. In fact, to enact systemic change, liberatory sites must intentionally dismantle multiple and mutually constituted ideologies.[19] The Whale Sanctuary soon operating on Mi'kmaq territory, otherwise known as Nova Scotia, Canada, serves as an ideal case study to examine the layers of complexity posed by bodies of water.[20] In fact, this project – the first of its kind – aims specifically at ending exploitation for whales and dolphins and becoming a model for future sanctuaries around the world wanting to offer shelter to cetaceans. While the aims are certainly laudable, there is still a risk of maturing single-issue solutions, especially if settler ideology is not addressed at the planning stage. So, for a start, in the journey to bring about reconciliation with the cetaceans who have been institutionalized for human entertainment, it is essential to avoid perpetuating displacement to make space for retired individuals. In many ways, the lives of the fishes living in the waters selected for the sanctuary will be disrupted and should thus be given high consideration. Moreover, the installation of a permanent netting system surrounding the 40 hectares of water space also unsettles pre-existing relational ecologies, which extend far beyond the prescribed confines, given the inherent permeability of water. Equally disrupted are the lives of the Indigenous communities living in these regions whose interests and needs should be prioritized on the long term, making sure they also benefit from reparation efforts. While on the project's website they claim to have been helped, guided, and encouraged by First Nation Chiefs and political leaders, it is troubling that no member of the team is Indigenous, thus suggesting a lack of Mi'kmaq presence both on a leadership level and throughout the decision-making process.

These are just some of the dangers I foresee. Conversely, the visions of trans-species justice celebrated in this chapter shake the foundations of systems of oppression, an approach that requires an active, consistent, and challenging practice of unlearning. Perhaps, it is this urge to face inconvenient and uncomfortable truths that keeps these initiatives from getting mainstream traction. Yet, the radical imagination they bring to life is shaping futuristic visions of liberation in real time. The emergence of new orders grounded in transformative worldbuilding provides positive guidance for replacing barriers and hierarchies with relational solidarity and, consequently, for building long-lasting alliances across species, beyond borders.

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Notes

1 To learn more about the forest cows at VINE sanctuary, see Shen (2022).
2 Notable scholars and activists who apply the concept of intersectionality to speciesism as well as a multispecies approach to social change include among others Julia Feliz Brueck, Claire Jean Kim, Aph Ko and Syl Ko, A. Breeze Harper, Christopher-Sebastian McJetters, and Billy-Ray Belcourt.
3 For an analysis of the borderscape as a method for a geographical opposition to capitalism and of its potential to reveal the dynamic social and spatial relationships taking place in and across borders see, Brambilla (2015, 2019).
4 Recent critical perspectives on animal sanctuaries include: Abrell (2016, 2017, 2021); Blattner et al. (2020); Emmerman (2014); Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015); Jones (2014); Pachirat (2018); Scotton (2017).
5 On colonial structures within animal sanctuaries, see Boswell (2017); Gillespie (2021); Reign (2021).
6 An overview of the colonial conception of land ownership and the consequent spreading of the western notion of property through fencing systems can be found in Cronon (2003).
7 On the rise of vegan capitalism, see also Sexton et al. (2022).
8 On their website, Agripunk is defined as an "antispeciesist, antifascist, antiracist, anticolonialist, antisexist, and ecotransfeminist" space (translation is mine). https://www.agripunk.com/home.
9 To learn about the stories of resistance and self-determination of the individuals who now live at Agripunk, see Manzato and Panchetti (2022). An English translation of the book is forthcoming.
10 According to the Slow Food's position paper on animal farming *Beyond Welfare: We Owe Animals Respect* (Goracci, 2022), "the Slow Meat campaign encourages support for meat from sustainable farming systems that respects animals" (48). The rhetoric of sustainability is imbued with unchallenged speciesism that relies on systemic violence under the guise of "animal-friendly husbandry" (24). It is thus not surprising that John Sanbonmatsu would include Slow Food among the movements that espouse "a food politics centered around the 'sustainable' enslavement and killing of nonhuman beings" alongside aquaculture, and locavorism (In Maurizi, 2013, n.p.).
11 On this topic, see Joshua Bennett (2020), particularly pp. 140–168.
12 https://microsanctuary.org/moc/
13 On the omission of more-than-human interests from sustainability discourses see Vinnari and Vinnari (2022), and Bergmann (2021).
14 The Black Permaculture Network is actively working to decolonize permaculture and reclaim their lands through radical care practices. For more details see the website of co-founder Pandora Thomas (2017).
15 On the structural barriers caused by a predominance of white spaces and the need for Black-only spaces, see Anderson (2022) and Blackwell (2018).
16 As Son Vivienne affirms, safe(r) spaces are not the reproduction of a binary opposition between inside and outside. Rather, they require "navigating a continually shifting

boundary between fear and courage, discomfort and security, trauma, and resilience" (2019, p. 219).
17 https://mariposasrebeldes.org/
18 On the exclusion of the struggles of more-than-human animals for instance from climate change movements, still too often ingrained with anthropocentric beliefs, see Weisberg and Salzani (2023).
19 To learn more about the liberation struggles of our marine kin, see Daniel Vandersommer's chapter in this volume (pp. 151–167).
20 https://whalesanctuaryproject.org/

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