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Four Legs Better

A Post-Speciesist Critical Discourse Analysis of Non-Human Animals'
Construction in Contemporary FAO Discourse

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) constructs non-human animals within contemporary development discourse, while analysing the consistency of these constructions with rights-based approaches within development, the findings of the field of critical animal studies, and the interests of private stakeholders in FAO operations. In spite of the purported commitment to evidence-based practice by development studies as a scientific field of study, and despite the proud history of the discipline of expanding moral consideration to historically marginalised groups and communities, non-human animals are continually left outside of the circle of empathy when it comes to rights-based approaches to development, irregardless of their central role across developmental programmes, particularly by FAO. Through Critical Discourse Analysis of key contemporary FAO policy documents, and using a framework of rights-based approaches to development and critical animal studies insights, this study reveals three significant patterns within the discourse of the FAO as an organisation. Firstly, non-human animals are consistently constructed through economic instrumentalisation, valued primarily as "multi-functioning assets" and measured through productivity metrics rather than as sentient subjects. Secondly, discourse within FAO documents demonstrates strong alignment with market logic, emphasising private sector partnerships, "sustainable intensification," and efficiency gains that mirror commercial interests. Thirdly, systematic exclusions pervade FAO language, with minimal recognition of animal agency, individual experiences, or rights-based frameworks despite acknowledgment of animal sentience. These findings reveal fundamental inconsistencies between development's stated commitment to rights-based approaches for marginalized subjects and the continued instrumentalisation of animals. This study contributes to understanding how institutional discourse creates socially constructed limits to moral consideration within development and suggests that including animal rights perspectives could advance more comprehensive and ethically grounded development practice which in turn could lead to a better world for all.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Development Studies, Animal Rights, Critical Animal Studies, FAO, Rights-Based Approaches

Acknowledgements

To the Sacred Reuss of the Dorset Bhakti, and whom it may concern.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Non-human animals play and have continued to play an inseparable role in our lives both historically and at present, and within the development sphere there lies no exception. While development's overarching aim is, in a very general sense, the betterment of life for all (Potter et al., 2018, p.551), non-human animals are often not only excluded from this but used by development organisations and efforts in ways which significantly worsen their quality of lives, in pursuit of improving the lives of human benefactors of development.

In spite of development studies' status as being science and evidence-based in its attempts to uncover what works and what doesn't when solving global and local issues, large-scale use of animals persists into the present day without regard to the slew of research in the animal rights and critical animal studies fields, much of which suggests that our treatment of animals is harmful to their wellbeing, intersectionality linked to harms to humans, and, in many cases, morally and ethically wrong (Singer, 2009, p.38; Kim, 2015, p.18; Proctor et al., 2013, pp.884, 894)

Furthermore, the effects of businesses whose profits lie in persistence of the use of non-human animals' by humans, be it for food, labour, or other production, on development practitioners and their policies through partnerships and stakeholder agreements, risk leaving non-human animals and the betterment of their lives at odds with profit incentives by private stakeholders through the development sector.

In light of these interconnected factors in the modern development paradigm, this study aims to analyse the discourse surrounding non-human animals and their construction by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), arguably the world's leading force on areas of development most intertwined with the use of non-human animals. To gain an understanding of these constructions, FAO reports and documents from the past decade will be analysed using a

discourse analysis, with a focus on the ways in which animals are discussed, both through use of language, and more nuanced ways in which they are referenced. The power of language as a demarcation of power structure (Caballero Mengibar, 2015, p.43) is a theory which will be key to the success of the study's findings, and discourse analysis has been chosen as the most effective method to uncover this.

Additionally, the findings of the discourse analysis will be compared to discourse found in animal rights and critical animal studies literature, so as to ascertain the extent to which constructions of non-human animals are aligned, with particular focus on discrepancies in view of the role non-human animals ought to play in the world of humans, development contexts notwithstanding.

The results of the analysis will be further compared to mentions of stakeholder partnerships and private investors, so as to gain insight into the possible effects which these interests may have on the construction of non-human animals in development discourse by the Food and Agriculture organisation.

Lastly, a review of the rights-based approach which came to the fore of development in the 1990s and beyond (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.486) will be held up side by side in comparison to discussion around the rights of non-human animals, to gain a better grasp on the differences and similarities which can be seen between the two fields within development, and the extent to which the former may provide a roadmap for the future of non-human animals in the development sphere.

Though existing literature discusses at length the use of animals in development and the ways in which this relates to or effects questions of sustainability (Potter et al., 2018, p.253; McMichael, 2016, p.xiii) as well as broader discusses on incremental improvements in animal *welfare* (in contrast to rights), and though there exists large amounts of literature on animal rights as a general subject, as well as rights as a general topic in development, less has been written which brings together these complex and interrelated concepts which present a pressing issue for those invested in the bringing an end to the lack of rights and low quality of life experienced by

individuals the world over. Thus, this study is both important and relevant to development studies in that it opens to the door to further questions of how we might move forward toward development efforts which avoid the exclusion of some of the most vulnerable groups, while simultaneously adding to the wealth of self-reflection which development studies does, and must continue to do if we are to bring about a world we want to see.

By being grounded in critical animal studies on the one hand, and post-development/rights based approaches to development on the other, as well as employing the use of discourse analysis and comparative discourse analysis as methods of analysis, which in turn will call for the use of institutional discourse theory, the study will retain a sound theoretical framework which allow it to hone in on the findings in a knowledgeable way. By limiting the scope of the research to documents published by FAO in the past decade, the study not only gains insight into overarching developmental discourse as it is at present, but also retains a specific enough focus to make the findings useful, relevant, and worthy of reflection, giving as glimpse of where we're at today and leaving room for further research to build upon.

1.1 Research Questions and Aim

The primary aim of this research then is to use these theories and methodological processes to understand the ways in which the FAO, as a leading development institution worldwide in the field of food and agriculture (areas critically linked to non-human animals and their lives), constructs non-human animals and their role in development as it is in the present day, comparing these findings to rights-based approaches to development, findings of critical animal studies literature, and the interests of private stakeholders in development projects which use non-human animals for human ends. This will not only shed light on non-human animals' construction in the development field as a whole, but also provide valuable insights into the limitations of those which development institutions consider "worthy" of benefitting from development efforts, and if this line of distinction is consistent with the views of researchers whose expertise lie in non-human animals and their lives, rights and experiences. By holding this up to rights as a general concept in development, the study aims to address inconsistencies and highlight a path forward to ensure the development field leaves no voice unheard when it comes

to the betterment of life for all.

Thus, the study seeks to gain these findings through this research question:

How are non-human animals constructed in publications by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation over the past decade, and to what extent are these constructions consistent with private stakeholder interests, rights-based approaches in broader development, and the findings of critical animal studies as a whole?

2. Background

2.1 The Research in Context: Animals & Development

Non-human animals are a part of our everyday lives, and the lives of people all over the world. The development sphere is no exception, and the lives of non-human animals are inextricably intertwined both with current development practices and with the underlying aims of development at their core, namely, the betterment of life for all. Over a billion people round the world rely on the use of non-human animals for their livelihood, development programmes consistently use non-human animals in hunger alleviation efforts and economic enhancement schemes like sustainable intensification of agriculture and livestock distribution programmes (FAO, 2024c, p.20).

Despite the significance in both scale and relevance of these relationships, and their central role in many development programmes such as those by the FAO, there remains at present limited critical examination of the construction of non-human animals themselves in development discourse, and the ways in which they are conceptualised by the institutions which retain control over all aspects of their lives. Sustainability discourse has brought forth some degree of reflection on our use of non-human animals with particular regard to the futures of food and with climate change in focus, but these discussions typically remain anthropocentric in their assessments of potentially negative consequences of animal use, discussion the potential loss to human wellbeing and quality of life rather than that of the animals in questions (McMichael, 2016, p.xiii).

This gap in research and discourse represents an issue for development studies which seeks to be self-reflective and, increasingly, better the lives of marginalised groups and address power relations by making heard the voices of those whose experiences have thus far been overlooked.

Concurrently, while critical animal studies as a field has made significant gains in understanding the relationship between human and non-human animals, and analysed this relationship across

contexts in modern society, there exists a gap in linking this to developmental efforts as well. The primary research aim for this thesis then, lies in addressing this disconnect, whereby development practice and development studies, a field intrinsically linked to ethical consideration, apparently overlooks such considerations in the case of a group, namely non-human animals, whose worthiness of inclusion in such considerations has been thoroughly explored if not *proven* by the robust and scientifically sound field of critical animal studies, as well as by many members of society as a whole.

2.2 Who the FAO Cares?

The authority and influence of the FAO as a development institution cannot be understated, and it is precisely this which makes it the ideal institution of focus for this study. The United Nations as a global leader in all development efforts, includes the FAO as the primary agency for agriculture, fisheries, and rural development, all contexts which are at present intrinsically linked to the lives and wellbeing of non-human animals. The FAO plays a significant role in the shaping of developmental policies and priorities, both for development organisations and at the governmental level when it comes to choices around funding and strategies for implementation (FAO, 2022a, p.1)

The discourse of the FAO carries substantial weight in that it bridges the scientific findings of research institutions and groups with practical policy recommendations to institutions (FAO, 2014, p.1). In this way, the choices of language, construction of concepts and groups, and omission of any considerations, trickles down to the ground level of development where development discourse becomes the lived experience of subjects. Additionally, it is the FAO which brings together private stakeholders and other interest groups, giving it sway as an institution over what profit incentives may proliferate into the implementation of development practice (FAO, 2024b p.9).

This creates the situation wherein the discourse of the FAO is critical to analyse in all attempts to understand the overarching discourse of the development sphere at a given point in time, in this

case the present, given the centrality of food focused and hunger relief efforts to development. The FAO takes a central place between countries considered to be developed and developing, often acting as an interface for the interests of both, as well as a mediator between often conflicting goals relating to economic gain, environmental protection, and social development/quality-of-life improvement (Lele & Goswami, 2021, p.639). Given the FAOs role as a convergent hub for governments, the private sector, NGOs, and those whose daily lives are affected by development efforts, its role in construction of human to non-human animal relations cannot be overlooked.

2.3 Relevance to Development Studies

The relevance of this research to the field of development studies lies in the significance of the link between discourse and power in development. Developmental literature has at present significant recognition of the concept that seemingly “neutral” discourse in fact embeds power relations (Caballero Mengibar, 2015, p.43), as well as the ways in which institutions open up or cut off possibilities for action and change, and the role which international organisations like the FAO play in constructing those who are affected by developmental efforts (FAO, 2022a, p.1). This gives credibility to the use of a discourse analysis in the context of this study and the relevance which this type of study holds in line with current theories of reflection for the development field.

The evolution of development in its inclusion of the voices of marginalised groups, as well as the rise of rights-based approaches and expansion of ethical considerations to a wider group of individuals (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.486)., places a study like this one at the forefront of a longstanding process of reflection on who should be included in the ‘in-group’ whose lives development efforts seek to better. This process is seen by many in scholarly spheres development as crucial to the improvement and successes of development as a whole, showing that research like this holds a place highly relevant to the field.

In the contemporary context we see increasing critique of the ethical and environmental impacts of development efforts (Potter et al., 2018, p. 200, as well as a rise in awareness of concepts like intersectionality, as well as the continual need to critically examine underlying assumptions

within the field (Razavi & Qayum, 2015, p.162). Alongside this, recent years have brought forth a growing body of literature on animal rights (Kim, 2015, p.68), and there has never been more reason to bring together these two inseparable fields given the gap in research which combines both areas.

3. Existing Research

3.1 Rights-Based Approaches to Development

Over the course of its history, development as a concept has undergone significant evolution, moving from a distinct focus on economic aims toward a more nuanced and multi-faceted approach to attaining the betterment of human rights and improvements in quality of life.

During the decades spanning from around 1950-1970, development studies and implementation retained a near solely economic focus, then broadened out between around 1970-1990 to address poverty as an issue, but it wasn't until the 1990s that a focus on rights, human rights, and the inherent moral value of individuals came to the fore of development studies' focus (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.486). Through the work of early scholars like Dudley Seers, who, as early as the late 1960s posited a broader view of development to seek the overall improvement of individuals' quality of life through a multi-faceted approach focused on human potential (Potter et al., 2018, p.198, 551), the shift toward rights-based approaches to development began to come. Further concern for development approaches beyond pure economic aims was highlighted by The Brundtland Commission of 1987 which pushed for sustainability to be integrated into development, enhancing concern for the quality of life of individuals in environments potentially affected by unsustainable efforts, and their rights in avoiding the negative effects thereof (Potter et al., 2018, p.128).

The process of evolving concepts within development eventually brought about a sharper focus on rights based approaches to development, or RBADs (referred to by Gauri & Gloppen (2012) as HRBAs (human rights based approaches). Gauri & Gloppen posit that the central focus of this new paradigm was the elimination of poverty, as well as the political empowerment of marginalised groups, as a *moral* imperative (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.486), as opposed to a means to economic ends. The UN, in particular the UNDP, played a key role in this paradigm shift, building off the work of Amartya Sen to operationalise the 'capability framework', which emphasises the inherent worth of individuals and most notably the importance of upholding their rights and ensuring their freedoms through a broad approach encompassing aspects of gender

equality, human wellbeing, and social justice to promote peace, freedom, and human rights (Potter et al., 2018, p. 20; Razavi & Qayum, 2015, p.162). The proliferation of these ideas once adopted by the UN serves a demonstration of the legitimacy which it enjoys as an institution and its power in shaping discourse, owing to its status of impartiality and officiality (Thérien, 2015, p.224)

This general focus on rights as a goal in their own right has gradually expanded to both include and prioritise marginalised groups, minorities, and those silenced by entrenched power structures. While foundational human rights were the initial focus of this new wave of developmental discourse, as demonstrated by their solidification in nine international human rights treaties (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.488). This foundation was built up over the decades and years to include greater awareness and focus on addressing inequalities, inclusion in democratic processes and empowering groups to gain agency over decisions affecting them in the face of factors of disadvantage (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.485). Indigenous groups have received increasing attention in the guaranteeing of their interests, for example in the form of the world bank's policies of 'free, prior, and informed consent' rather than simple consultation when it comes to projects which may impede upon indigenous peoples' interests (Potter et al., 2012, p.340).

Gender equality is another example of disadvantaged groups' interests being brought to the fore of development studies, the key example of this being the 2014 World Survey on the Role of Women in Economic Development, which shed light on power structures which allow inequitable gender roles to persist, such as women in development contexts' reliance on informal and unpaid labour which subsequently limits their freedom and enjoyment of the same rights as their male counterparts (Leach, M. Mehta, L. & Prabhakaran, P., 2015, pp.4,10). Such research calls for a sustainable development which protects women's bodily integrity and dignity through a gender-equality focused approach (Leach, M. Mehta, L. & Prabhakaran, P., 2015, pp.6,7).

The common thread throughout these approaches which make up their foundation is the centralisation of ensuring the dignity, agency, and participation of those affected by development. The aforementioned capability framework specifically focuses on enhancing freedom and agency

for women and girls (Razavi & Qayum, 2015, p.162), highlighting the necessary link between protection of rights and bodily autonomy.

In spite of the ever-expanding focus on rights-based approaches for human populations in developmental contexts, there remains a dearth of existing literature which concerns itself with the extension of these rights to non-human animals in developmental spheres. While certain literature does acknowledge potential future inclusion of non-human animals' in discourse and practice for the purpose of sustainability (Potter et al., 2018, p.253), and discussion exists of ensuring continued biodiversity for similar purposes (McMichael, 2016, p.xiii) (notably both with end goals of anthropocentric benefits), development literature in general terms is yet to broadly address ways in which non-human animals are constructed by institutions like FAO and the UN who otherwise champion rights-based approaches and the inclusion of marginalised groups with regards to their own intrinsic wellbeing, quality of life and guarantees of rights within developmental frameworks.

Thus, a crucial avenue of research lies wide open, with the proliferation of rights-based approaches to human communities laying bare unavoidable questions about the consistency these hold with the treatment of other sentient beings within both global food systems and development initiatives.

3.2 Critical Animal Studies & Development

Critical Animal Studies as an emergent field in the academic world represents a significant shift in scholarly inquiry and social science paradigms which have typically held unchallenged anthropocentric views, by shedding light on these assumptions and making multi faceted academic arguments for greater moral consideration of non-human animals.

Peter Singer's 'Animal Liberation', first published in 1975, quickly became a cornerstone within the field from which a slew of further discussion and discourse sprung forth. Of particular potency was the widespread attention the book gave to the concept of speciesism - the discrimination of an individual or group based on species membership (Singer, 2009, p.35). A

key argument of the book is that if we are to hold equality as a fundamental principle on a moral level, it is a principle which should be extended to all sentient beings, asserting that the capacity to suffer, rather than rationality, ought to comprise the basis for ethical consideration, and that rationality or intelligence as hallmarks for extension of empathy are no more defensible than basing these discriminations off other equally arbitrary characteristics such as height or skin colour (Singer, 2009, p.38). On the basis of this foundation of critiques came an uprooting of entrenched paradigms surrounding non-human - human animal relations, and brought forth a change in academic philosophy which manifested itself as a slew of social research dedicated to understanding and critiquing the moral status of animals within human society (Singer, 2009, p.8). More recently, there has been “an explosion of scholarly interest in human-animal studies in the past decade” (Kim, 2015, p.68), seen in journal publications, conferences, and an increase in animal law courses in legal studies (Kim, 2015, p.68). On the basis of these ruptures in the academic landscape, it can be, and *has* been, argued that non-human animals, their moral status, and their emotional lives, are legitimate subjects of academic inquiry worthy of re-thinking (Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p.16, Stucki, 2023, p.68).

A key concept within critical animal studies is the rigorous critique of the *instrumentalisation* and *commodification* of non-human animals, which in turn allows the discipline to reject the long-held paradigms of anthropocentrism which reduce the value of non-human animals to resources for human benefit without regard for their own lived experiences (Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p.96). CAS scholars make the case that practices like factory farming and non-human animal experimentation, both of which result in severe suffering to billions of animals each year, stem from prevalent speciesist ideologies which prioritise the comfort, convenience, and profit of humans over the wellbeing of non-human animals (Singer, 2009, p.302; Kim, 2015, p.64). It is in this view of instrumentalisation that non-human animals are reduced to ‘animal instruments’, with their value being consistently based off of their utility to humans, even when disguised under seemingly neutral, valueless language terms such as “resource” (Kim, 2015, p.144).

Such assumptions are criticised by figures within the abolitionist movement, such as Tom Regan, who instead non-human animals possess inherent value beyond their use by humans which calls for the guaranteeing of their rights, a departure from the more mainstream approach in other

fields of “animal welfare” which seeks to continue the use of non-human animals by human ones, albeit under improved conditions (Regan, 1983, p.188; Paccagnella & Marchetto, 2020, p.253). As further research in hard sciences is published on the sentience of animals, that is their ability to feel and experience emotions both positive and negative, gives ever greater credibility to these critiques, undermining previous justifications for harmful animal use on the bases of lack of consciousness by showing the measurability of subjective states and their importance in understandings of the wellbeing of non-human animals (Proctor et al., 2013, pp.884, 894)

Intersectionality between critical animal studies and development studies has, historically, been limited, but in recent years the early buds of recognition of this crossover have begun to bloom. Developmental discourse in large institutions such as the UN has for the most part retained an anthropocentric bias when it comes to development, historically only giving attention to issues regarding non-human animals in the context of habitat preservation for future use by humans, and rarely giving mention to animal welfare, let alone rights (Nista et al., 2020, p.14). Recently, however, development discourse, particularly that surrounding the SDGs, show a small change. For example, 2010 saw the first instance of the UN Committee on World Food Security identifying animal welfare as a global goal of animal agriculture policy, using the “Five Freedoms” as a practical framework in caring for non-human animals humanely (Keeling et al., 2019, p.2). Recent research departs from previously held assumptions by suggesting a “considerable consensus” amongst experts that the improvement of animal welfare is in fact compatible and even beneficial toward achieving the SDGs, as opposed to in conflict with such goals (Keeling et al., 2019, p.8). The novel SARS Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 shone a light on the interconnectedness of human health concerns with those of non-human animals, as well as overall planetary health, with some scholars calling for a “One Health” approach to incorporate all these concerns into one (Stucki, 2023, p.9). In spite of these small advances, there remains little in the way of efforts to embed animals rights into developmental efforts and policies, and moves toward the consideration of non-human animals as sentient beings worthy of their own rights and moral considerations remain “very timid”, displaying a continuation of the anthropocentric undertone of development studies (Nista et al., 2020, p.15)

As the field continues to grow and evolve, CAS and its key concepts are shaped by the contributions of its finest scholars. Peter Singer calls for the equal consideration of interests across the species line (Singer, 2009, p.21), alongside Regan's emphasis on non-human animals' inherent value (Regan, 1983, p.185), and schools of thought development in parallel within these two frameworks. Though more in line with animal *welfare* discourse, the "Five Freedoms", as developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, offer a practical framework to be used by institutions from which assessments of animal welfare may be made, covering freedom from hunger, fear, pain, and discomfort, alongside the freedom to express normal behaviours (Erasmus, 2019, p.2), and, as discussed, this framework can be used even by less animal-rights focused organisations such as the UN.

More recent scholarship presents exciting new theories such as Claire Jean Kim's exploration of intersectionality between race, species, and power, positing that "Animalization has been central not incidental to the project of racialization" (Kim, 2015, p.18) and bringing concepts of human supremacy to the doorsteps of the more widely explored subjects of racial and colonial histories.

The "One Rights" paradigm, a reaction in part to the "One Health" paradigm that followed the COVID-19 pandemic, has been introduced even more recently by Saskia Stucki, and urges the proliferation of a consolidation of rights between human and non-human animals in the face of "increasingly delicate interdependence" (Stucki, 2023, p. vii). In their work *Zoopolis*, Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson put animal rights into the arena of political theory, bringing together the oppression of animals both human and non, framing the two as a shared struggle for social justice (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011, p.84). The field and its links to other disciplines continues to expand, incorporating conservation and environmental research as well as animal sentience investigations (Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p. 53, Proctor et al., 2013).

This veritable wealth of literature serves a testament to an increasing awareness that sustainable development and social justice, along with their goals of the betterment of life for all, must look beyond the confines of anthropocentric struggles and take action to guarantee the rights and wellbeing of sentient beings both sides of the species line.

3.3 Institutional Discourse & Development Organisations

International Organisations, or IOs, while often purported to be apolitical, neutral facilitatory bodies of interstakeholder cooperation, are often faced with critique that they in fact *shape* the agendas of global development and create the discourse and constructions of poverty and development in the global context (Koch, 2012, p.1, 11). Large IOs like UN Departments and the World Bank make calls on what ought to be prioritised globally and which policies and forms of governance should be propagated worldwide, through both funding and mandates, the effects of which trickle down to those on the ground of developmental change (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p.718, 726; Koch, 2012, p.3)

The proliferation of such discourse by large OIs leans on seemingly neutral language which appears not to be value laden, but in fact upholds certain normative ideas within global society, as well as jargon or technical language of the fields, so as to sound positive even if groups will be disadvantaged by the actions in question (Tesseur & Crack, 2020, p.26)

There exists significant literature exploring the effects of these normalisation processes within large organisations, such the IMF, UN, and World Bank, who exert authority over prevailing narrative in spite of an “apolitical” status (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p.709). Rieglo (2019, p.13) argues these subtle framings to be a cause of structural violence in that they reinforce colonial narratives and create a development paradigm which is dismissive of values or ideas outside of mainstream discourse.

The findings of this area of literature highlight the necessity of examining the discursive framings employed by OIs so as to uncover aspects of development which are normalised and naturalised but may be foreclosing alternative, better approaches, even potentially leading to the unchecked continuation of structural violence within the development world.

3.4 Current Approaches to Animals in Development Practices

Current literature on the roles of non-human animals in development contexts generally tends to focus on “livestock” programmes and their effectiveness, sustainability in relation to agriculture, and sometimes on the divide between animal welfare and animal rights as philosophies.

Much of the development literature perpetuates anthropocentric views of non-human animals, positioning them in relating to their use by humans, to improve food security or reduce poverty, often through programmes providing recipients with animals from which they can derive food, as a capital investment of sorts (Carlson-Bremer et al., 2018, n.p.) While there exists discussions around improvement of animal health for example, these are often a means to and end of better outcomes for human “owners” of a non-human animal (Carlson-Bremer et al., 2018, n.p.; Stoffel, 2023, p.344). The challenges for poorer farmers in maintaining high standards of welfare for animals they “own” are also addressed in the literature, representing the multidimensional aspects of animal use in a world not equal amongst humans (Phillips, 2024, p.2,4,5,6).

Negative environmental impacts caused by the use of non-human animals remain a hot topic, with greenhouse gas emissions, land and water use, and pollution causing some scholars to advocate for a reduction in animal use, though this isn’t necessarily tied to a moral benefit, and there exists literature advocating for certain livestock practices as environmentally beneficial on the other side of the scales, so often a focus on inherent rights falls out of the spotlight in sustainability-focused discussions (Humane Society International, 2017, pp.4,7,10; LivestockData.org, 2024, n.p.)

Within development-related literature on non-human animals, there remains a chasm to jump over in order to link literature and efforts pushing for incremental improvements in the living situations of non-human animals under the control of human ones with a genuine pursuit of the inalienable rights and freedoms of non-human animals. There are many complex factors to navigate in marrying these concepts, but in light of rising awareness of our interdependence regarding health (WHO, 2024, n.p.) and the upsurge in intersectionality discourse within development, development may well benefit across the board from a more empathetic approach to our four legged co-habitants of the world we seek to change.

3.5 Current Gaps in Research

In reviewing the literature relevant to the study, gaps can be identified which serve as guidance for the purpose of the research. The lack of rights focus on non-human animals in contrast with the significant focus of rights in human spheres, places incremental welfare efforts in a new light, highlighting inconsistencies in developmental philosophy and calling for further research which brings these aspects together for the benefit not only of development studies or critical animal studies, but of the concept of rights as a guiding principle, foundational in the construction of our society. The lack of comparative analysis amongst disciplines, coupled with the limits in examination of institutional or stakeholder influence, calls for further research.

Thus, this study seeks to contribute to existing literature by bridging the gap between disciplines often considered to be of little relevance to one another beyond sustainability questions, and by systematically and critically reviewing the discourse of a large IO like FAO, it aims to add to the discourse of the disciplines a solid examination of where contemporary development finds itself in regards to the rights of non-human animals.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

This thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to gain insight and understanding into how the FAO constructs non-human animals in development discourse and contexts. Using CDA will allow me to examine language used and compare it across sources, finding patterns and linking them to exterior literature surrounding development, rights-based approaches, and critical animal studies. Given the ubiquitousness of non-human animals' commodification across all parts of global society, analysing and examining the *lack* of discourse around animal rights in FAO documents will be as important as noting what *is* present. Furthermore, CDA will be useful in exploring the way in which certain constructs are naturalised and seen as necessary, which other approaches to the research might overlook. Through the critical lens, animals' roles which may otherwise be taken as a given are able to be unpacked and examined, both in their frequency throughout the sources, and in their multi-dimensional nature across contexts. In this way CDA is well suited to the research at hand.

The widespread use of 'Discourse' as a sociological concept is largely attributed to Michel Foucault, who defined it as “...*a tool for constructing specific truths and knowledge, and it is ubiquitous, pervading every aspect of social contexts. The exertion of power often occurs via various discourses, although discourses are not solely the domain of any particular class or those in positions of dominance.*” (Poorghorban, 2023, p.321). The concept of discourse has been further built upon since, particularly by Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995) to include the theory of institutional discourse, which examines the ways in which institutions maintain order and power over ideologies by controlling dominant discourse, and how power structures are made to appear as natural orders without room for change (Gölbaşı, 2017, p.5).

This approach is particularly relevant here because of the power relations aspect between human and non-human animals, explored further through the examining of critical animal literature in my research. In the context of development, the naturalisation of concepts comes further into play in light of the urgency and scale of efforts to alleviate hunger, for example. Thus, analysing

documents of the FAO, arguably the biggest player in hunger and food focused development, and their discourse surrounding non-human animals, will carry weight for the implications of how concepts of development and animal rights interact as shown by language choices and their implications for power relations in both spheres.

Commodification is important to define for the purpose of this theoretical framework, and it leans heavily on CAS literature, wherein prominent scholars critically examine the ways in which we devalue the personal experiences of non-human animals and reduce them to commodities for our enjoyment or instruments for our utilisation, a paradigm which enables the continuation of their cruel treatment (Singer, 2009, p.302; Kim, 2015, p.64). Commodification as a concept is key to my analysis because it highlights the conflict between economic interests (often seen as key and paramount in development contexts) and the rights of individuals for their own sake (in this case, of non-human animals). Language use which employs the process of commodification is markedly different from more empathetic views of individuals, creating a key divide in discourse, highly visible to the analytical eye. Commodification and instrumentalisation will play key roles in understanding how the FAO in its current constructs non-human animals and their place in the overarching aims of development.

Specific to the documents I'll be using, and in light of commodification's key role, applying CDA to FAO documents will follow a process of reading, coding, analysing, and examining patterns of language use. The analysis aspect will come when patterns are formed and FAO discourse can be seen to follow certain trends. This will then be cross-examined with economic and stakeholder interests in mind, based on findings in that area, as well as cross-compared with key concepts of critical animal studies and animal rights literature.

4.2 Critical Animal Studies

Critical Animal Studies (CAS) will be central to the theoretical framework of this study, particularly in its critique of ways in which non-human animals are constructed within the discourse of institutions (Singer, 2009, p.302; Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p.11). Caballero (2015, p.43) posits the theory that language about non-human animals which *seems* neutral may often

reinforce power structures of exploitation. CAS, which, based off of both biological scientific evidence (i.e. animal sentience research), as well as philosophical arguments, views the rights of non-human animals as a necessary moral imperative beyond its anthropocentric benefits, provides a robust framework for examining ways in which discourse makes normal and natural the current power relations between animals human and non-human.

In spite of growing awareness of concepts like intersectionality in development studies (Leach, M. Mehta, L. & Prabhakaran, P., 2015, p21), and the field's general focus on ensuring exposure for the voices of marginalised groups, the intersection between development studies and CAS remains largely underexplored, making this multi-disciplinary research a valuable contribution to the field in its less-than-common combination of theories. Drawing on tried and tested sociological frameworks like critical and comparative discourse analysis, the study seeks to use these frameworks to analyse both how and why non-human animals have remained excluded from considerations of the rights of marginalised groups despite such focus on marginalised voices in recent development paradigms (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.498) and how this 'selective moral expansion' manifests itself within the frameworks of current development discourse.

Important to note is the use of language in CAS and the way it seeks to oppose the inherently speciesist implications of commonly used language with regard to non-human animals. Thus, the term non-human animal will be employed to refer to individuals commonly called simply 'animals', so as to avoid anthropocentric exceptionalism, as well as highlight our equal role in status and worth, and avoid issues associated with animals as a derogatory term for another person. Additionally, terms such as "livestock" will be avoided where possible, as their reduction of individuals to economic units of gain run counter to the purposes of this study. The use of the term 'more-than-human' has gained traction in some literature (Lainé and Morand, 2020, p.1), the use of which seeks to oppose the reduction of other animals to simply non-human and the implications of a value assessment attached to that, but for the purpose of clarity within this study I will maintain use of the term non-human animals.

4.3 Rights-Based Approaches to Development

Key to this study and the analysis of its data is the theoretical framework of rights-based approaches to development (RBAD), which came to the fore of development studies in the 1990s to call into the question the construction of human benefactors of development as simply means to broader economic ends, such as improvements in national GDP (Gauri & Gloppen, 2012, p.486). Right-based development approaches challenge the idea that subjects of developmental efforts, and in fact any individual involved in development processes, ought to be assessed in terms of their value to desired development outcomes, beneficial as those outcomes may be. The concept of striving for rights for rights' sake, rather than for economic or other adjacent reasons, was novel in contrast to previous utility-focused constructions in its emphasis on agency, dignity, and the inherent worth of an individual (Potter et al., 2018, p198, 551).

Specific to the context of this study, RBAD shows the ways in which discourse constructs and limits the potential moral considerations within development contexts and to whom those considerations extend, as well as how that changes over time. The discursive construction of individuals or groups as worthy or unworthy of rights, as well as the potential for that dividing line to shift, on the one hand exposes an ugly exclusivity in development studies' desire to help, but on the other may be seen as a source of hope and a roadmap for a potential future where the circle of empathy extends ever outward.

While awareness around ethical considerations is key in a study which, on the surface, seeks to compare human and non-human subjects of development with regards to rights, the focus of this study lies not in a comparison of these experiences, but in the ways in which institutional discourse, namely that of the FAO, creates socially-constructed categories of moral consideration which may not align with the findings of up to date research on the experiences of non-human animals at the hands of humans in power over them. The theoretical significance of RBAD both being analysed in its emergence, and being used as a framework/lens through which to view FAO discourse on non-human animals, is the way in which it sheds light on the power of large-scale institutions to expand or constrain the circle of empathy, or the scope of moral consideration and ethical concern, through the use of language and discourse in their officially published documents.

These three theoretical frameworks will be used as a robust lens through which to view the findings of my analysis, allowing for comparison and perspective as well as maintaining a critical distance from the sources while understanding them in depth. Rights as a concept will be applied to non-human animals by the researcher even where the sources do not, and the findings of CAS and theories surrounding animals as they ought to be viewed based on scientific and philosophical evidence will be followed even when broader discourse does not. In this way, a clear and sharp discourse analysis will be carried out when analysing the sources, so as to ascertain underlying assumptions and normalisations.

5. Method and Data

5.1 Data Collection & Choice of Scope

This study analyses 16 FAO documents from within the past ten years, specifically those focusing on animal agriculture (often termed “livestock”) and food solutions. The sources are as broad as possible to gain the most accurate overall picture of the FAO’s construction of non-human animals, and are as recent as possible, with ten having been published within the past five years, so as to gain an accurate picture of *contemporary* FAO discourse as it is at present. The choice to focus on the contemporary discourse stems from the evolving nature of CAS as a field, and the relevance of the issue at present given the discrepancies in rates of acknowledgement of non-human animals outside the anthropocentric worldview between disciplines. This set of documents was narrowed down from a broader range of FAO documents, and were chosen based on their discussion of use of non-human animals in development efforts. They provide better insights than documents focused on crop-based solutions, and more of a wide range of discourse to analyse than very specific project reports. Further attention has been paid to mentions of stakeholder and private partnerships in attempts to understand the economic forces behind the discourse presented. Through the FAO website’s search functions, specific terms could be singled out to find the most relevant documents, and through an initial literature review, the sample set could be further narrowed down to best fit the research at hand.

These documents will be analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis to understand how non-human animals are constructed by the FAO. The methodology for the analysis will follow three stages, covering three interrelated aspects of the discourse within the scope of the study.

5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Firstly, the documents will be searched for use of words regarding animal construction, coding for words such as “livestock”, “animal products/resources”, and “animal source foods”.

Furthermore, value based words will be sought and analysed in their usage such as “welfare”,

“rights”, “ethics”, and “humane”, alongside usages of “efficiency” and “productivity” in relation to non-human animals. Additionally, terms which denote stakeholder interest will be sought such as “private sector”, “Public-Private Partnership”, and “stakeholders”, as well as market focused words like “intensification”, “sustainability”, and “market-focused”.

After specific keywords are found and noted, the wider patterns of discourse surrounding them will be analysed, examining the context and nuance of their use and focusing on discerning to what extent non-human animals are referred to as either individuals or commodities, if their worth is assessed based on economic benefit to human society or the enjoyment of their own lives, whether they are counted as individuals or by total weight (living or dead), and whether partnerships with animal-agriculture private stakeholders are transparently disclosed or alluded to, and the relevance this may have to the previous questions.

The following questions, divided into the sections mentioned, will be used to guide the analysis of the data found in the FAO documents.

Document Analysis Framework

The analysis of FAO documents was guided by the following systematic questions, organized according to the study's analytical framework and divided into sections based on thematic purpose:

Economic Instrumentalisation:

- What economic terminology is used to describe animals (e.g., productivity, efficiency, output, resources, assets, units, returns, profitability)?
- How are animals quantified or measured within the documents? What metrics, statistics, and performance indicators are employed?
- What action verbs are used to describe intended interactions with animals? How frequently do terms such as "manage," "produce," "utilize," "optimize," and "transform" appear in relation to animals?

Market Logic and Institutional Alignment:

- Where do references to private sector partnerships, stakeholders, market solutions, business models, and commercial viability appear in the discourse?
- How prevalent are market-oriented phrases such as "sustainable intensification," "efficiency gains," "optimization," "competitiveness," and "value chains"?
- How are partnerships with industry described and justified? What shared terminology appears between FAO discourse and commercial language?

Systematic Exclusions:

- Are there any mentions of animal rights, ethics, individual animal experiences, feelings, preferences, or agency within the documents?
- How is language relating to animal suffering, pain, wellbeing, or quality of life employed, if at all?
- Is there any discussion of what animals might want, choose, or need beyond human-defined production requirements?

Comparative Framework:

- Who are explicitly identified as beneficiaries of development efforts? How is "betterment of life" conceptualized and for whom?
- What assumptions about human to non-human animal relationships and hierarchies are embedded within the discourse?
- How are key terms such as "welfare," "sustainability," and "wellbeing" defined when they appear in the documents?

Furthermore, and given the often long-term-focused goals of the FAO, the UN, and general development efforts, the keywords will be analysed through a temporal lens, focusing not only

on their use in present contexts but looking at future aims and implied predictions. This will seek patterns in language which could shed light on how the FAO views use of animals in the future, whether change is predicted there, whether current changes in views of animals globally is acknowledged or if current constructions are seen as unchanging in future planning, and how sustainability goals relate to animal use.

The third aspect of the discourse analysis of the FAO documents will focus on absences, wherein aside from searching for words, terms, and patterns which *do* exist in the discourse, those which *don't* will also be noted and analysed. This section will focus on experiential language regarding animals, that is their suffering, wellbeing, or state of mind. The extent to which alternative development models which frame non-human animals differently will also be examined, as well as any critical engagement with animal use for human means in the documents. In acknowledging and analysing these absences further patterns of discourse can be seen through what is assumed as natural and necessary.

5.3 Comparative Approach

After discourse analysis of the documents is complete, a comparative analysis approach will be employed so as to examine rights-based discourse in development literature more generally, particularly within the UN, and seek to view animal rights discourse from the general literature of critical animal studies through a similarly general discourse analysis. Recent development literature regarding the proliferation of the “rights-based approach”, with particular attention to the expanding inclusion of formerly marginalised groups, will be reviewed and compared with FAO discourse surrounding non-human animals, and the extent to which consistencies or discrepancies between the two may be seen as valid will be assessed. The focus on language will continue throughout this section to give direction to the comparison, as well as the extent to which terms relating to human subjects can be applied to non-human ones with regards to rights. This comparison will give importance and weight to the findings of the initial FAO document discourse analysis, as it will shed light on which groups institutions like the FAO construct as worthy of rights, protections, and moral considerations.

Crucially, this comparative analysis, and the study as a whole, will take care to avoid suggesting equivalency between different subjects' experiences. Instead, this comparison will be used to shed light on discursive mechanisms through which key institutions in the development sphere, like FAO, include or exclude certain considerations in their language and frameworks. By interpreting the findings through theoretical frameworks of rights-based approaches to development and critical animal studies, the study will be able to analyse any alternative framings, constructions, and possibilities which may be systematically foreclosed by the current discourse of FAO. Through this approach, the structures of power as entrenched through language, and the ways in which these structures naturalise certain dynamics and render others invisible or inconceivable, can be understood at a complex level. The purpose of the comparison, rather than suggesting equivalency in experiences across subjects, is to examine the logic of large institutions, namely FAO, and the discourse patterns which allude to this, concurrently revealing the power of a rights-for-rights'-sake approach as a tool to make practical change in the actions of developmental institutions and research.

5.4 Limitations

The limitations of this research can be divided into four sections, and awareness across all limitations will be key in mitigating their impact on my findings.

Limitations of **scope**:

The documents I choose to analyse are specific to one time period, and while extensive, do not cover the entire range of every piece of writing concerning animals that the FAO has ever done. The documents are also limited to English language, which risks causing a bias to the anglosphere, and creating a blindspot to other regions' variation in discourse.

Limitations in **methodology**:

While this research will accurately assess the ideas purported and reported upon by the FAO in their writings, the findings will be limited to just this as the actual practice of the projects mentioned cannot be assessed further than what the FAO themselves have to say about them.

Thus, any assessment of the FAOs practice will hinge upon trust in their own reporting accuracy and must be taken with a grain of salt. Additionally, the discourse will be analysed by one researcher only, creating a risk of biases and blindspots that can only be mitigated through awareness and thorough research methods.

Limitations in **access**:

While the FAO has extensive publications on its activities, not all agreements and partnerships are transparent or accessible for research, and without direct access to high-ups in the FAO system, documents publicly available will be the limit of what can be accessed and analysed.

Limitations in **analysis**:

This study risks ascribing causation to correlation, specifically that agribusiness partnerships have an effect on the discourse surrounding non-human animals in FAO documents. While patterns between the two may be found, the general view of non-human animals as objects of commodification in global society as a whole may well pervade into FAO documents with or without economic stakeholder interest, thus creating a need for the research to be aware of the limitations of results in showing only correlation. Additionally, while analysing documents from present and recent years is most useful in gaining a sort of a “where we’re at now” picture, historical depth may be missing and could risk limiting the extent to which the findings show a deep understanding of why FAO attitudes and constructions exist in their current form. This means the findings must remain focused on present attitudes and not claim to understand the FAO through all its stages.

While limitations in research are always present, and while this research may find itself as no exception, the mitigation of these is important through awareness and understanding, allowing the research to be thorough and sound, avoiding the pitfalls of weaker research which remains blind to its limitations.

6. Analysis

This section will analyse the findings of the 16 selected documents made publicly available by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation through their online resources, using the method of critical discourse analysis as well as comparative analysis with discourse from across both development literature focused on a rights-based approach, as well as animal rights literature and critical animal studies. The findings will be organised into four categories; Economic Instrumentalisation, Institutional Alignment and Market Logic, Unheard Voices and Systematic Exclusion, followed by a discussion on the implications these findings have for development. On the basis of the findings, and the analysis' inseparability from key facets of my discourse, namely CDA, CAS, and RBAD, the comparative analysis of these findings with the review of literature in those fields will be woven into the discourse analysis for a complete and well rounded critical discourse analysis situated firmly within the theoretical framework.

6.1 Economic Instrumentalisation

The most pervasive and consistent theme throughout the 16 FAO documents analysed is the economic instrumentation of non-human animals, wherein they are valued not for their worth as individuals but as economic units whose value is contingent upon their utility to humans in the attainment of development objectives, in line with theories of critical animal studies (Singer, 2009, p.302) as well as the discursive methods of normalisation discussed in my theoretical framework section (Poorghorban, 2023, p.321). Through the use of this language the FAO continually normalises human use of non-human animals and forecloses alternative approaches, additionally employing the use of technical language to construct a discourse seemingly unchangeable, in line with critiques of the discursive methods of large institutions. In this section three aspects instrumentalisation in the analysed documents will be examined; language-based construction of animals as economic instruments, quantification of animals as units of economic gain, and action-based language which normalise power relations which risk depriving animals of their rights.

The following quote from the opening speech of Qu Dongyu, FAO director general at the 2023

FAO Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock (FAO 2024d) illustrates well the power of developmental language in general positive framing of animal-use solutions in making invisible the experiences of the animals themselves:

“I hope I have managed to present our food-producing animals as multifunctioning, multisolving assets for healthier livelihoods, diets, environments and people – all contributing to sustainable food systems transformation through their essential roles in the four betters. And I hope I have made a case that the sheer diversity of livestock uses and benefits, species and systems and peoples and cultures provides us with a wealth of avenues for engendering the fairer, safer, healthier and more prosperous world that we all want. But real transformation of livestock systems – in every corner and for every people of our world – depends on our effectively reaching out to non-livestock players: on getting many, many more hands on deck than just livestock stakeholders.”

Qu Dongyu, (FAO, 2024d)

By placing focus on positive human outcomes and referring to non-human animals solely in regard to their utilisation for economic means, FAO uses discursive methods of marginalisation to maintain the instrumentalisation of non-human animals and obscure their experiences. Furthermore, the temporal aspects of the quote represent a discourse from FAO which sees human use of non-human animals as not only something they wish to continue but something they wish to grow, paint not only a contemporary picture of discourse but suggest a continuation at a greater scale of the same attitudes in years to come. Normalisation processes like this are in line with the discursive methods of institutions as covered in section 3.3 of my literature review, and excerpts like this one can be analysed both through choice of language and through absences of perspectives.

The economic instrumentalisation of non-human animals continues throughout the policy documents analysed. In terms of specific word use, as outlined in my methodology section, certain terms were documents in my analysis of the documents. The term “efficiency/efficient/efficiently” was used over 200 times within the documents in direct relation to an increase of it in regard to non-human animals, though several reports scarcely used the term,

and some not at all, showing a discrepancy in choice of language across FAO discourse, possibly a reflection of different departments or groups within the organisation holding different views on the use of non-human animals. Productivity is also used in reference to human instrumentalisation of non-human animals over 200 times, with a majority of instances aiming toward increasing productivity, a process which risks impeding on the rights of subjects well outside of the general aims of development. Furthermore, the term “asset(s)”, a direct key way to remove agency of individuals, is used over 70 times regarding NHAs, with these animals being described as “resources” over 500 times, with “units” coming in just below that figure. So what do these figures actually mean within the framework of this study? And what can we learn about the construction of non-human animals in developmental discourse from them?

Most poignant throughout the documents is the way in which non-human animals are repeatedly constructed as economic “assets” or “units” for the use of humans, which stands in stark contrast to the findings of critical animal studies and sentience research. Furthermore, the rights of human subjects and the cruciality of their upholding and protection is a recurring theme within the documents when discussing developmental aims and goals, making sharper the socially constructed divide criticised by anti-speciesism discourse between human and non-human animals and the effect this has on their treatment in both development and society as a whole (Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p.10). Through animals being referred to as financial assets, multi-functioning, and sources of revenue, their value is reduced in total to their use to humans in solving the inequalities of our world brought about by humans themselves, a discourse which lies on the opposite side of the spectrum to CAS’ view that NHAs deserve a life where they are free to pursue their aims and dreams (Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p.142), rather than means to create wealth. The capital focused language further exacerbates the power-relations brought forth by the discourse, in the sense that development, in spite of the general proliferation of rights-based approaches in recent decades, still retains the attaining of capital as a goal, particularly in IOs like the World Bank. With this in mind, NHAs being presented in this way exacerbates the dynamic of “owner-owned”, as capital’s purpose is to be a disposal method of gain for whoever owns it, not a living feeling individual.

In terms of quantifying language, the recurring theme is NHAs being deprived of individuality through their measurement en masse, with products coming from them such as meat, milk, eggs, wool, and hyde, being measured by physical quantity, and when measured as individuals, it is most often with regards to productivity of their bodies, such as yield of milk or eggs for women subjects, or reference to reproduction or mortality. This links back to themes found in my literature review found in feminist development discourse with regards to bodily autonomy and agency, adding an extra element of gender to the large-scale issue of non-human animal exploitation in development.

Persistent choices of action words throughout the documents further reinforce the economic instrumentation and associated power relations/restrictions of NHAs' rights and freedoms, with recurring discourse whereby it is posed as natural that human animals "manage", "utilise" and "optimise" non-human ones.

6.2 Institutional Alignment & Market Logic

Though the information in the documents is not sufficient to find direct links between instances of, for example, animal agriculture companies profiting of non-human animal use and the discourse surrounding those non-human animals having a more speciesist tone, it is clear that partnerships with the private have a significant impact on the modus operandi of the FAO as an institution, and analysis of the language use within the documents makes this clear.

Market-oriented terms and concepts consistent throughout the discourse shape the human-non-human animal relationship within the structures and processes of the organisation, as shown by the persistent use of terms like sustainable intensification, value added supply chains, and efficiency gains, which demonstrate the private sector and its logic pervading an IO like the FAO and risking the pursuit of these gains inhibiting dynamic change now and in a potential future where the betterment of animals' lives are at odds with entrenched profit systems.

With over 150 mentions of PPPs across the documents, the FAO continually frame the interests of the private sector within the livestock industry as key to the alleviation of food and hunger issues globally, and PPPs being referred to as the key to value chain strategies. Within the theoretical framework of this study, this language feeds into the discursive critics made by many

scholars of institutions in that it presents the contemporary situation as having no viable alternative, in spite of said situation marginalising groups who have no say in potential change. When the FAO publishes that "market-based, commercially viable solutions are required to promote... sustainable growth" (Leroy & Fernando, 2019, p.81), it posits such a statement as blanket fact devoid of profit imperative or political will, given the status the FAO enjoys as an apolitical organisation (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p.709), making analysis critical in opening doors to alternatives. Use of terms like "intensification" and "scaling up" again suggests that the FAO itself projects a future wherein current attitudes toward non-human animals persist, despite being an organisation intrinsically linked to development, whose history is pockmarked with the inclusion of formerly marginalised groups.

Some degree of acknowledgement exists within the documents that efforts at improving efficiency and sustainable intensification might run counter to the quality of life of non-human subjects, and this is seen in discussion of whether or not such changes compromise the health of non-human animals, but in line with other themes, such considerations are placed after human concerns, and potential risks are assessed by economic loss to humans, not the loss of a life with inherent worth.

Though sustainability is discussed across a great number of the examined literature, solutions are often put forth which involve *further* intensification, in what the FAO deems a sustainable way. The lack of will to reexamine existing systems within the FAO exacerbates the market logic of which they are criticised.

Though market based language in FAO publications may be seen as harmless, and perhaps simply an innocent byproduct of bureaucratic processes, the use of such terms comes to the fore of the developmental philosophy when it comes to measuring outcomes of interventions or programmes - that is, if success is measured using market/business focus language and concepts, the lived experiences of affected individuals risks being severely obscured.

The significance of these findings in the broader context lies in the disconnect between market, profit-focused interest, which are publicly acknowledged, and the legitimate status enjoyed by

IOs like the FAO, who through social and environmental work, maintain a place in global society as un-selfinterested, in spite of their strong links and oftentimes direct funding of, private initiate

6.3 Unheard Voices & Systematic Exclusion

Though critical discourse analysis is typically characterised by examining what *is* said, by people, organisations, or groups, CDA nonetheless benefits from examining absences in a text, and in the case of this study, it is these silences which can make up the bulk of the findings.

Through systematic omission of rights-based philosophies when speaking on the subject of non-human animals specifically, and in the lack of acknowledgement of critical animal studies findings despite being a development organisation so largely concerned with animals, the FAO presents currently held limits of moral considerations as unavoidable.

Crucial to the findings of this section is the total absence of the term animal rights, and near total absence of terms ethical and sentient. By not at all engaging in discussion on these topics, the FAO subverts any concerns stakeholders may have regarding the rights of non-human animals, and only mentions risks to NHAs' wellbeing when it poses a risk to humans such as food safety or disease. The fact that rights are conversely mentioned so frequently with regards to members of the human species crystalises theories of anti-speciesist discussion, wherein individuals are divided along a socially constructed line based on species membership (Swartz & Mishler, 2022, p.96).

Further absent from the discourse is language related to agency amongst the non-human stakeholders in its developmental efforts. Active verbs are not used in the context of non-human animals, robbing them of choice or desire, for example no animals mentioned ever “choose” or “want” anything, whereas agency is a key factor in general development efforts. In spite of this, FAO does recognise the “Five Freedoms” approach (Erasmus, 2019, p.2) which is used in animal welfare discourse, the fifth of which is freedom to express normal behaviour, something which the majority of animals living under human control for the purpose of economic gain are not able to do.

The most striking of absences lie in those granted to human subjects but denied to no-human

ones. The FAO is quick to make it known their position that all humans deserve dignity, require protection from exploitation, and must be granted equitable treatment, they systematically deny those very same things to swathes of individuals equally able to experience all the suffering we can across the majority of their discourse and presumably operations.

Within the broader theoretical framework of CDA, CAS, and RBAD, these exclusions naturalise and normalise discursive construction wherein the instrumentalisation of non-human animals and subsequent denial of their rights and freedoms is not something which FAO attempts to justify through argument, but instead something completely left out of the conversation, with no acknowledgement of the sudden denial of rights based approaches across the species line, and no recognition of the advances made in critical animal studies when discussing treatment of non-human animals.

6.4 Discussion: Implications for Development

Through analysis of the 16 contemporary FAO documents a series of patterns was revealed which sheds light on aspects of development studies which stretch beyond the confines of non-human animal research. In spite of scientifically proven and acknowledged sentience among non-human animals, the championed rights-based frameworks which make up contemporary development practice systematically exclude them from moral considerations which lays bare arbitrary divides thought to be a thing of the past in development's inclusive and evidence-based discourse, limiting both its self-reflection and transformative potential within the global context.

The inconsistencies in theories of development like the rights-based approach show the limits of implementation of seemingly robust theoretical frameworks. The success development studies has had in including marginalised groups within the human community in the benefits of its efforts has seemingly left the discipline blind to current exclusion of non-human groups in spite of the wealth of evidence suggesting such a divide cannot be justified logically. Theories of development operate on the basis of inherent equality, and ground themselves in understanding diverse arrays of experiences to best help those from a diverse range of backgrounds, however a foundation built on speciesist assumption somewhat undermines these leaving inconsistencies in dire need of addressing

In line with current reflective research in development and post development, these findings contribute to existing literature on the power relations of institutions, and serve as further reason for constant reflection, particularly in the face of private interest.

Additionally, the findings place anthropocentrism at the heart of development studies and question the limits of moral boundaries and the circles of empathy. The advances made in theories of intersectionality will prove crucial in addressing these concerns for the sake of animals both human and non.

Key to the findings is the doors they open through critical analysis to alternative pathways and models of NHAs' role in development. Rather than incrementally increasing the standards of living of imprisoned animals, the pursuit of animal rights as a social justice goal could lead us to an even better world. Important is the exercise of sensitivity, particularly in development contexts where inter-human power dynamics already play such a delicate role, and addressing food insecurity while avoiding imperialist approaches to change will be a key balance, but not one that downplays the importance of making the change for the sake of billion of our nonhuman brothers and sisters who suffer and perish every year.

7. Conclusions

This study examined how the FAO constructs non-human animals within development discourse and assessed the consistency of these constructions with rights-based approaches, critical animal studies findings, and private stakeholder interests. The analysis reveals that FAO discourse systematically reduces animals to economic instruments through asset-based language, productivity-focused quantification, and management-oriented frameworks that align closely with commercial interests while fundamentally contradicting development's stated commitment to rights-based approaches.

FAO constructs animals exclusively through economic instrumentalisation, describing them as "multi-functioning assets" and measuring success through productivity metrics rather than welfare outcomes. Institutional discourse demonstrates strong alignment with market logic through pervasive partnership language, sustainable intensification frameworks, and efficiency-oriented terminology that naturalises commercial approaches to animal welfare. Thirdly, systematic exclusions characterize FAO discourse - despite acknowledging animal sentience, the organization excludes animals from rights-based frameworks routinely applied to human beneficiaries, revealing arbitrary moral boundaries within development practice.

These findings contribute to understanding how institutional discourse creates boundaries around moral consideration while claiming evidence-based neutrality. The selective application of rights frameworks to human but not animal subjects exposes theoretical inconsistencies that limit development's transformative potential. The alignment between FAO language and private sector interests demonstrates how commercial priorities become embedded within public institutional frameworks through seemingly neutral technical terminology.

The study's limitations include its focus on a single organization and reliance on document analysis rather than empirical practice. Future research could examine comparative discourse across UN agencies, investigate implementation gaps between policy language and field practice, or explore how alternative framings might reshape development programming.

This analysis challenges development studies to examine unquestioned anthropocentric assumptions that may constrain responses to interconnected global challenges. As climate change and zoonotic diseases increasingly demonstrate human-animal interdependence, development frameworks that maintain rigid species-based moral boundaries appear inadequate for addressing contemporary realities. The systematic exclusion of animals from rights-based consideration ultimately limits development's capacity to achieve its stated goals of evidence-based practice and comprehensive approaches to global wellbeing.

8. Appendix

CAS	Critical Animal Studies
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
FAO	(United Nations) Food and Agriculture Organisation
LEAP	Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership
NHAs	Non Human Animals
OIs	Organisational Institutions
PPPs	Public Private Partnerships
RBAD	Rights Based Approaches to Development
SDGs	(United Nations) Sustainable Development Goals
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health

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