

EACAS 2025 Berlin

<https://www.eacas.eu/9th-eacas-conference-2-4th-may-2025-berlin-registration/>

Friday 2nd May, 2025**• Introduction by Richard Twine, Sociologist based in the UK**

- Critical Animal Studies was formed 20 years ago in the US
- It has roots in anarchism and ecofeminism
- Scholar-activism bridge
- Interdisciplinary
- Engaged theory
- Intersectional and vegan
- To be a CAS scholar is to be an activist
- First academic field to identify with vegan practice
- [eacas.eu](https://www.eacas.eu)
- On Facebook and Bluesky
- CAS Europe was formally part of ICAS (USA) but went its own way in 2015

Session 1: Critical Thinking and Empathy

- Bruno Ćurko (University of Split, Croatia) – Fostering Critical Thinking and Bioethical Sensibility Towards Animals in Children
 - He conducts philosophy workshops with children
 - Emphasises the importance of fostering critical thinking in children
 - Bioethical sensibility towards animals
 - Moral complexity in human-animal relationships
 - Children tend to believe that animals should be treated as well as humans, then comes adolescence and social norms are integrated
 - Children's early sense of ethics needs to be fostered
 - Critical thinking should be encouraged
 - Critical thinking in education enables children to question assumptions and encourages logical, informed discussions
 - Lipman (2003): "Thinking that leads to good judgement"
 - Bioethical sensibility:
 - Awareness of animal sentience and welfare
 - Empathy as a moral foundation
 - Role-playing games: encouraging children to be animals (cognitive critical thinking)
 - Young children's inclusive moral view; age-related shift due to socialisation; opportunity to preserve and refine empathy
 - Philosophical and ethical frameworks:
 - Nussbaum's capabilities approach
 - CAS perspective
 - Justice beyond humans
 - Key Strategies:
 - Curriculum integration
 - Philosophical inquiry (P4C)
 - Empathy-building activities
 - Critical media literacy
 - Balanced guidance and enquiry

- P4C (Philosophy for Children):
 - Teacher acts as a facilitator, not a teacher
 - Questions such as “What about the wolf?” In children’s stories
 - Lupus – prostitute – Aristotle – not there in nature
 - Skeptical questioning
 - Don’t passively accept dominant narratives about animals
 - 8-9 year olds. Adriatic Sea. Mediterranean monk seal. Nearly extinct.
 - 9-11 year-olds. Why do we need to respect animals? What is respect and how can we do it?
 - Story creation (Narrative Method). Takes 4 months. Adriatic Sea – connection with shells
 - Conclusion:
 - Ethical imperative and educational opportunity
 - Empower children to reason and care
 - Prepare future citizens for coexistence or..?

- **Benjamin Hunt – Performing Change: The Role of Creative Practices in Cultivating Interspecies Empathy and Action**
 - Ben Hunt – Performance Studies – DeMontford University – benhunt.info
 - Performance as direct intervention
 - Performance invites us to feel
 - Trauma and anthropocentrism
 - Trauma and Performance (Duggan 2017)
 - Bringing hidden trauma into public space – embodiment
 - Centring ourselves
 - Breaking the anthropocentric circle
 - Duck Lake (Watt, 2016)
 - They do not pretend to be a duck, instead they move with duckness
 - Soya the Cow (Hellmann, 2018)
 - She doesn’t act like a cow, she becomes cowness
 - Slaughterhouse Vigils
 - Box of Shadows
 - Anti-hunt
 - Inviting audience to feel confinement, exhaustion etc.
 - La potencia feminista, Gago (2020)
 - Affective, relational, collective power
 - Unscripted – Unruly – Emergent
 - Not power over – but over power
 - Performance is Change
 - Cultivating empathy
 - Disrupting speciesism
 - Imagining
 - performinganimalrights.org
 - Anthropocentrism and animality
 - We are all animals trying to access our animality
 - Start with emotions first
 - Emotion and scientific knowledge
 - Vital to have scientific information as a basis for emotion
 - Performance bridging the two
 - Integrating activism and performance

- Bearing witness as performance
- Tension between framing things as performance
- Performance helps us to access realness
- We're all performing all the time
- How to choose...
- Consent – You don't need to get involved with the bodies of nonhuman animals because we have the tools
- The queerness of antispeciesism
- Barbara Helen – Singer / Songwriter
- Her music is an outlet for activists to avoid burnout

- **Dimitra Kountaki, University of Crete – Fostering Empathy Beyond Anthropomorphism: The Role of Education in Transforming Human Rights**
 - Learning to ignore:
 - Natural Empathy – The Lesson – Reinforcement
 - The Dominant Worldview:
 - Humans as Center
 - Institutional Embedding
 - Hidden Curriculum
 - Nature as Resource
 - A New Framework?:
 - Challenge of beliefs
 - Expansion of ethical frameworks
 - Responsibility and care
 - Inclusion of all life
 - “Education cannot be neutral”¹
 - Napoleon and his horse Marengo
 - Animals as Individuals, not resources
 - Eco-Literacy
 - White Fang by Jack London (1906)
 - The Wolf (Der Wolf) Herman Hesse (1960) in Märchen (Short Stories)
 - Critical Consciousness

- **Carlos Salzani, Vienna – Can a Book Make You Vegan? The Literary Imagination and the Limits of Empathy**
 - The Biopolitical Animal
 - The Limits of Literature and Empathy – Not as a restriction
 - ‘Cadáver Exquisito’ by Augustina Bazterrica
 - Reaction of readers to dystopian world where eating animal flesh became deadly, cannibalism became legal. Literally pulls humans into the hooves of livestock animals. Many readers write to her, telling her that the book encouraged her to be vegan
 - The Literary Turn
 - Literature makes us acquainted with possibilities other than those present in our culture (John Kekes: The Enlargement of Life)
 - Literature can “stretch our world” Susan Sontag
 - Literature is the mind's flight simulator
 - The 18th Century novel strongly contributed to the language of animal rights

¹ Giroux, Henry. (2010). Rethinking Education as the Practice of Freedom: Paulo Freire and the Promise of Critical Pedagogy. Policy Futures in Education. 8. 715. 10.2304/pfie.2010.8.6.715.

- 1887 Black Beauty – Human treatment
- Martha Nussbaum
 - Love's Knowledge
 - Poetic Justice
 - Upheavals of thought
 - Richard Rorty
- Criticism
 - No proven correlation between fiction and effects on readers behaviour
 - Safe zone – Fictionality is free from real social demands
- Nonfiction that shows the horrors of carnism more often makes people go vegan
 - Jonathan Safran Foer: Eating Animals
 - Yu. Noah Harari: Sapiens
 - Earthlings (2005) Film
- Fiction has a different affect
 - Starting to look at reality in a different way – not telling you what to do
 - The limits of imagination and empathy can never be established
 - Take the world and give it back with another look and perspective
- Carnage: Swallowing the Past, Simon Amstell (2017) Mockumentary²³
 - The world goes vegan
 - Irony and wit instead of horror – to show the absurdity of carnism
 - Succeeds within all the limits

Session 2: Activism, Representation, Participation

- **Anne van Veen, Utrecht University: De-mooo-cracy: Transformative Learning for Interspecies Democracy**
- <https://annevanveen.com/de-mooo-cracy/>
 - Introduction: Collective guided imagination
 - Theoretical Background:
 - Political philosophy
 - Interspecies democracy
 - Nonhuman animals as political actors
 - Micro- and macro-agency
 - Curtailed by oppression
 - Epistemic failure, (in)justice and humility
 - **Transformative Learning:** Using narrative and theatre for doubt arousal and perspective taking
 - De-mooo-cracy:
 - Mock citizens assembly
 - Develop a future vision for how humans and cows can live together
 - Policy. Visit a farm. Experts. Role-playing. Theatre and storytelling.
 - Cows and humans in De Achterhoek in 2050
 - Mira: Biography (written by a participant)
 - Worldview: Interviews with participants afterwards
 - 'I see cows everywhere now'
 - Cows as political actors

² See BBC accompanying page to Carnage <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/VN3BnwnWKCytkfzhxL1BB4/carnage-the-facts>

³ <https://archive.org/details/SimonAmstellCarnageP04sh6zglplayer>

- Behaviour Change
- Art as enabler of TL: Imagination, emotions and perspective taking
- Barriers to TL:
 - Fear of anthropomorphising
 - Previous desensitising experiences
- Research into cow language
- Intuitions of people were more or less right

- **Tim Reysoo: The Missing Piece: Building an Effective Political and Economic Strategy for the Animal Movement**
 - The animal industrial complex
 - The “Famers Republic of the Netherlands”
 - Meet the Victims – activist occupied a pig farm
 - Farmers started a political party
 - This party has the majority in most places
 - They stopped any support for plant-based innovation – “Protein-transition”
 - Additional plant-based milk tax – sales are dropping a little bit
 - Public funding is now used for animal-only innovation. There is no public outcry.
 - Mass public support for the farmers exists
 - Collective guilt? It is actually harming the general public
 - The water level in the Netherlands is kept artificially low for the dairy farmers
 - A lot of members of the general public have huge expensive cracks in their basement, to benefit a small sector
 - The Vegan Movement and the Plant-Based Industry
 - Lessons from Abolitionism
 - Inclusive movement, bought the issue to parliament
 - Building a Lobby for Animals:
 - Get a tailor-made suit
 - Join the right
 - High-level politicians are actually very easy to access
 - They had never heard of plant-based policies
 - Frame your lobby message in a way that is reconcilable with their ideology
 - Grüne Woche Berlin Conference
 - Go there and call out the narrative that is being displayed there
 - “The Alternative Protein Industry”
 - Plant-based news
 - Assist with political motions
 - Go to political debates
 - Speak with members of parliament
 - Host a fancy plant-based dinner
 - M.P.s do work visits - going to plant-based factories
 - Focus on the personal assistant of the representative
 - Funding for plant-based industries

- **Marie Leth-Epensen, Lund University: Forging Alliances While Crafting Alternative Food Futures: A Study of Activism and Civic Engagement Across the Animal, Environmental, and Rural Movements in Denmark**
 - Cross-movement alliances
 - Food sovereignty
- **Melvin Geib Caballero: Ways Towards Effective Animal Representation**
 - Needed
 - Possible
 - Animal Welfare Ministry

Saturday 3rd May, 2025

- **Dr. Judith Benz-Schwarzburg: Animal Ethics in Picture Books**
 - Children and Animals
 - Anthropocentrism is ethically problematic
 - Children initially hold a biological stance
 - They are influenced into an anthropocentric view
 - Picture books are a primer, ages 3-5
 - Picture book reading is captivating and highly creative
 - You are meaning reading *into* the book and *from* it
 - Literary reading triggers self-reflection
 - How do picture books contribute?
 - 'Wild Symphony' by Dan Brown (2020)
 - Not complex subjectivity
 - Focus on the facts of the animals
 - 'The Elephant' Jenni Desmond
 - A nice example. Different level of deepness. Making animal subjectivity the main topic.
 - 'A Stone Sat Still' Brendan Wenzel
 - A stone is a stone for somebody
 - Unique perspective on the world
 - Being part of a shared world
 - The scope of animal agency
 - 'Liebes kleines Schweinchen' Ulf Nilsson Eve Eriksson
 - Philosophical moment of the animal looking into the human's eyes
 - Pelle starts to run and liberate himself
 - They understand each other not because of a shared language, but because they love each other
 - A comment from audience member: The sound of the kangaroo jumping in the Wild Symphony example has a rhythm, a relation with the animal's embodied living.

Kickstarting for Good <https://kickstartingforgood.org/>

Incubation and acceleration programme aimed specifically at nonprofit organisations and impact initiatives. Next open for registrations March 2026

- **Iana Fishova: Educating Beyond Speciesism: Thinking-Doing Creative-Relational Inquiry in Critical Animal Pedagogies and Vegan Education**
 - Ethico-onto-epistemology
 - Thinking – Doing – Creative – Relational Inquiry
 - Creative – relational
 - Non-neutrality
 - Humour
 - Love

- **Josip Guć (University of Split): Appreciating Non-Human Animals by Becoming a Child**
 - John Dewey
 - Growth – the goal of education
 - There is no stable measure of maturity
 - We should be growing in childlikeness
 - Paulo Friere
 - Remaining a child is the condition of proper education
 - Vitality to life (Kohan 2021)
 - Bioethical sensibility

- **Carolyn Eirlich: Learning to Be Affected: Principles and Strategies of (In-)Visibility Regarding Pictures in (Critical) Education on Animal Factories in Germany**
 - Susan Sontag: 'Regarding the Pain of Others'
 - The Beutelsbach Consensus:
 - Prohibition against overwhelming the pupil (Überwältigungsverbot)The Beutelsbach Consensus:
 - MenschTier Bildung e.V. <https://mensch-tier-bildung.de/>