

Flying cats and dogs: Relationality, empathy and care in the transportation of animals by air

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The carrying of companion animals by air has grown into an international business involving approved vets, pet travel agencies, airlines, and animal terminals. This study investigates how the experience of transportation is shaped and draws theoretically on an approach of more-than-human mobility. In detail, I approach mobility through relationality, empathy, and caring practices by considering air transportation as an anthropocentric means of animal movement. Movement, including the specific conditions used to carry companion animals, influences the experience of mobility, triggering multispecies empathy and caring practices. Empirical accounts provide 16 online interviews with cat and dog caregivers analyzed via a qualitative content analysis. The interviewees shared transportation experiences in the aircraft cabin, in the hold, or when carrying animals as cargo. The analysis reveals that caregivers and companion animals experience air transportation relationally and the separation of caregivers and companion animals causes negative transport experiences.

KEYWORDS: companion animals, mobility, transport, relationality, empathy, care

Both human and nonhuman animals' move through space and time and their mobility affects multispecies relations. Birke and Hockenhull (2016, 123) point out that the verb to move has "myriad meanings. [...] we move together or apart, things move us – either as physical transport through space, or emotionally". Movement plays a vital role in shaping multispecies relationships for participating human and nonhuman animals because the physical and emotional movement of humans and their companion animals

are closely connected. Conversely, multispecies relationships influence the mobility of humans and animals. Affectionate relationships shape the experience of movement through space and create a foundation to move together through time.

Commonly, the umbrella term *animals used for transport* comprises research on the mobility of domesticated animals by focusing on the role of animals as means for human transport (see Hodgetts and Lorimer 2018, 7). Under its umbrella, studies on horseback riding investigate relational aspects of human and nonhuman mobility (Game 2001; Thompson 2011). Progress in human locomotion in the Global North, however, has shifted the position of animals from being means of transport to becoming transported subjects. Exploring animal transportation by air, this study contributes a fresh perspective on animal mobility by approaching multispecies relationships when carrying companion animals. Human and nonhuman companions primarily use air transportation when humans relocate for professional or family reasons (Sales 2016, 116). The unique position of companion cats and dogs as family members motivates many caregivers to move with their nonhuman companions (see Fox and Welsh 2011; Riggs, Due, and Taylor 2017; McConnell et al. 2019). The transportation of companion cats and dogs by air has grown into an international business, involving airline services, pet travel agencies, international guidelines, and animal terminals in airports (see IATA 2023; IPATA 2018; ATA 2023). The study examines how caregivers and their companion cats and dogs experience air transportation as a form of mobility in the late modern age by drawing connections between relationality (Haraway 2008), multispecies empathy, and care (Gruen 2015; Calcagno 2017; Hamington 2017). The concept of mobility comprehends the individual and relational human and animal experiences of movement. Theoretically, mobility draws on a more-than-human approach in mobility studies, highlighting how animals experience movement (Hodgetts and Lorimer 2018). The empirical material consists of sixteen online interviews with cat and dog caregivers who engage in an emotional multispecies relationship with their companion animals. In most cases, the companion animals were present during the interviews. The interviewees had transported their companion animals by air at least once, covering in-hold, in-cabin, and cargo transportation. To capture the transport experiences, the interviews have been analyzed utilizing a qualitative content analysis.

Relationality, empathy and care in companion animal mobility

This study locates the transportation of companion dogs and cats in the field of animal mobility studies (see Hodgetts and Lorimer 2018). Traditional mobility studies explore

issues beyond the traditional lenses of transport (Shaw and Sidaway 2010) by focusing on the experience of movement and stillness with broader implications ranging across socio-cultural, political, and economic milieux (Shaw and Hesse 2010, 306). Adding a more-than-human perspective to mobility studies, Hodgetts and Lorimer (2018) identify a shift from animal movement to animals' mobilities. While animal movement describes moving across space, animal mobility comprises how human actions shape the movement of nonhumans, and lastly, the term animals' mobilities highlights the animal's experience of mobility. This study comprehends mobility in the view of Hodgetts and Lorimer by focusing on the movements of airplanes and the stillness of companion animals. According to them, mobilities are "movements and stillnesses that are socially shaped, experienced (by human actors, in most accounts), and that have meanings for those involved" (Hodgetts and Lorimer 2018, 6).

Research on animals and affect (see Nyman and Schuurman 2016) contributes to animals' mobility, as human and nonhuman companions experience movement across time and do so relationally. Air transportation is an event experienced relationally between human and nonhuman companions, making it a case of animals' mobility. From such a perspective, transportation draws on cases of riding and dog sledding, where transport is considered a relational process shaped by human and nonhuman emotions and the ability of humans and animals to understand each other's intentions (Kuhl 2011, Äijälä 2020; Game 2001; Birke and Hockenhull 2016, 126ff.). However, such studies focus on the role of movement when co-constructing interspecies relationships because these animals are a means of transport for humans.

Departing from this, I examine how relationality creates the experience of movement. From such a perspective, Haraway (2008, 19) summarizes relationality as "becoming with" and interspecies dependency in a "worlding game," of "regard and respect" and "the play of companion species learning to pay attention." In other words, humans and animals shape each other's environments. They co-constitute lifeworlds and engage in co-evolution (see Timeto 2021). In the case of air transportation, the interplay of transport conditions, caring practices, and the emotional entanglements between human and nonhuman companions produce relational experiences. Relationality draws on the activity of play as a central aspect in the interaction of humans and animals. Play requires the moral capacity to understand and follow the rules of the game and consequently presumes the agency of humans and nonhumans alike (Bekoff 2007; Koski and Bäcklund 2017). Rather than being merely a capacity, animal agency arises from interactions between animals and their environment. Here, agency constitutes that animals interact with and influence their environment. Consequently, the agency

of companion cats and dogs includes, firstly, shaping human behavior, secondly, human and companion animals intentionally acting with and upon each other, and thirdly, shaping the behavior of other companion animals (Koski and Bäcklund 2017, 14).

The multiple ways in which animal agency operates are especially discernible in affectionate multispecies relationships between domesticated animals and humans. To foreground the emotional relationship between humans and their cats and dogs in shaping the experiences of movement, I use the term companion animals to describe carried dogs and cats. Calarco (2021, 102) stresses the difference between pets and companion animals, as the former indicates human dominance, with an animal as human property, and the latter refers to friendship. Drawing on Calarco, I understand the term pet to incorporate commercialization and animal commodification, while the term companion animal stresses affection between humans and animals.

Empathy and care are central aspects of relationality between companion cats and dogs and caregivers. Empathy points to the person's feelings towards animals, offers a psychological, cultural, and political attempt to explain relationality, and hence targets human feelings directed toward companion animals. In general, empathy contains the cognitive understanding and the affective sharing of one's emotional state although being alienated from them (Aaltola 2018; Eisenberg and Strayer 1987; Katz and Buchfield 2020, 23-24; Taylor and Signal 2005). Gruen (2015, 32) introduces the concept of entangled empathy as a "way for oneself to perceive and to connect with a specific other in their particular circumstance, and to recognize and assess one's place in reference to the other." Gruen characterizes empathy by proximity and distance to stress that empathy further comprises the understanding of species-typical behaviors and the individual personality of animals over time. Entangled empathy entails anthropomorphism because humans expand their emotions to animals to make conclusions about the feelings of animals. Nevertheless, I argue that the anthropomorphic dimension of empathy adds to relationality and does not undermine it. Bekoff (2007, 123) points out that anthropomorphism is a linguistic tool to "make thoughts and feelings of other animals accessible to humans." Using anthropomorphic language does not discount the animal's point of view (Bekoff 2000, 867).

Empathy can motivate caring for companion animals, while interspecies care involves all stages of a companion animal's life (see Schuurman and Franklin 2018) and is shaped through listening and attentiveness rather than based on abstract moral rules (Hamington 2017, 50). I use the term caregiver to describe the human companions drawing on the performative dimension of care. Here, caregivers engage in caring activities and observe themselves while practices of care construct their identity as care-

givers performatively. I approach companion animal care as practices including caring habits and caring activities in line with the feminist tradition of care as thick, non-moralistic doings that are not necessarily comforting (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, 199; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). Here, I draw on Hamington (2004, 57) who points out that caring habits and activities “exhibit a regard for the growth, flourishing, and well-being of another” Caring habits are “robust structures of activity involving mind and body that are both open-ended and recursive” (Hamington 2017, 53). In contrast, caring activities are less routinized and repeated actions that nevertheless aim to boost the wellbeing and flourishing of companion animals. I summarize both caring habits and caring activities as caring practices.

Furthermore, Hamington argues that practicing care has an embodied and a performative dimension. According to the author, the embodied dimension refers to the body that delivers and receives care. Performativity captures the interplay between the individual and her environment, as individuals care and simultaneously observe and evaluate themselves while performing care (Hamington 2017, 52). Activities expressing care create and lead to an interplay between performative and embodied care. In the following, I explain the methodology used to approach companion animal transportation by air.

Data and methodology

The study relies on individual transport experiences described by dog and cat caregivers. The participants shared their accounts of companion animal mobility by air in 16 semi-structured interviews conducted in spring 2020 by Skype and Facebook messenger. The interviews have been selected to contain an equal number of experiences concerning the transportation of dogs and cats. Potential interviewees were contacted via posts in Facebook groups about animal traveling and ex-pat life, as well as in individual message requests. The interviews covered the following topics: introduction, documents and vaccinations, procedure (before, during, and after transportation), animal behavior, values, and beliefs concerning opinions and suggestions for improvements. However, topics often overlapped when participants started sharing their experiences. The interviewees voluntarily participated in the study and gave informed consent. The interviews have been anonymized and treated confidentially.

The majority of the participants had traveled more than once by air with their companions. The experiences included cabin, hold, and cargo transportation between 2010 and March 2020, and comprised transports in or from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. The participants lived in Austria, Madagascar, the United

States, the United Kingdom, Laos, the Netherlands, Russia, and Finland during the interviews. The caregivers transported their companions by air due to permanent or temporary relocation or leisure. In most cases, the nonhuman companions were present or around the caregivers during the interviews. During the interviews an intimate atmosphere (see Gillespie 2017) between the caregivers, animals and the interviewer influenced the interview questions and answers by revealing rich details about the behavior and personalities of the animals present. Thus, the animals have left traces in the interview material that go beyond representations (Kalof and Montgomery 2011, 4). The interviews were analyzed via a qualitative content analysis. This method provides strategies to investigate the meanings of texts, photos, and videos in the context of their creation (Krippendorff 2004). Its situational, reflexive, case-oriented, and validity-emphasizing nature is well-suited to approaching individual accounts and experiences (see Schreier 2012, 21). The literature distinguishes between manifested and latent messages within the data (Lune and Berg 2017, 186ff.). An interpretation close to the written word reveals manifest messages. In contrast, the analysis of latent content focuses on more profound meanings. I used the software Atlas.ti to code the different experiences by paying close attention to manifested and latent messages. In detail, the significant codes of transport conditions, caring practices, emotions of caregivers, represented emotions of animals, and animal behavior organized the data. Especially the coding of caregivers' and represented animals' emotions relied on latent and manifested content.

Afterward, I arranged the codes in the three temporal groups before, during, and after transportation to contextualize the preparation of transportation, in-cabin transport, where caregivers and animals are physically together, and as-cargo and in-hold transport, where caregivers are separated. The group after transportation, consequently, only comprises experiences about the reunion of companion cats and dogs and their caregivers after in hold or as-cargo movement, but not experiences about settling into the new home.

Shaping relational experiences through empathy and care

The following section investigates different interviewee experiences to reveal how the interplay of empathy and interspecies caring practices shapes relational transport experiences. The first part of the analysis focuses on transport preparations by looking at crate training practices and arranging necessary travel documents. The second part focuses on in-cabin transportation, and the third part targets the limitations of care by examining in-hold and cargo transportation. Caregivers experience empathy by

engaging in the emotional state of their companion animals to facilitate caring habits and activities. Conversely, the absence of physical contact between companion animals and caregivers does not limit empathy but its enactment in caring practices.

Care and empathy in transport preparations

Apart from emotional support animals and assistance animals, companion dogs and cats are transported in crates or transport boxes made from soft or solid material, such as textiles, wood, or plastic (IATA 2016, 215). Soft or hard cages are used inside the cabin. Hold and cargo transportation necessitates solid crates only. The participants employed crate training to accustom their companion animals to the transport crate. The training aims to familiarize cats and dogs with the transport kennel to change the animal's perception of the crate. A caregiver whose two dogs traveled from Australia to the Netherlands remembers:

[...] within 10 minutes, the behavior list had got her [the dog] into the crate. And of course, she [the dog trainer] suggested also putting the bed in, so the crate smells familiar. By the end of it, I had the doors open, and she would pretty much either go into her large crate, or she would go and sleep in Jim's crate. The smaller crate. I think she liked the coziness [...] And even when I got ready for work, she was quite happy to sit in it and wait before I left for work (caregiver of a dog).

After unsuccessful training attempts, the caregiver used a behavior checklist arranged by a dog trainer to accustom the dog Amy to the transport crate. The checklist evaluates the dog's behavior and provides practical steps to change the animal's behavior. A combination of dim lighting, cream cheese, deep breathing, yawning, and petting changed Amy's suspicious perception of the crate with the result that the dog accepted the crate. The caregiver summarizes the dog's emotions about being inside the crate as happy. Though she does not use words to express her happiness about the success of the training, she shares her story in a confident, calm, and satisfying way. Caregivers with cats also familiarized their felines with the transport kennel. They used catnip, provided food or treats inside the crate, or left it open for a longer time to accustom the cats to the transport kennel. Nevertheless, caregivers also report negative crate training experiences. These invoked negative feelings in animals and caregivers. Here, the caregivers felt responsible for the unsuccessful training and the animal's stress when being confined. During the training, caregivers relate empathetically to their companion animals by adjusting training methods according to the needs of their cats and dogs.

Crate training has a dimension of human domination over animals. Palmer (2016, 125ff.) distinguishes between two types of power practices humans use on animals. The first category contains internalized practices that “affect the subjectivity of the animal” as “training, taming, breaking and teaching” to make animals more useful to human ends. Crate training belongs to this group. The training is a disciplining measure that makes companion animals useful to transport conditions and procedures. Empathy used in crate training is based on the subjectivity of companion animals by considering their needs and adjusting training methods if needed. Therefore, empathy characterizes crate training as a caring practice (see Katz and Burchfield 2020, 23-24). The training, as a caring practice, aims to minimize the stress of confinement during transportation by helping companion animals to (re)learn that being confined is not dangerous. Ideally, the companion animal accepts the crate as a safe place. It is a composition of mutual physical (inter)actions that usually originate from the caregiver’s body as the caregiver guides the training and is addressed to the animal’s body. Hamington (2017, 52) introduces the term “constraint choice” to explain a performative element of crate training as a part of care. Caregivers have no control over transport practices that require carrying animals in crates but choose training as an activity to prepare their companion animals for transportation. Enacting such a choice renders the human companion into a caregiver. In such a view, Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, 5) positions caring practices in the dimension of affect/affection, work/labor, and ethics/politics. The interplay of these dimensions creates tensions between social, ethical, and emotional engagement and the maintenance of care. While caregivers empathically engage with their companion animals, they also perform crate training, forcing them to be confined.

A second major part of the transport preparations concerns the organization of documents required to carry companion animals by air. Depending on the country-specific regulations, companion animals need a microchip, vaccinations, and sometimes import- and export documents for their transport. Caregivers reported they engaged in extensive individual research about the necessary documents. They asked for advice in social media groups and contacted pet travel agencies. A caregiver with two dogs traveling from Nicaragua to Madagascar remembers:

I started several months before: I had contacted a lot of pet travel agents and even these professionals, and everybody told me something else. Always when I thought there was a solution, new problems arose. For instance, [...] I had contacted, among others, animal travel in South Africa, and they said [...] dogs need a test. [...] I needed a test for the two dogs, which cannot be made in Nicaragua and costs 700 dollars for each dog just for the few hours of transit (caregiver of two dogs).

To organize the transport, the caregiver contacted several animal forwarders and pet travel agencies. She had trouble finding a route that did not demand more than one transit stop. One option was a transit in the USA, where both dogs needed a titer test to enter the country. Titer tests are used to monitor the level of antibodies for rabies in the animal's blood. The fact that everybody told her something different and new problems constantly arose indicates the stress the caregiver experienced during the preparations. Another caregiver remembers how she arranged the transport of her dog and what emotions came up in the preparations:

I was checking on the internet what they say about the preparation, and it looked pretty complicated. In Taiwan, there is a Facebook group, and the group has people who normally transport their doggies from Taiwanese shelters to the United States, Netherlands, and Australia. [...] The people just put documents in the group and say what you need to do.

The caregiver later added her concerns that the issued documents would not be accepted:

[...] What we were most afraid of is that they would not recognize your documents. I am from Taiwan, and the documents they [the Taiwanese authorities] gave us were in Chinese and English. The print they [the Taiwanese authorities] gave me did not look very official (caregiver of a dog).

The caregiver found the required documents and steps in a group that organizes the carrying of rescued dogs. However, she feared the Dutch authorities would not accept these documents, and this would cause her dog to be stuck at the airport or, in the worst case, returned to Taiwan. Caregivers reported they initially searched for information on social media channels and in groups about pet traveling and ex-pat life to organize animal transports by air since individuals share their experiences about necessary administrative steps on social media.

Although the preparation of the documents lacks physical interaction with their companion animals, the caregivers experienced stress, worry, and fear during the process. Such feelings are rooted in empathy and arise from the imagination of the consequences and alternative scenarios. However, empathy here is not rooted in the projection of the caregiver's feelings to the animal and their situation but in the reflective act of imagining (Gruen 2015, 25) how the animal might experience disruptions in transportation caused by missing or wrongly filled-in documents. Mistakes in the documents may lead to animals to being stuck at the airport when exiting or entering the country.

The thought that their companion animals might experience stress and fear when left behind evoked similar emotions in the caregivers. Consequently, they arrange the documents themselves or outsource the process to pet travel agents and forwarders.

Empathy and care during transport

Companion cats and dogs are carried in the aircraft hold, cabin, and on cargo flights. Depending on the weight of animals and height, many airlines apply policies for carry-on luggage and checked-in luggage to animals. Small animals in crates are transported in the aircraft cabin under the seat in front of you. During in-cabin transportation, caregivers and animals are physically together. Here, caring practices and empathy are central in shaping transport experiences. A caregiver who flew with her cat in the cabin from Chile to the United States describes her experience:

It seems that the spaces underneath the seats are getting smaller and smaller. I remember, three years ago, when I traveled from the US to Chile, we had a lot more room, and it was not a problem. But the carrier that I had to buy for him was very small. He fit in it. But he did not have a lot of space, and I felt very guilty about that. But at the same time, I thought it was better for him than traveling with the cargo underneath the plane (caregiver of a cat).

The caregiver compared the space under the seat when she flew to Chile and three years later when she relocated to the United States. She remembers that her cat did not have enough space under the seat. Understanding the discomfort of her cat triggered the caregiver's guilt, as she felt responsible for the uncomfortable transport conditions of their cat. The guilt the caregiver experienced shows her empathy for the state of her companion cat. She felt responsible for the uncomfortable situation of the cat, causing an uncomfortable feeling of guilt. She describes the emotional state of her cat after the flight by sharing the situation when the caregiver and her cat arrived at their new place:

He was definitely stressed. [...] We brought him up to this room and the first thing he did was crawl underneath the sofa and he stayed there for a long time. I think he was stressed and he hid for a while and did not eat that much (caregiver of a cat).

Although the cat was transported in the cabin, the journey was stressful for him. The duration of the journey and the transport conditions, like the little space under the seat, exhausted the cat with the result that he fearfully responded to the new environment, not curiously. The caregiver, however, engaged emotionally and relationally in the companion

animal's situation. While the cat felt stressed, the caregiver experienced guilt. The emotions were different from those of her companion cat, indicating an embodied form of empathy. Aaltola (2018, 108) expands the cognitive and emotional foundation of multispecies empathy by adding an embodied component. Embodied empathy entails an emotional response that originates from the experience of the other's agency and subjectivity. In other words, embodied empathy does not mimic the emotions of companion animals. The caregiver cognitively and emotionally perceives the cat's response to the tiny space, which invokes guilt. The guilt reflects the difference between the caregiver who sees the companion animals as a subject and the treatment of companion animals as objects or carry-on luggage.

Inside the cabin, caregivers reported caring habits to improve the transport of their companion animals. A caregiver who flew on a long flight from Thailand to the United States with two cats remembers. One of their cats was calm. The other tried to get out of the crate:

So, we purchased a comfort seat and that made the world because we put the cats there and it was more comfortable. We put one on the seat between and then one on the floor and if we were able to nap a little bit, we put the hand in the bag and kept the hand in the bag. He kept trying to get out, and I had catnip too. I gave them a lot of catnip in the hope of calming them down (caregiver of two cats).

The caregiver summarized different activities to comfort their companion cats during the flight. She booked an extra seat to ensure additional space for the cats. She used a lot of catnip, though she was unsure if the catnip had any impact. Lastly, she placed her hand in the crate to ensure her presence. The caregivers' napping indicates that they felt relaxed on the flight. Other caregivers added that they gave the companion animals food, treats, and water to comfort them. These caring activities and habits aim to improve the transport experience of companion animals. Relationally, performing these activities and habits improves the flight experience of the caregivers. Furthermore, they restore the subjectivity of the companion animals as individuals with needs and preferences and not objects. Hamington (2004, 47ff.) notes that embodied care reassumes the subjectivity of both parties. Animals and caregivers likewise appear as subjects that either deliver or receive care through bodily actions. These actions are initiated by thinking with and knowing the other party and simultaneously postulate the subjectivity of companion animals as receivers of care. Establishing care beyond mind and body accepts thinking as a relational process, including caring in an interdependent world (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012; Kittay 2019). Lastly, physical touch is a caring habit

that relationally shapes the companion animals' and the caregivers' shared transportation experience. A caregiver who regularly flies with her cat in the cabin remembers:

You are technically supposed to keep them under the seat in front of you the entire-time. I asked my neighbor if it was ok that I held the bag. He said yes and the flight attendant did not say anything. When I am petting her, she is quiet and honestly at some point I just sneaked her out to keep her company. Because what I found is, if she is like with me, she is quite calm. She just sits and sleeps (caregiver of a cat).

Although animals are supposed to be stored under the seat inside a crate, the caregiver ignores the rules to comfort her companion cat. She put the crate on her lap and later she released the cat from the crate. The cat sat on her lap under a blanket. Though the caregiver clarified earlier that her cat is quite vocal in expressing discomfort, when sitting on her lap she was calm. The physical presence between caregiver and cat expressed in touch creates comfort for both parties. By ignoring the rules, the caregiver foregrounds the individual needs of her companion cat and applies situational knowledge to care for the cat.

Like other caring practices, touch also restores the subjectivity of companion cats and dogs. Hamington (2004, 4) summarizes that embodied care means that the body knows how to care. Such knowledge has been developed and expressed in caring habits. A touch is a form of "caring knowing" by relating to companion animals (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 98). During transportation, touch, petting, and stroking are embodied caring practices that shape the multispecies transport experience. The caregiver's quotation highlights that sometimes a simple touch, like the cat sitting on the caregiver's lap, is enough to calm the animal and assures the counterpart's presence. In such a view, touch restores the subjectivity of companion cats and dogs during transport and appears in contrast to the transport conditions, which neglect animals as subjects by treating them as objects.

Limitations of empathy and care

Companion cats and dogs traveling with their caregivers that do not fit under the seat inside the cabin are carried in the aircraft hold. Unaccompanied animals, whose transport has been arranged by an agency, are carried on cargo flights or inside the hold on passenger flights, depending on the connection. In both cases, caregivers and their companions are physically separated for the time of transportation. Accompanied companion animals transported in the aircraft hold are usually separated from their care-

givers at the airport when their kennel is checked in. Later, they are loaded into the aircraft, transported, and unloaded. At their destination, the caregivers pick them up at the oversized luggage counter. Animals traveling unaccompanied as cargo or in the aircraft hold might be separated from their caregivers for several days. Depending on the circumstances, an animal travel agency picks them up from their home and delivers them to the airport, where customs check their papers. Later the animals are loaded, transported, unloaded, and again checked at animal border posts at their destination. In the process, companion animals might spend time in enclosures at airport terminals, receiving food and water. A caregiver talks about her feelings knowing that her two companion cats were transported in the aircraft hold on the same flight:

I was just thinking the whole time, I hope that they are calm. I hope that they know that I am here. And I think that was why I did not sleep on the flight at all. I had a migraine. [...] I think I told the lady who was sitting next to me that my cats were on this flight, and she checked in on me. So that was helpful (caregiver of two cats).

The caregiver had trouble relaxing on the flight as she thought a lot about the well-being of her cats in the hold. The physical separation between caregiver and companion animals caused worries and sorrow for the caregiver. The caregiver turned to a stranger to relieve her fears. The caregiver's feelings were rooted in empathy for the transport conditions of her companion animals. In other words, caregivers do not feel their companion animals' emotions but feel the experience of their companion animals. Instead of physical interaction, empathy lies in the imagination of possible experiences. Despite physical separation, caregivers emphatically engage with their companion animals and evaluate in-hold transport by reflecting on what they know about in-hold transportation and the behavior and character of their companion animals. Gruen (2015, 26) points out that empathy is a process consisting of various steps. Firstly, the well-being of animals grabs the attention of empathists. Secondly, they reflectively imagine themselves in the animal's position and judge the conditions. Thirdly, the empathist assesses the situation and collects relevant information. While caregivers still empathize with their companion animals, the physical separation causes stress for the companion animals. A caregiver who regularly flies with her companion dog in the aircraft cabin and the hold compares the two different situations:

It is a double-edged sword, as is everything in the world. When traveling in the cabin she is much calmer because she is next to me. [...] But in the cabin she does not have space. She is calm, but I know she is smushed in the bag where she cannot stand up. In the hold, we use a huge box. [...] But then when I get her back, she is in

a weary state. I know it is stressful for the dog. The longer the flight is, the calmer I find her. [sometimes] I even heard her screaming ... (caregiver of a dog).

The caregiver used the expression of a “double-edged” sword to describe the advantages and disadvantages of in-cabin and hold transportation. Her dog’s behavior inside the cabin is calm because the dog is with her. In contrast, after in-hold transport, the caregiver has occasionally experienced hearing her dog barking in the airport arrival area. After a long flight, however, she usually finds her dog exhausted. While she depicts the situations rationally and composedly, her story breaks up when she mentions hearing her dog barking on arrival. The break indicates an emotional involvement, resulting in the caregiver not finding the right words to continue. Another caregiver whose cat was transported from the United States to the Netherlands on a cargo flight describes the reunion with her cat Roy:

I think I was a bit happier to see him than he was to see me. [...] Because he spent two days without me, and he was like: Where have you been? Well, he is normally a very quiet cat, but he was meow, meow, meow, meow like he always had that kind of angry meow. [...] As soon as he got out of the crate, he was super affectionate. He was rubbing up against me, and he wanted to be held, and he is not normally a very affectionate cat (caregiver of a cat).

The caregiver and her cat Roy were pleased about the reunion. After recognizing his caregiver, the cat started meowing. When he left the crate, he showed affection and stayed close to the caregiver. The situation encompasses empathy. Nevertheless, such empathy appears after transportation and is a response to the separation of the caregiver and companion cat during transportation. Calcagno (2017, 45) notes that “dogs and cats are known to become stressed when their built environments with humans change or are dismantled.” The missing presence of the caregiver as a familiar stabilizing person during transportation gives additional stress to companion animals and limits caring habits and activities to comfort the companion animals. Nevertheless, companion animals also experience stress when their caregivers decide to re-home them due to relocation. Here, the separation becomes a long-term condition that caregivers compare to the disadvantages of air transport in cargo and the hold. While companion animals experience stress when left alone in the aircraft hold or on cargo flights, leaving them behind or re-homing them constitutes an even more stressful separation. Temporal and spatial separation concerns the transport, as well as the whole multispecies relationship. In such a view, care involves spatial and temporal aspects. The moment

of separation and the absence of caring practices visualizes the geographies of care (Bowlby 2012; Milligan and Wiles 2010). Bowlby (2012) points out that informal caring activities construct a geographic map of caring activities over time. In such a view, the limitation of caring during transport guarantees caring for companion animals in the long run and the continuation of the multispecies relationship.

Discussion and conclusions

This study investigated how companion dogs and cats and their caregivers experience air transportation using the concepts of relationality, multispecies empathy and care. The transportation of animals situates the role, status, and treatment of companion animals in late modernity. In detail, companion animals are integrated into the social networks of their caregivers and occupy positions similar to friends and family members. The unique and affectionate relationship between the caregiver and companion is irreplaceable, highlighting the subject status of companion animals (Townley 2017, 23; Milligan 2009; Cudworth 2011). As a result, many caregivers plan to relocate together with their companion animals. Here, air transportation guarantees the continuation of such a relationship. Nevertheless, transport conditions and practices (see Lanza 2018) reflect the object status of animals creating negative transport experiences for both animals and humans. Animals are transported according to practices related to carry carry-on luggage and checked-in baggage with specialized places for animal crates under the seat in the cabin, in the aircraft hold, or on cargo flights. While caring practices improve these transport conditions, the physical separation between caregiver and companion animals during in-hold and cargo transport limits care.

Considering the relational experiences of transportation between humans and their dogs and cats is a starting point to modifying existing transport to create positive more-than-human experiences of mobility. The analysis reveals that caregivers emotionally engage with their companion animals, and companion animals are perceived to experience less stress when their caregivers are present and perform caring activities to comfort them. The separation of companion animals and their caregivers is, conversely, experienced as a source of stress and worry. Caregivers cannot engage in their caring habits or activities, and the companion animals are left in an unfamiliar environment without comfort. Nevertheless, complementary empirical research needs to investigate relationality and care in transport experience when shipping rescue animals by air or sold cats and dogs. These animals are often carried together with a less familiar person who acts as a caregiver, with the result that both parties engage in a temporary

multispecies relationship. Lastly, various other aspects influence this experience of air transport, such as the presence of familiar animals or familiarization with air transport and the environmental conditions in the aircraft hold. Future research could draw on visual methods, such as video analysis and filming (Lorimer 2010; Hamilton and Taylor 2017), to examine the experiences of the animals further.

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