

Wageningen University – Department of Social Sciences

MSc Thesis Chair Group Rural Sociology

Growing in 't Paradijs - A Tale of Man and Nature:

**An exploratory study of care farming
to discover what makes it a 'caring' environment.**

April 2011

MSc Programme: International Development Studies

Student: Sophie Hopkins

Specialisation: Sociology of Rural Development

Supervisor: Bettina Bock

Thesis Code: RSO80433



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Acknowledgements

This thesis was a labour of respect. Respect for those who participated in the research. Respect for the time and personal journey that people shared. And respect for the emotional lifts that can be experienced simply by stroking a chicken, feeding hay to a bull, grooming a horse, weeding tomatoes or wandering through the woodlands. But ultimately, it is respect for the way people care for one another and take great pleasure from this.

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Note: Cover Illustration of 't Paradijs by Caroline van de Vate. All photographs used in this report are accredited to the author.

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch,
a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment,
or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to
turn a life around.

~ Leo Buscaglia (1924-1998)

Executive Summary

Care farming is becoming increasingly popular and accepted as a health care service, particularly in the Netherlands where the main clients are the elderly, those suffering from mental health problems, children with autism and the mentally or physically handicapped. Whilst care farming is a form of green care, associating it with the benefits of being within a natural environment, there remain great differences between the type and style of care being delivered amongst farms and much dispute about the role of the farmer or farms themselves. General definitions are a contentious issue as it is the individuality of care farms that seem to be appealing. However, the Netherlands are leading in this field and have introduced several accreditation schemes that can ensure clients of a certain standard of care without compromising the rural idyll that is attached to this care option. Care farming is also being utilised as a viable solution for entrepreneurial farmers

Undertaken from an interpretive approach, this report takes a closer look at the benefits or limitations of care farming to participants by examining their own experiences and perspectives. A mixed farm in Barneveld, the Netherlands, served as a case study and engaged a wide number of people through participant observation techniques. Additionally, there were 37 semi-structured interviews. The research focused on providing an overview all those involved in care farming, from the clients, to the staff, volunteers and family members, as it is not only the clients that experience care in this context. The results were collated and thematic coding was used to analysis the data which was then combined with the literature review to answer the research questions. By incorporating different perspectives of people involved in care farming, a triangulation of experiences ensured a fair and accurate reflection on the role of care farms could be made.

Hassink (2007) and Sempick et al. (2008) identified three main categories of benefits associated with care farming: Physical or active; mental or restorative; and social. These three elements can be further broken down to provide an appreciation aspects such as diet and identity within the context of care farming and it was investigated how they impacted on participant's experiences. It can be argued that there is a distinctive overlapping between the three categories and as such, whilst the focus may be on one, such as promoting physical work, consequences will be rippled across other aspects, such as encouraging participants to take part in group activities or improved well being whilst maintaining gardens. This multilayered and flexible approach to care seems to suit both the environment and the participants. It is also one of the key strengths of care farming.

The philosophy of 't Paradijs manifested itself in five different forms: Christianity; putting the client first; individuality; teamwork; and innovation. Participants seemed to identity with the aspects they felt most suited them. For example, the management felt all five aspects were essential to the existence of 't Paradijs. Whereas the staff were concerned with meeting the client's needs and seeing each person as being unique. Similarly, they took strength from the support they gave one another. The clients however favoured being given time and space to find their own way and were proud to be part of such an inspiring and influential farm. They also felt as if their work was more meaningful if it could directly assist with the maintenance or income of the farm business and they took great ownership and satisfaction in these roles. Another outcome was that every participant felt cared for in some way, not only the clients. This sense of belonging to a community gave people the strength

and support to face their own challenges and helped to reinforce the idea of equality and sociability that was inherent in the daily activities.

Surprisingly, the role of nature and animals was not necessarily seen as important as the role of people involved in the care farming progress. Instead they seemed to provide the background or purpose to interactions with one another, especially in the case of the older people. Likewise, the autistic groups were only interested in the animals they could have direct contact with, such as holding the rabbits. This does not mean that the surroundings were underutilised, but only that were not often considered to be the focus of activities as one may expect from green care which usually relies on interaction with nature for restorative outcomes.

In terms of suitability, many participants believed those from a farming background got the most from attending 't Paradijs as it formed an element of continuity in their life experience, especially for the older male clients. However, there was a distinct lack of education about farming or nature and all participants relied upon one another to share knowledge. It was explained that especially for the autistic group, the decision not to teach the clients about their surroundings was purposeful as it provided a distinction between a place of freedom ('t Paradijs) and a place to learn (school). The lack of familiarity about both farming and the environment amongst many of the participants was still an unexpected find and further extenuated how the focus was heavily on the care of the people. This led to questions such as 'how important is the farm in care farming?'.

Investigating the role of the farm addressed issues such as the image of rural and what people expect from farming, resulting in the acknowledgment that farming is undergoing a transition period. The accessibility of 't Paradijs, and its accommodation of different needs, is something visitors believe should be strived for on a wider scale. Interestingly, the distinction between the farmer and an entrepreneur was blurred as the manager saw himself as the latter, with a full-time care farmer being employed. The difference between the two roles however was not important to other participants and they drew their own conclusions, commonly acknowledging that there were two farmers, only that the manager had more of a leadership role, sometimes understood as the head of the family. This role, and that of the family in general, was very important to the way participants related to one another and how they placed themselves within the community.

Whilst several issues were addressed in the discussion, the ultimate conclusion was that all participants benefited from the idea of being 'useful'. How this translates into care depends on the context and those involved, but it seemed as if caring for one another, whether client, staff, family and so on, created an environment in which people could focus on their abilities rather than their weaknesses. The role of the farm is linked not only to that of the animals and nature, but also to the people that are engaged in the activities, especially the idea of an extended family or community. Even though there are certain limitations to care farming, such as the lack of in-depth counseling desired by some clients, there seems to be a wealth of benefits associated with this concept. It is only hoped that further investigations can continue to enlighten the experiences of the actual participants in this choice of health care, as it is their view and feelings that should ultimately determine if care farming is a success or not.

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1 Introduction

Health and social care options are currently undergoing a transformation period. The demands and wishes of client groups such as adults with mental health problems, children with autism and the aging population which continues to increase, are forcing European health care systems to look to provide broader services beyond institutionalisation and to develop care in the community alternatives. In theory, the spectrum of spending choice for social care (see 2.1) activities should cover not only health care, but social past-times; thus, the value of mental well being and sociability is valued as important as medical intervention. Whilst developments continue to be made in the provision of services, the value of care farming (see 2.1) should not be overlooked.

Research into trials with personal budgets (otherwise known as direct payments) prove that autonomy of power over personal spending options resulted in clients feeling happier and more positive regarding their social and physical well being (Pearson 2006). This was further accentuated by an improvement in emotional wellbeing which can be a key factor in delaying the need to be admitted to a residential care home for elderly clients (Clark et al. 2004). However, initial trial results show that whilst clients appreciate the freedom to choose how to spend their budget, there is a lack of options at present, especially regarding social care in rural areas (McVeigh 2009). Whilst an assessment of services and policy structure is beyond the remit of this research project, the option of personal budget payments does mean that clients need to have access to a choice of services, of which care farming could be integral. It is with this notion that this research project investigated care farming in the Netherlands which is predominately funded by personal budgets with the purpose of understanding the experiences of stakeholders involved. This project explored the activities available at 't Paradijs, a care farm located near Barneveld, and aims to illuminate why stakeholders believed care farming is an effective intervention for health and/or social issues and how they felt they are all benefiting. It created an opportunity to understand different perspectives and needs of the participants. Exploring 't Paradijs also provided the chance to examine the importance of belonging to a 'community' as part of social care solutions, the role of the farm and the value of a rural setting for social care activities.

1.1 Research objective

What makes care farming a ‘caring’ environment that contributes to the health and well being of stakeholders?

- To undertake an ethnographic study of ‘t Paradijs care farm in the Netherlands
- To investigate how care farming is meeting the needs of different stakeholders

As health care becomes more decentralised, this research investigates the potential for green care and more specifically care farming, to be used to provide health and well being services for a range of client groups. To do this a study of the benefits of green care (see 2.2 for discussion of definitions) within the Netherlands was undertaken, where clients can currently be referred to specialised farms to partake in green care activities. The aim was to understand why the clients choose to be involved in care farming, what their ideals are of this concept, if there are any patterns in these reasoning’s and how they feel they benefit from it. It was also of interest to explore the opinions of other participants involved in care farming such as service providers, employees, trainees and family members, as this provides a different perspective and an opportunity to triangulate interpretations of the ‘care farming’ concept.

This project is conducted from a sociological perspective and is focused on social care developments and impressions rather than searching for the so-far illusive medical proof of health improvements which is struggling to accommodate the many variables involved with establishing ‘well being’. The results are qualitative as it was felt that the opinions and views of those already involved in care farming are essential to understanding its growing popularity and potential as they are at the core of the movement. Therefore the research departed from the experience of the participants themselves rather than merely an outsiders’ observation, making the research ‘user-centric’ and putting the actors at the heart of understanding care farming as a form of health care. The research aims to identify the key characteristics of care farming within the Netherlands that could be duplicated and incorporated in potential future social care solutions within other countries and to appreciate the ‘care’ aspect that this approach presents.

1.2 Thesis outline

Firstly the context will be set by examining the background to care farming through the use of a literature review. This leads onto the research questions and a more detailed explanation of the research methods that were practiced. Following the methodology is a presentation of the results broken down into three chapters each addressing a sub-question and using both literature based and primary research findings. The research concentrated on the expectations and experiences of different participants involved with ‘t Paradijs as well as providing a more explicit interpretation of the concepts and terminology that is regularly used in this field. Finally, the research findings are discussed and the role of care farming in the provision of social care is reflected upon.

Knowledge sought and relevance

The research project aims to broaden the understanding of care farms and highlight the values that stakeholders associate with the concept. An in-depth exploration of a care farm is presented in conjunction with an examination of corresponding literature to provide an understanding of the social care opportunities it supplies.

Societal interest in care farming

Although actual green care practices may not be new, there seems to be a current movement towards a wider acceptance of the perceived benefits of this sector. In particular, care farming has been identified as both an opportunity to strengthen people's mental wellbeing and also as a chance to develop community cohesion and influence societal shifts towards issues such as increasing income security for small farms. It is also providing a solution to the need for a new urban-rural relationship and re-establishing a relationship with food (Steel 2009). Care farming and green care are becoming relatively new topical issues as the reality of, for example, an aging heterogeneous population changes the makeup of society, with simultaneous challenges of sustainability and threatened rural economies. More research is being published (for example Hassink and Van Dijk 2006 and Sempik et al. 2010) and more cross-border interests are being met through European platforms such as SoFar or taskforces (such as COST866). As such, there is a significant and urgent need to further understand the current and potential role of care farming as we face up to the matters ahead.

What is the relevancy of care farming research?

The innovative role that nature can play in health care intervention plans and rehabilitation is still relatively unexplored. Although the natural environment is associated with restorative qualities (Sempik et al. 2003), care farming combines this with elements such as social interaction and 'productivity' (for example, planting and harvesting vegetables as a group). It is hoped that this project can be useful in helping to justify funding streams into care farming initiatives and to open new avenues for social care activities in outdoor spaces for a wider audience.

This research also highlights the different values that are prioritised and needed between actors. Furthermore, the comparison of perspectives broadens the understanding of care farming as a concept itself and how it is understood by those that are involved in its activities.

1.3 Concepts

The key characteristics of care farming were identified and reflected on throughout the research. However, in order to provide some clarity and context of the researchers understanding, a brief overview of care farming, social care and health and well being are explained in the following section. An understanding of the more encompassing terms such as nature benefits and green care discourses can be found in the literature review (2.0).

What is care farming?

‘Care farming’, also known as ‘social farming’, is an increasingly popular phenomenon and an element of the wider umbrella of green care that includes health care approaches such as therapeutic agriculture and animal assisted therapy (Hassink and van Dijk 2006). There is no formal definition for care farming, perhaps because flexibility and individuality is often a common feature of each eclectic farm project thus making generalisations challenging (see 6.1 for further reflection of the definition). Despite marginal differences in the meanings of the terminology associated with this type of green care, a common understanding could reinforce the concept and strengthen it to outside scepticism. In the meantime, for the purpose of this project the label ‘care farm’ is used to provide consistency and clarity for the reader. Similarly, for this research, the researchers own working definition of care farming will be: *The social care of people with an emphasis on interacting with nature and productive agriculture.*

What is social care?

The concept of care itself has evolved significantly from the responsibility to look after ones family, to the idea of social responsibility which extended the scope of care duties beyond blood relations. Daly and Lewis argue that care is an ethical practice based upon interconnectedness of “personal ties of obligation, commitment, trust and loyalty” (2000:283), but that it has become too ambiguous and diverse in meaning. Instead they put forward the idea of ‘social care’ which combines the labour of care (doing the actual ‘caring’ tasks such as hygiene, as well as activities with the person being cared for) with a commitment and ethical responsibility. As a result of this broad sphere, social care is often found at the junction between public and private care, and formal and informal care. This is reflected in the many different structures that care farming seems to exhibit, from private businesses to social enterprises.



Older client and retired farmer feeds hay to the cows.

An understanding of health and well being

Traditionally, health has been a concept associated with medical features and the attitude to ‘fix’ the patient. “The essential quality of healing is to make whole again, repair, and restore to a whole condition” (Lewis 1990:244). Whilst the medical model towards health is still prevalent, the social benefits of care farming are becoming more established and acknowledged. The four key factors influencing health and well-being can be identified as: diet, physical activity, nature and social capital (Spedding 2007). The last two categories are relatively new to the concept of health, but are fundamental in the nurturing of social and emotional well-being; understood as “emotional states

and life satisfaction” (Lawton 1991, cited in Rennemark et al. 2009:2). It is believed that by offering a range of meaningful values to clients, their physical, mental and social well-being will be catered for within the guise of, for example, security, routine, activities and social connections (Schols and van der Schriek-van Meel 2006:459). For example, ethnographic research in a rural community in Montana identified the understanding of health as “the ability to work or to be productive in one’s role” (Weinert and Long 1987:452). In their study it was found that the rural population under investigation placed a greater emphasis on the ability to work rather than on pain or mental health as an indicator of health status. Thus, the understanding of health can be a very personal approach and about feeling ‘useful’.

2 Literature review

This chapter addresses the background to care farming and why it has become a successful tool for health care in the Netherlands. It begins by summarising the fundamental beliefs that are associated with the health benefits of nature, followed by an appreciation of 'green care' of which care farming is part of and then a brief history of how care farming evolved as part of rural development changes.

2.1 Benefits of nature

A number of concepts are emerging about the benefits of nature being a restorative environment despite the difficulty in proving this scientifically. There is a commonly held opinion that contact with nature will reduce stress and fatigue (see Frerichs 2004 for study in the Netherlands where 95% respondents agreed with this statement, cited in van den Berg et al. 2007). Summarised below are the three most regularly cited and fundamental approaches regarding the restorative power of nature, by Ulrich, Kaplan and Kaplan, and Wilson. Whilst these concepts do not relate to care farming specifically, they do form the basis of why contact with nature is seen as beneficial and therefore they should be acknowledged as part of this research.

Ulrich: Nature and recovery from stress

Ulrich is particularly concerned with how contact with the natural environment can have psychologically healthy consequences and restorative effects, otherwise known as a "psycho-evolutionary model" (Elings 2006:51). His most renowned experiment proved that post-gall bladder surgery patients recovered quicker when situated in a room looking out into trees rather than hospital internal walls (Ulrich 1984). Fundamentally, Ulrich (1983) argues that the most pronounced restorative effects of nature are to be found for people experiencing stress. Experiencing nature can motivate an individual to change their behaviour and course of action, for example to choose to engage with others. Ulrich (1983:106) supports the assertion that individuals in general have an aesthetic preference for natural environments although this is not restricted to farming or even rural settings.

Kaplan and Kaplan: Attention restoration theory

Attention restoration theory (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989) argues that the natural environment presents qualities that allow recovery from mental fatigue and that the need and desire for contact with nature is embedded in us as a result of environments that humans have evolved in. "According to this perspective, people's desire for contact with green is more than naïve rural romanticism; it may even reflect an evolutionary heritage" (van den Berg et al. 2007:82). Whilst all environments have different restorative features, Kaplan and Kaplan believe that it is the natural environment which is considered to be the most beneficial.

Wilson: Biophilia hypothesis

Wilson argues that not only is biodiversity fundamental to the future of the planet, but that it is an essential part of a country's heritage and should be treasured (Kellert and Wilson:1993). Like Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), he asserts that the human *need* for nature is inherent in our being as a

consequence of evolution and within the human biological make-up. Wilson explains this need as a learned behaviour rather than an instinct and is therefore different for everyone but present in all.

2.2 Green care discourses

Although green care has been used in institutions such as prisons and hospitals for some time (Sempik and Aldridge 2006), there are huge gulfs in the research associated with this movement. Currently green care is understood as a therapeutic approach within a 'green' environment with the purpose being to care and to promote physical health, psychological well being and social connectivity (Hine et al. 2008), albeit it in various settings and forms. Within the concept of green care there are many 'approaches' linked by the role of nature and/or engaging with the natural environment. These various forms range from the direct therapeutic approaches such as animal-assisted therapy and therapeutic horticulture, to the 'soft' therapy approach such as care farming which is the area of interest here. This variety is a strength of green care as the breadth of scope makes it accessible to a large number of people with different needs and it also gives rise to a multitude of outcomes such as increased physical health, farming skills, self-esteem, social skills and well being, to name but a few (Spedding 2007).



A trainee brings the rabbit to the client, making the animals accessible to all.

The fundamental discourses in green care can be classified as threefold: public health, social inclusion and multifunctional agriculture (Bock and Oosting 2010), although there is an extent of overlapping between them. Firstly, the public health discourse addresses the meaning of 'health' and 'wellness' with the belief that being in a natural environment has valuable and positive effects on people's mental health and wellbeing (Van den Berg et al. 2007). Within this discourse, green care can be understood as an "intervention" (Sempik et al. 2010:6) meaning that further decline in clients' health and wellbeing is prevented and they are given the chance to change their behaviour and experiences as part of a recovery strategy.

Secondly, the discourse of social inclusion can be identified by a variety of factors including the impression of belonging to a group or family farm, and also the notion of being a part of a community of common interests. These two discourses are explored further during the research and discussed following the empirical results.

Thirdly, the discourse of multifunctional agriculture concerns agricultural businesses engaging in more than one income generating scheme (see 2.4 for more detail to provide a context for the Netherlands). Some view care farming as an innovative ways to maintain and sustain a small family farm through the concept of broadening farming related activities (Ploeg 2006). As such, the importance of clients cannot be underestimated, as without their demand for care farms, the supply would diminish. In countries where clients fund their place on a care farm, they are also economically significant with van Stiphout controversially arguing that "disabled clients are a new kind of crop today" (cited in SoFar 2007:39). Therefore, the changing social and health care systems have challenged the way clients are viewed.

Different countries mainstream their green care activities according to their leading discourse. To understand the main discourse that is leading development helps also to understand how people view green care activities such as care farming, and what outcomes they envisage. Bock and Oosting (2010) argue that the discourse of multifunctional agriculture is the main feature in the Netherlands as most care farming activities take place on privately owned farms as part of additional income streams, involving patients in 'normal' environments that focus around engagement with non-health professionals. Even so, the discourses of public health and social inclusion are also significant for the empirical research of this project. All three discourses are important to appreciate as stakeholders may be influenced by different experiences and expectations.

2.3 The meaning of institutionalisation

An understanding of institutionalisation is essential to place into context the use of the term throughout the report. In this respect, institutionalisation refers large-scale and impersonal. McPherson (1990) understands the lowest level of institutionalised care as being that of restricted hours of nursing care in residential homes that promote independence amongst its clients. But he also acknowledges that even this brings a loss of control over one's own life as there is still an element of dependency and anonymity. Institutionalisation "disrupts well-established lifestyles, and symbolises rejection, deterioration, loss of personal control, and the imminence of death...the social, emotional, and psychological needs of the individual are seldom satisfied in the bureaucratic, depersonalised environment" (McPherson 1990:283).

The limitations of institutes revolve around the common drive for cost-effective care often at the expense of families and with the loss of autonomy and time for clients, but not always at the improvement of health care. Alienation from a known social network and milieu can induce feelings of "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, self-estrangement, social isolation, and cultural estrangement" (McPherson 1990:239). As such, McPherson (1990:284) argues that "for both humanitarian and economic reasons, institutionalisation is a costly step that could be avoided or delayed in many situations if viable alternatives were available in the community". Care farms can be considered as concrete examples of the desired socialisation of care leading to greater independence and social status, taking the clients' potential as a starting point, rather than focusing on their limitations" (Hassink et al. 2010:424). This move from the medical to the social model reinforces the client as an individual and concentrates on their strengths rather than their failings.

2.4 History of care farms

This section provides a context to the emergence of care farming. It addresses the rural development processes that have been driving the changes faced by the farming industry over recent years and how care farming is shifting the key roles in farming families as well as a general with the relationship with the land. These themes provide a background context and are revisited throughout the research. This section concludes by looking at the 'original' care farm and the current situation in the Netherlands.

Modernisation

Rural development is by nature, multifaceted. The concept that farms can be used for more than just food production has forced a re-examination of what it means to 'farm' and our relationship with the land. The post-World War II agricultural modernisation movement was responsible for the intensification of food production and the increasing priority of achieving economies of scale. However, the aim of the EU's current ambition for development initiatives is to use locally embedded resources to retain "agriculture as an economic carrier within the region" (Wellbrook et al. 2010:7) whilst facing new tasks presented to them by their immediate environment. It seeks to use local internal resources to make "the rural more attractive, more accessible, more valuable and more useful for society as a whole" (Van der Ploeg et al. 2008:3). As the dichotomy between farming and society adjusts, new ways are being found to 'use' nature and develop natural resources to create unique identities and greater security. The regrounding of capital positions at the grass-roots level works best for entrepreneurial projects such as ecologically sound initiatives including organic farming (van der Ploeg 2006). The relationship between the combining of social resources and entrepreneurial ventures is perhaps best represented by individuals who establish care farms using their entrepreneurial expertise for the purpose of creating and developing a social resource.

Multifunctionality

The multifunctionality of rural spaces has created many avenues of income streams, including moving into the health and care sector although the diversity of this concept makes it difficult to generalize what form multifunctionality should take. The multifunctionality of farms is a feature that is becoming firmly established within the agricultural sector, for example, "On the average Dutch dairy farm, 33 per cent of the available family income is derived from pluriactivity and on the average arable farm more than 50 per cent of the family income is derived from other activities" (ibid). This statistic demonstrates the need for farming families to diversify beyond the traditional crop or herd production systems, and to look at new ways to maintain their sustainability; care farms can provide a solution to economizing, income and social integration (Bruins 2009).

Rural-urban relationship

Rural development needs to account for urban demands and desires as well as rural capabilities and opportunities. Small family farms are forging a new role for themselves as 'multi-functional enterprises' which is creating new forms of social cohesion (Van der Ploeg et al. 2002:11) and redefining the relationship between farm enterprises and urban populations. As a consequence, 'rural' is being redefined at the grassroots level and different actors are being given access to a new discourse that is evolving to accommodate their changing needs and demands. Thus the idea of 'rural' is as dependent on what actors consider being urban as they do rural. The care farm is only one approach being used as a method to close the gap between the rural and the urban, especially near more urbanised areas where the demand for new services associated with nature and landscape is increasing (Hassink et al. 2007).

At this point it is important to acknowledge that the concept of 'rural' differs not only between individuals understanding, but also between countries. In areas such as Canada or Scandinavia there is an additional category as well as urban and rural; wilderness or areas that are not easily accessible due to domination of nature. Therefore when reflecting on the changing rural and urban relationship

the aspect of what constitutes 'rural' first needs to be clarified. For the purpose of this project, rural is to be understood in the context of the Netherlands.

Age

A serious issue that is threatening the future of farming is the decrease in those wishing to work in the agricultural sector. "The age profile of farmers is increasing with more than half of farmer over 55 years of ages and 70% over 45 years old, with 12% of family farms containing only persons of retirement age. The numbers under 25 years old are negligible with fewer and fewer young people willing to take on the business and the accompanying lifestyle" (Heenan 2010:41 regarding Northern Ireland). This change in the demographics of farming communities is mirrored across Europe and has put the future of some family farms under threat and alternative strategies for encouraging young people to enter into, or remain within, agriculture are being sought. Moving into the multifunctional field can make this sector more attractive to work in and a chance to modernize approaches to keeping the countryside active and productive.



A volunteer leads the older people in a group exercise.

Women in farming

Although stereotypical by nature, the role of women in farming may not have been in the spotlight, but it is certainly fundamental to how things 'behind the scenes' have evolved. Combining the care sector and farming has reinvigorated opportunities for women to become increasingly prominent in agricultural ventures once more. Their involvement has a dual advantage of the family sharing the burden of an innovate business and combining the individual skills needed to operate a successful care farm. In general, more women are moving into decision making positions or taking responsibility for the care element of care farming which is less physically demanding. It also provides a compromise as entrepreneurial women look for ways to increase the farm's income whilst limiting the time they are away from home and their childcare responsibilities; thus increasing the choices available for careers of their own (see Bock 2004 for further information). Therefore it can be argued that the diversification of labour utilises a wider skills set that is available to farming networks and reinforces the idyll of a family farm where every member of the family unit would be actively involved in the business.

Geel, Belgium

It is believed that care farming originated "from the traditional rural self-help nets quite well present in rural areas for modernisation of agriculture and the rise of the public welfare system" (So Far 2008:2). Perhaps the earliest recorded example is that of Geel in Belgium, where the local community took in people needing care into their own homes and actively included them within the community; a practice that continues to this day. The initial actions of local people evolved into the Foster Family Care Programme which consisted of taking in people mental or social disabilities and embracing them as a member of a family (Roossens and van de Walle 2007). This traditional and successful community approach challenges the 'old fashioned' attitude of ignoring, or even worse,

expelling people who were 'different' from local mainstream communities. Whilst the family setting is at the heart of this structure, the involvement in farming and activities such as harvesting are still central to the method of care.

The Netherlands – history and current situation

The beginning of care farms within the Netherlands is associated with anthroposophic and religious communities in the 1970s and they are mainly private family farms with diverse client groups either living on site or as day visitors (SoFar 2008). In the example of Kiem/Bronlaak in the Netherlands, clients live within a housing structure that accommodates a family at the heart (similar to Geel) and the resident family takes responsibility for the clients' day-to-day care whilst other employees can lead activities. This is not an exclusive situation and volunteers or local people are encouraged to participate with on-site activities or social events. The anthroposophic philosophy "teaches that all people, no matter what their learning difficulties, have a healthy core element in them, giving rise to special abilities and talents" (Van Dijk 2009:1). This sense of equality and acceptance emerged from families who had children with learning disabilities became concerned about the lack of opportunities for them once they reached adult hood and so took it upon themselves to establish a safe place with the idea of belonging to a larger family as a fundamental principle. A similar concept can be found with the Camphill communities worldwide.

Currently in the Netherlands the number of care farms has increased at an alarming rate from 75 in 1998 to more than 800 in 2008 (Elings and Hassink 2008). The structure of this sector is complex with care farms receiving incomes from a number of different sources. Whilst only 4% do not receive any compensation a grand total of 42% of care farms receive funding from personal budgets (SoFar 2007: 20) with smaller proportions being connected directly to, for example, a care institution or direct payment from insurance companies. This farm diversification is thought to be bringing in average revenues of 52,517 pounds sterling a year per farm (Elliott 2009:1). Whilst the Dutch care farm model is the only one to have a significant 'economic value' within the EU, not all other countries agree that this example is ideal and instead argue that it is a way to redirect responsibility and costs for social care and welfare away from the government (SoFar 2007) often without sufficient funding or support.

Accreditation schemes currently exist, such as quality assurance certification when linked with associations (such as the Kwaliteitswaarborg Zorgboerderijen with the Landbouw & Zorg or AWBZ, the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act). These schemes not only ensure a sufficient quality of the provision of care, but also represent a level of professionalism that users can expect. Further schemes are being proposed to ensure a more detailed representation of the standards practiced, such as the one trialled by 't Paradijs and represented in the quotations about 'quality' (see Appendix 2). Drover, who is at the forefront of similar initiatives in England, argues that "care must be at the heart of the business" rather than profit motivation (cited in Elliot 2009:1). That said, if executed correctly, care farming can be a 'win-win situation' as rural farms continue to be economically viable and the farmer can help the wider society by providing a "health, social rehabilitation or education service" (Hine et al. 2008:9). However, this passing down of responsibility by the health institutions, but not necessarily the corresponding resources, can provide both opportunity and difficulties for the future of care farming.

In conclusion, the available literature provides a sufficient insight into the understanding of care farming and how it fits in with rural development initiatives. It also addresses some of the factors that are considered important, from the role of women to the discourses dividing the approaches. Still, it fails to address the actual experiences of those involved and what they consider to be fundamental to care farming themselves. It is for this purpose that a case study of an existing care farm in the Netherlands was proposed with the aim to identify the needs of those involved as well as the way their needs are being fulfilled. It is through these illuminations that lessons can be learnt with the intention of strengthening the argument to include care farming as an option for social care opportunities.

3 Context

This chapter explains the approach of the researcher and the contextual framework. It also introduces the care farm that forms the unit of analysis. It ends by presenting the research questions.

3.1 Researcher's paradigm

The viewpoint of the researcher is one of the interpretivist paradigm. The interest is in how people themselves structure reality and give it meaning, whilst taking into consideration the role of the researcher within this reality and how this may impact on the final interpretations. This evolving view of different meanings lends itself to the empirical research method of an ethnographical investigation which takes place over time combining a number of investigative techniques; in this sense, knowledge is gained through experience. The trustworthiness of this knowledge is held accountable via the triangulation multiple realities of the different stakeholders that combine to form 't Paradijs.

3.2 Research approach

This research project is exploring the interpretations and meanings that are underpinning the structure of actions and roles of actors within 't Paradijs. The research is also investigating the construction of 'care farming' as held by the actors involved based on their experience at 't Paradijs through the means of thematic analysis. By exploring this case study in depth and comparing it to related literature, the values of care farming as a health intervention and social care method are exposed.

Interpretivism takes the view that the world around us is constructed and influenced by one's individual experiences and beliefs, thus we are not neutral observers but instead we shape how we see things and what it means to us (Wallimam 2006). Furthermore, exploring the 'embedded' units (Yin 1989 cited in de Vaus 2001: 220) creates a whole view of perspectives, experiences and meanings that are interrelated; the whole is studied through looking at the parts. This approach provides an experience-based and research-based reflection on why care farming is, or is perceived as, a suitable alternative health care option and how it meets the needs of clients to maintain or improve their mental well being.

More specifically, thematic analysis identifies keywords describing care farming from literature and transcripts notated following interviews and highlighting different experiences. Likewise, observations provide evidence of what the actors are actually doing and how they are relating to one another. Although this research project focuses on a single case or unit of analysis, it has been designed to understand why and how care farming can benefit participants, which is information that could be applied to other cases. As such, theories are used to deconstruct the different elements that are associated with notion care farming, and 't Paradijs in particular, rather than testing the validity of these theories.

3.3 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this research project was: 't Paradijs, a care farm (zorgboerderij) 10km west of Barneveld, the Netherlands.

The farm 't Paradijs was selected as a case study because of its varied client base. The farm, including outbuildings and a family house, is approximately 5 hectares in size, although there are more hectares off-site to accommodate a growing cattle herd. It is a social enterprise project established since 2006 on the previous site of a defunct farm, but is rapidly expanding in demographics and activities. The land owner is an absent and silent partner, with the farm instead being overseen by a board of directors including the manager and his wife, both of whom are active in farming and care activities on site. The manager is known for his entrepreneurial approach and is involved off the farm in groups coordinating the progress of care farms both in the local area and nationally. There is also a full-time qualified care farmer and 12 other members of part-time staff, from gardeners, to cooks, to care assistants; all roles involve an element of care. In addition to paid staff, an essential part of the work force includes part-time volunteers and student trainees whose numbers fluctuate and their schedules are flexible depending on the needs of clients. In total, around 200 actors participate with the day-to-day running and involvement of 't Paradijs, including up to 150 clients.

The clients involved with 't Paradijs include:

- The elderly (60+) whose groups are run Monday – Friday
- '30+ group' (aged 16 upwards) which is a group for people within a wide range of ages with mental health difficulties, including anxiety and depression, which is often referred to by the clients themselves as a 'burn out'. This group is also Monday – Friday.
- Autistic children who attend in small groups on Wednesdays aged up to 16. There are also weekend groups who stay on site at the farm for Saturday and Sunday on alternate weekends.

The philosophy of the farm follows Christian guidelines and operates an 'open policy' to visitors, encouraging them to mix with the clients if feasible; thus social integration is fundamental to owners values. There is also a strong emphasis on 'getting back to nature' and belonging to a 'community', with these elements running through all the activities. The population of interest for research is widespread as each participant that contributed to the design of 't Paradijs, or the carrying out of activities, reinforces its philosophy and contributes to how it grows.

See Chapter 5 for further information about 't Paradijs and how it has evolved.

3.4 Conceptual framework

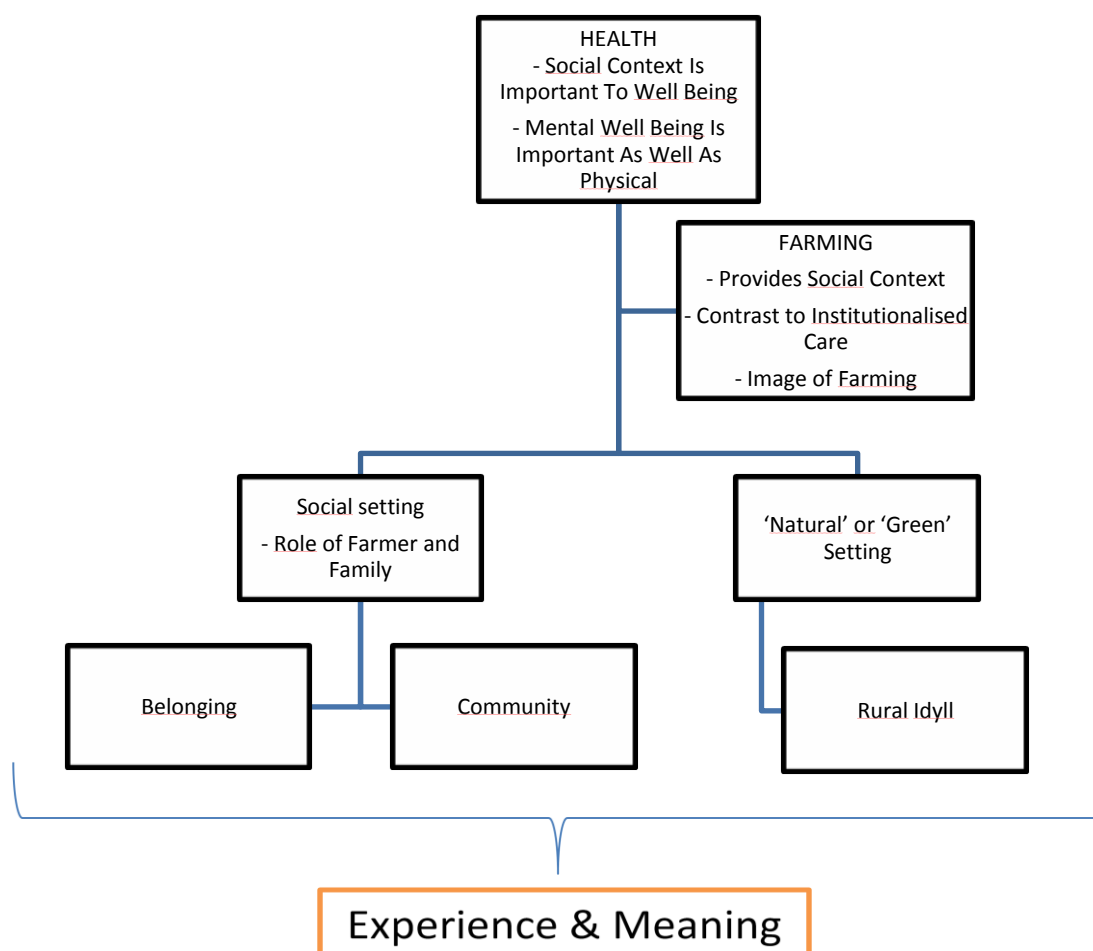


Figure 1: Conceptual framework model for the research project

Approaching from a health perspective, the argument for care farming as a form of health intervention and care provision is grounded in the view that ‘health’ is not just a physical or medical competence, but that it also includes mental well being. Farming can create a suitable environment to nurture this aspect on an individual level which challenges the standard institutionalised response for health concerns. Because of this, the idea of farming, and the ‘rural’, is fundamental to the way care is perceived.

The social setting of care farming aims to meet the many needs of stakeholders. The experience of attending a care farm is often one of joining an extended family. This is partly due to the fact that the farming family are often living on site, and also because they are usually at the core of project, involved in both the farming and the ‘care’ aspects. The value of this image is interesting as it also contributes to a sense of belonging and being part of a wider community.

The importance of being in a ‘green’ environment is at the heart of all green care approaches, including care farming, as the therapeutic advantages of being in contact with nature are becoming

more widely acknowledged. However, the extent to which the clients approach care farming with their own ideal of 'rural' or 'nature' is intriguing, as this shapes their expectations and attitudes towards their care.

By conducting an ethnographic research, the elements detailed above are explored by eliciting information from those involved and deconstructing their experiences. This enables a reflection on why care farming is a suitable health care option and how it meets the needs of clients to maintain or improve their mental well being.

3.5 Research questions

Central Research Question:

What characteristics of care farming makes it a suitable environment for care?

The following 3 questions evolved from the initial literature review and represent areas of investigation that are either under-researched or are specifically related to deconstructing how participants experience care farming at 't Paradijs. They are further sub-divided to ensure a coherent and adequate exploration in order to address to over-arching question of:

1. What characteristics of care farming are attractive for social care activities?

- a. Care farming definition and understanding
- b. Critique of care farming
- c. How is care farming suited to meeting the health and well being needs of the participants?

2. How does care farming meet the demands of participants?

- a. What is the philosophy and what are the motivations driving the development of 't Paradijs?
- b. What are the key characteristics of this type of care from the view point of the participants and how are they experiencing them?
- c. Are current participants satisfied with the service they experience?

3. How fundamental is the role of the farm in care farming?

- a. Is 't Paradijs a farm?
- b. How important is the role of the farmer and family?

These questions are answered during the remaining sections of this project through the use of literature and empirical research. The research techniques are explained in the following chapter: Methodology.

4 Methodology

This chapter explains how the research was carried out and the reasoning behind the choices made. It describes the angle from which this research conducted, followed by the research design and techniques. Also included in this chapter are the criteria used to choose participants and the researcher's own fieldwork experiences. It ends with the plan and procedure of the analysis.

4.1 Research design

A 'story' of 't Paradijs was constructed through a combination of both retrospective and present-day research techniques, taking into consideration the history of the farm and the current situation as it is experienced by participants. The study employed a qualitative design which is largely descriptive in nature and as the methods themselves are constructed they are reflected upon throughout the research. Data has been collected using a range of methods enabling the triangulation of information to give a more balanced overview. A thematic coding approach was used for analysis.

There were fundamentally two parts to the research. The first part was a review of the literature relating to the philosophy of care farming and the supposed benefits derived from it; from this questions were formulated to be used for the interviews. The second part was an explorative ethnographic study, focusing on what the different stakeholders are doing and experiencing at 't Paradijs and how they feel about it. The aim of the latter strategy was to view the experiences from the participants' perspective whilst complimenting this with participatory observation. The two approaches were then compared to discover trends and to deconstruct the concept of care farming. Simultaneously, the potential contributions to improving (or stabilising) the health and well being of participants have been identified.

4.2 Research techniques



Coffee breaks are a very social affair.

Ethnography is the study of cultures, in this case a care farm, over a period of time with the aim of gaining contextual insight into the holistic interactions and mechanisms within a group. Ethnographic studies are more concerned with depth rather than scope and as such the findings are often difficult to apply to other situations. However, they do offer an insight into the relations, rules and values of the study group in question from which more generalised lessons may be drawn.

Although there are many green care activities, care farming is arguably specifically about being in a farm environment rather than the traditional approach to giving care in generically built institutions. Therefore the research, via interviews, literature, observation and reflection addressed how important the rural setting was, the role of agriculture, and the image of a farmer or farming family.

Case study

A case study is a method of exploratory and explanatory research within ethnography, that aims to appreciate and understand not only the 'how' and 'why', but also the multiple layers of social phenomena that underpin the choices and actions that take place within the group being researched. According to Yin (2003:15), the case study has a number of different applications including to "explain the presumed casual links in real-life [...], to describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred", and to illustrate topics and to explore the outcomes. For the purpose of this project a heuristic case study has been used. Mitchell (2006:27) defines heuristic case studies as a way to develop existing theory. The idea is that if the case conforms to the pattern formulated from a theoretical perspective, then the case study is strengthening the theoretical argument and predictability (de Vaus 2001: 253).

Whilst a description of the case study in question is inherent within the research, it is impossible to describe everything that occurs during the research period and that has lead up to these events creating the current context. For this purpose, the history shared by participants has been embraced as providing a background to the current situation and as a way of enhancing the understanding of the case study (see 5.0).

Participant observation

Empirical data was collected through participant observation, which is designed to gain an 'insiders' point of view. "By employing the method of participant observation, knowledge can be gained of the complexities of cultures and social groups within their settings. The central concern is to produce a description that faithfully reflects the world-view of the participants in their social context" (Wallimam 2006:24). Thereby, only by immersing oneself in the culture can a researcher propagate an understanding of the society. However, throughout the research there is a constant negotiation between gaining access to information and keeping a safe distance so as to limit the impact of the researchers own presence. As Elias (1987:xxxi) explains, "What one might consider as a cause is also an effect, and what might be considered an effect may in turn be a cause". An observer must form a sense of detachment, distancing themselves from their subjects to be able to be objective, whilst still involved in the processes that create the context, detail and environment. The involvement-detachment balance is a continual process that is being re-negotiated. "Good participant observation thus requires a self-conscious balance between intimacy with, and distance from, the individuals we are seeing to better understand" (Hume and Mulcok 2004:xi). Although this sounds contradictory, it requires constant reflection by the researcher to track their own role or experience and the influence that it is having on those around them. The researcher both befriended and observed participants; a dichotomous role that does sometime leads to contradictions. For example, at times the research felt uncomfortable befriending clients for the purpose of the investigation as this could have been perceived as 'tricking' them into trusting her and sharing their personal thoughts. By keeping notes in a research diary efforts were made to separate observation and interpretation in real time and to provide an opportunity to reflect upon the role of the researcher during the analysis of the research findings. However, the details recorded are an interpretation as much as a reality and constructed as such (de Vaus 2001:251); they are what the researcher considered noticeable and significant.

Interviews

Ethnographic interviews are usually open-ended in design and conducted through a conversational manner, allowing for digressions away from the subject matter. In-depth interviews should be based on the premise of 'probe' questions which will direct the conversation in a particular way. Themes were identified using the literature review. The emphasis was also on recognising the ideals of care farming that the providers and clients have and if they are realised. The semi-structured interview was considered to be more appropriate for the professionals working at 't Paradijs, as questions can be formulated around a domain of interest, thus information is about a specific topic. The slightly more formal approach of a pre-arranged interview time suited the key members of staff, enabling the interview to be more focused and in-depth. These interviews also provide structural information about 't Paradijs. Additionally, 'spontaneous' interviews with various participants provide substantial interesting information for the project. Those involved included clients, staff, volunteers, open day visitors and client's family members. The themes explored depended on the context and the interest of the interviewee as well as being the foundations for probing topics such as nature, farming, community, animals and activities. These topics are reflected on throughout the research to ensure sufficient information had been collated on each theme to be able to analysis the material adequately.

The most suitable method of recording more in-depth interviews was found to be through using a tape recorder which was later transcribed by the researcher. This enabled the interviewer to maintain eye contact with the interviewee rather than to be distracted by note taking. The engaging body language also encouraged a more relaxed discussion in an informal setting. Apart from the autistic clients, at least one representative from each of the groups was interviewed in this more extensive way providing an overview of perspectives to analysis. All interviews were transcribed and some as verbatim. They were included as part of the diary entries which kept the situations and participants in context with the rest of the activities recorded that day. This method was particularly suitable as many of the interviews were spontaneously approached when it was felt there was sufficient access established to the participants or when a suitable moment arose.

The option of using a video camera was considered but decided against as the researcher believed this would challenge the participants' right to anonymity. Whilst no-one choose to exercise this right, many of the interviews were conducted in private and the use of a video camera may have threatened the researcher/interviewee relationships by challenging the informal and trusting atmosphere. When taking pictures of people on a digital camera, their consent was asked for verbally before or directly after the picture had been taken. If it was considered necessary, a short explanation of the purpose of the picture was given regarding it use and what the researcher was interested in.

Language

As the researcher's native language was English some language constraints needed to be considered. The researcher was able to understand a sufficient level of Dutch, but had a limited verbal vocabulary in the language and there is always a risk that interviewees' responses were simplified. Even so, it was not felt that this hindered the research significantly as most participants had an excellent command of English or spoke in Dutch and the researcher repeated it back in English to confirm that their response had been understood. As a result, the need for a translator was restricted

predominately to the older persons group, mainly as their local accents were strong, or as in the case of some, they were missing teeth and it was difficult for everyone to understand them! Whilst people were willing to translate between the researcher and interviewee when needed, there are risks involved such as creating more contextual issues. "Translation is more than a technical exercise; it is also a social relationship involving power, status and the imperfect mediation of cultures" (Bujra 2006:172). The use of a translator opens the door to misinterpretation of information or respondent's views being manipulated by the position of the translator. It also involves 3 people in the conversation so answers given by the participants may have been influenced by the presence or their relationship with the translator. However, to try to avoid this situation the researcher choose those that assisted with the translating astutely.

The most obvious disadvantage of language constraints concerned interviewing the autistic clients. To overcome this, the autistic clients were observed and the researcher joined in with activities, but it was the parents and team leaders who were interviewed and asked to provide their perspective on the autistic clients' development. Whilst they cannot replace the clients view, their opinion and judgement is still considered valuable for the purposes of this research.

Secondary sources

Secondary sources used are predominately books, scientific journals and newspaper articles which form the fundamental literature review. The literature review investigated the definition and understanding of care farming and how it is associated with well being. This research also focused on the ideals of green care and how it is at the core of care farming initiatives. Key characteristics of green care and care farming were identified with the purpose of directing the structure of interview questions.

Other sources included the farm's own website (Anon 2006) and a television documentary which featured 't Paradijs in a series along with 4 other care farms in The Netherlands. The video has since been shared amongst academics and persons with an interest in this field, as an example of care farming within the Netherlands. It was used to provide a context to the research but it does not feature in the project any further. Finally, quotations used as evidence for a Certificate of Quality Assurance award were displayed at the Open Day event. These quotations were taken from participants at 't Paradijs and they represent different experiences of 'quality' (Appendix 2).

4.3 Participants

The target population for this research project was defined as: *any person who was involved with 't Paradijs and has a personal interest in the care given*. This group was varied and considered to be widespread beyond the geographical boundaries, as each participant that contributed to the design of 't Paradijs, or the carrying out of activities, reinforces its philosophy and contributes to how it evolves. Only the manager, his wife and their children live on site. Most other participants come from within a 5-10 km radius and those that travel further are mainly volunteers. The first perspectives which were the focus of the research included the staff and they understood what care farming is, or how they believe they are providing this. Secondly, the clients' perspectives of why they chose the path of care farming as a form of social care and what elements are important to them. Thirdly, it was also hoped that family members or carers could be involved as they observe the changes in clients from an external perspective away from the care farm activities. Although this happened, it was a smaller representation of this group than had been intended. A fourth group of participants can be identified as volunteers or trainees who were included in the staff category 'personnel' for purposes of analysis. And finally, the perspectives of some first-time visitors to the farm at an open day were recorded.

Participants were recruited directly by the researcher. Initially, the researcher visited the research site to meet the staff and introduce herself to the stakeholders. Following this the participants were recruited through an opportunistic sample and were individually approached when the opportunity arose to conduct an interview. The researcher also observed the interactions between stakeholders for the duration of the research visits. In total 37 participants were interviewed (see Appendix 1 for list of interviewees and their roles). This consisted of 8 members of staff, 6 volunteers or trainees, and 13 clients: 8 older people 5 30+ clients and 1 autistic client. A further 10 people were interviewed that included 3 parents of the autistic group clients and 7 open day visitors. The ethnographic approach took in consideration clients who preferred their privacy, others who were suffering from dementia, and a small handful who were uncomfortable by the use of English around them. This however was a small group of both clients and personnel (between approximately 10 people in total) and although they were excluded from direct questioning, they were still considered part of the group during observations. In total however, approximately 130 participants were involved in the research as some were only part of the observational research rather than being interviewed.

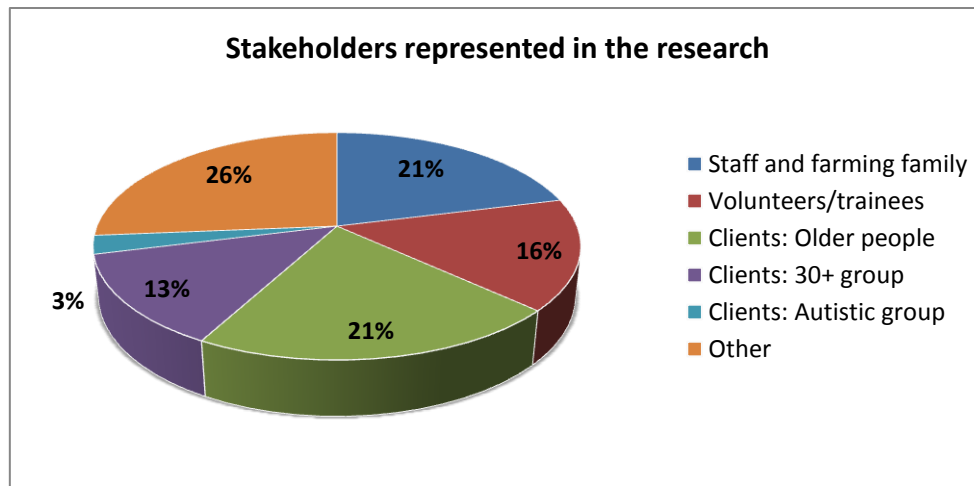


Figure 2: Pie chart to demonstrate the relativity of the stakeholder groups interviewed in the research

Whilst the inclusion criteria were wide there were a number of participants excluded from the study, essentially those that were considered external to the care aspect of the farm. For example, contractors who were visiting to size up the forthcoming chicken shed project and visitors to the farm shop whose interest was to purchase goods rather than talk to people present at the time. These transactional and professional actions were thought to be less important for the researcher to investigate during the research period.

In total, 11 days were spent on site at 't Paradijs. During this time, 2 days were spent with the autistic group and 1 day was spent at the Farm Open Day – this is a national event when farms can choose to invite the public onto their land to show people what they do. In this case, 't Paradijs also provided refreshments, entertainment, stalls and information for guests, potential clients and interested parties. In itself, the day was about showing 't Paradijs to the best of its abilities and it was also an opportunity for many clients to show their family members and friends the work they have been participating in. The remainder of the days (8) were spent with the older people and the 30+ groups equally, although it was common for the researcher to interact with both groups on the same day both as a means to maintain contact with people and also as a way to observe the farm structure as a whole.

Important actors in the case study

Whilst there is no exhaustive list of potential stakeholders of care farming, the following groups have been identified as those that are involved in 't Paradijs, the research case study.

Clients

Within the term of 'clients' lies a wealth of different meanings: patients, service users and clients are the most common terms but all have a number of connotations, mainly to do with the way people are seen as dependent or as an equal. For example, the term patient implies someone to be cared for and treated, or someone suffering from an illness (SoFar 2007:60). The term client however suggests that payment has been made for a service and no-one involved in this exchange is automatically perceived as being dependent or 'ill'. Therefore, for the purpose of this study people paying to attend 't Paradijs will be referred to as 'clients' as this is the term used by the personnel members. There is an element of equality that is represented by this language use. It also reinforces the point

that there is a user and service provider relationship as clients are paying to attend 't Paradijs and can therefore, arguably, expect a return on this investment.

Farming family

The farming family, the manager, his wife and their three children, live on site at 't Paradijs. All are actively involved in agricultural activities as can be expected from traditional farming families, albeit it minor assisting roles for their children who are still in full-time education, and both the adults are engaged and manage care activities and the overall business. In this instance, the farming family are also a practicing foster care family and therefore it is not uncommon for an additional young person to be in residence at 't Paradijs for short periods.

Staff

Staff are not only assisting with the care of clients, but they are also engaging with nature in a more active manner than would be expected to occur within a stereotypical institutional setting simply by the location of their workplace. Whether their role is administration or animal management, they are working on the site of the farm and engaging with the community evolving around them.

In general, care farms are small units with a high staff-client ratio (Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009). This more personalised and intimate care lends itself to supporting not only the clients, but also one another amongst the staff. Most staff at 't Paradijs are part-time and therefore the daily make-up of personnel is in constant flux.

Extended families

As indirect beneficiaries, it can be viewed that the families of clients and their client support groups also benefit from the clients participation in care farming activities. This could be, for example, through a respite period whilst clients are at day care, or through the long-term improvement in health of the client. Regarding a day centre for the elderly, McCuan (1976 cited in Dilworth-Anderson and Hildreth 1982:344) argues that "both family and older persons benefit from day care services because day care supported the daily physical maintenance of the elderly, provided psychological support to the family, and offered viable mechanisms for maintaining the elderly at home." Contact with families affiliated with 't Paradijs is maintained by inviting them participating in open days, social activities and regular telephone calls which are seen by Dilworth-Anderson and Hildreth (1982) as vital to providing a comprehensive care approach.

Volunteers and trainees

Care farming provides opportunities for people to volunteer with a range of skills and tasks, from practical work, to care, professionalism and administration. The units are often small and people donating their time eases the financial and practical burdens on the farmer or manager. Volunteers can also bring new ideas and energy to projects which can widen the range of services and support offered to clients. Hassink et al. (2010) argue that because volunteers in particular are there in their own time and therefore not affiliated to the professional care sector, they approach their work with a different agenda and can create a more supportive and compassionate listener and thus easier for clients to establish trustful relationships. The trainees at 't Paradijs are usually affiliated with social care studies. Volunteers and trainees are regular members of unpaid staff at 't Paradijs, as they both learn from and assist with the daily activities and the range of clients that are in attendance.

For the purpose of efficiency and clarity, the term ‘personnel’ is used to refer to paid staff, working family members, volunteers and trainees. Only when it is necessary will the specific group of actors be referenced individually.

4.4 Ethical considerations

A number of ethical issues were raised by the research. Participants sometimes talked about sensitive issues and told personal stories. Due diligence and care was taken when dealing with these subjects and the researcher supported and thanked people for sharing their insights accordingly. Voluntary and informed consent was given by all those involved to use the information given in the research. Confidential data that was not considered relevant to the research has been omitted and destroyed. Likewise, aside from IJsbrand and Caroline, the names have been changed in the report to provide an element of privacy for those who participated and full anonymous transcripts are kept in a secure location by the researcher.

A noted burden on participants was the issue of time as talking to the researcher sometimes distracted the participants from their original ‘job’. Every effort was made by the researcher to assist participants with their actions and to limit the distractions from their normal role and duties caused by her presence.

4.5 Fieldwork experiences

A short introduction to the researcher, her background and interest was handed out in Dutch at the start of the research period. This was especially useful for the older clients, as it reassured people that the researcher was welcomed by the staff, especially IJsbrand and Caroline, which created a more trusting environment. Circulating a brief summary about the researcher also helped to explain to people the role as a researcher at the farm, and it also sparked off questions and conversations not only between the researcher and an interviewee, but also between the various participants. For the few participants who preferred to keep to their own space, the researcher just observed their interactions with the group and approached making contact in neutral territory such as sharing a lunch with the group.

Staff were particularly accommodating by allowing the researcher to join in groups and participate. Although there was initially difficulty in finding space to actually speak to staff directly as they were often busy, by participating in the activities there was an opportunity to seize moments when they presented themselves. More formal interviews were pre-arranged with 5 key participants which enabled a (relatively) uninterrupted conversation and the chance to ask more personal and direct questions away from clients and so on (IJsbrand, Caroline, Nathalie, Adriana, Vera). As with all sensitive issues, whoever the respondent, care was taken to provide sufficient privacy and support when addressing subjects that could have caused stress. Once again, people’s willingness to participate was an enormous asset to this research.

The remaining interviews were conducted in an informal manner to try to overt any distressing or uncomfortable situations for interviewees. It was made clear to interviewees that they were able to withdraw from the conversation at any time, and that anonymity was possible if they preferred. Interviewees were also asked directly if they were still happy to continue when the researcher felt

that emotions were high. Everyone who participated was extremely forthcoming as they were keen to share their experience at 't Paradijs with a wider audience.



Staff and client discuss the progress of the strawberries together.

It took a couple of visits to establish a sufficient method of note taking that would enable all the observations to be recorded. This was partly due to the fact that the researcher was getting involved in activities and felt it was inappropriate to leave and also because the researcher did not want to create a feeling of mistrust if participants saw notes being taken when they were speaking. After reflecting on the progress and observations a decision was taken to retire to a private space every 1-1.5 hours for approximately 10 minutes and to make a more substantial record of observations than just simple notes. The private space varied depending on the situation but it was often somewhere

secluded outside away from the groups. This solution worked well and enabled a more relaxed participant observation as detailed information was not needed to be stored for as long. It also gave the opportunity to identify trends and points of interest that had arisen in the 'session' which could then be followed up immediately if appropriate, as is consistent with interpretivist researching.

As the participants were so willing and generous with their time, there was a sense of gratitude that was built up between the researcher and 't Paradijs. In return, the researcher printed some photographs that had been taken over numerous site visits for individuals and groups to keep, demonstrating different activities that they had taken part in during their time at 't Paradijs. Not only were these well received, but they also sparked conversations and encouraged participants to share their experiences with one another.

4.6 Plan of analysis

The analysis was structured to explore the material and identify categories that were relevant to answer the research questions. For the first question, to explore the relationship between farming and care, an extensive literature review was conducted. Themes emerging from this investigation were used to develop the questions for the semi-structured interviews which formed the basis of the second question of the research, to understand the construct of care farming and the health benefits perceived. These interviews were recorded using a tape recorder before being transcribed by the researcher. The third and final research question combined both the empirical research and literature based review as the material for analysis. For this research question in particular, the themes that were considered important in the empirical research were compared to those that surfaced from the literature. A comparison and analysis of the findings provided an opportunity to reflect on the importance of themes.

During this process, Angrosino (2007) argues that the importance of maintaining standardised and meticulous notes cannot be over emphasised. For example, details on the participants involved, the physical setting and the behaviours and interactions need to be recorded in as much detail as possible to provide context and data for actions and opinions. In these circumstance the 'unseen' is

as important as the 'seen'. This stage naturally led onto memo-writing which plays a key role linking coding and the analysis of material. It enabled the researcher to become progressively more focused on categories and it identifies unanswered questions or possible theoretical relationships (Charmaz 2008). More specifically, discourse-analysis resulted in a detraction of keywords associated with the research questions, but it was the researchers own observations that provide evidence of what stakeholders are actually doing and how they are relating to one another.

Multidimensional variables are notoriously difficult to measure. There are many factors to consider, each influencing one another and therefore making it almost impossible to identify a direct cause and effect relationship. Elias (1987) argues that a compromise needs to be reached – a middle ground – so the intended message is not lost in discussions and studies. This is the case when trying to measure the impact of care farming on clients well being – is it due to being in nature? Being around other people? Being outdoors? Being around animals? Being part of a community? To address these issues, indicator questions were designed to illicit individuals' opinions. By comparing numerous accounts and opinions, an internal validity of the findings can be reached; the 'parts' work together to create a context for the 'whole'.

4.7 Quality insurance

A critical approach was needed when reflecting on the data collected as it could be assumed that everyone involved in care farming are advocates of the theme as they have chosen to participate. As such, and to increase the trustworthiness of the data, a reflective diary was kept as well as an audit trail of analytical decision thus providing transparency of the decision making process.

4.8 Analysis procedure

Diary keeping

A fundamental part of the empirical research was to keep a diary. This became essential as part of a reflective process to overcome any rapport the researcher established with participants that could compromise the objectivity of the research. It is an important aspect that was identified by Nooij (1997:120) who argued that “One of the acknowledged risks of a qualitative methodology is that the researcher’s identification with the people whose behaviour he is studying, becomes so strong, that any attempt at a more or less objective analysis of research data is frustrated in advance.” In order to avoid compromising the research, all observations were recorded and included in the thematic coding process. They provided an important visual appreciation of the body language used, the actual activities undertaken and the interaction between people or individuals and their environment. The diary is referred to throughout the report using the day and line within the entry as a reference point. Whilst observations are vulnerable to the researchers own interpretation, they created a context and a further depth to the investigation, thus enabling the physical and unspoken behaviour to feature in the research rather than just the spoken. Observational techniques also provided the researcher with the opportunity to share experiences with the participants and to engage with their surroundings; to be involved rather than just to watch can provide a whole different dimension or perspective to the understanding. See below for an example of a diary entry.

Figure 3: Excerpt from research diary- day with older people 29.04.10

“As the clients arrived there was a lot of movement and bustling around to welcome everyone individually; a genuine fuss was made over each person as they entered and took up a seat for coffee or pottered around. There is a significant lack of structure during the day aside from coffee breaks and lunch time. From what the staff were saying, this is purposefully designed to be different from hospitals. Clients are able to choose activities to join in with although it was also an option to just sit (one guy just sleeps all day). I was looking forward to seeing the eggs being collected and I was pleasantly surprised that 2 men didn’t want to wait until after coffee as they look forward to their ‘job’ with much anticipation and responsibility. I joined them to watch them carefully take the eggs from the boxes and collect them in a bowl, a job that required much patience and care but that they happily worked together. The eggs were then to be cleaned and put into boxes to be sold by different shops – I was told by Adriana that the cleaning process was often popular with other people. I had seen it on my previous visit and it seemed like a pleasant production line of activity between friends. I was introduced to Tamara who works there (staff or volunteer is still unclear) and she was very open in explaining about her childhood. I wonder if ‘t Paradijs as a community is especially important to her?”

Thematic coding



Figure 4: Notation of diary entries

addresses the meanings associated with participants responses although care has been taken for the researcher not to apply her own priorities and interpretation to the answers being analysed; it is a way to “identify, elaborate, and refine analytic insights from and for the interpretation of data”(ibid 1995:151). All transcripts were addressed in the same manner. At first they were read carefully and general observations or questions were highlighted (see figure 4). The lines were also numbered to allow referencing in this report.

Themes and related subordinate themes were identified and arranged before comparisons between data were made and similar material is grouped together for more a detailed analysis to identify patterns and relationships. Figure 5 shows

the process taken to arrange the diary entries from the empirical research. As mentioned, this process was repeated until the researcher was satisfied that it provided fair and just representation of the findings. See the page opposite for the list of themes identified.

Themes emerging from the data collected were identified by following the guidelines set out by thematic coding, of which there is further information below. As is expected in qualitative discourse-analysis, thematic-coding was used to analyse the literature and field notes, highlighting topics of particular interest. This ‘grounded-theory’ approach (Emerson et al. 1995) aims to develop rather than verify theory through the use of integrative memos and detailed deconstruction of notes taken during the research. Coding highlights what is

happening i.e. the ‘how’ rather than ‘why’ - the latter is a result of the researcher’s interpretation. Coding also



Figure 5: Thematic coding process

The 11 themes emerging from the thematic coding process:

- *Philosophy*: The motivation behind 't Paradijs and how it is practised i.e. The ideals that are considered to be important to the concept of 't Paradijs by those involved in running it (opposed to care farming in general).
- *Ideals*: Experiences of the philosophy and elements of 't Paradijs that are important to the participants. It is also a reflection on Het Paradijs compared to other care farms and how this farm is seen as 'different'.
- *Farming Family*: Understanding the roles of Caroline and IJsbrand in particular and how they fit within the structure of 't Paradijs. Also, a representation of the concept of 'community' as it is interpreted, experienced and observed by participants.
- *Needs of Participants*: The different expectations or needs that participants have from 't Paradijs, as seen by themselves or by others.
- *Outcomes*: Indicators of improved well being or improved situations of different participants, as well as some consequences of the way Het Paradijs is structured.
- *Care*: Examples of actual and attitudes of care related activities at 't Paradijs and a comparison with imagined institutionalized circumstances. It also includes the meaning of 'care' to different participants and how care is integrated in the day-to-day structure.
- *Mattering*: This category spans examples given in 'Care' 'Farming' 'Nature' 'Social' and 'Ideals' but should be mentioned in its own right as it this feeling of being useful and important that seems to be the most beneficial, to both all the participants involved in this study, not only the client groups.
- *Farming*: How farming fits with care, the activities it involves at 't Paradijs, and the importance of farming skills to the whole concept. For the purpose of this category, farming involves animals, vegetable gardening and raising income to maintain the farm business, including the farm shop.
- *Nature*: How the space and nature is used around the farm and within the immediate surroundings, and what this means to the participants.
- *Social*: The way people or groups interact and move around one another, and the importance or meaning of the social contact experienced to participants.
- *Reflection*: Thoughts and ideas formulated throughout the research, identifying themes or querying the findings and highlighting potential future questions and lines of enquiry.

This information was used to address research question 2 and then compared to the findings from the literature review (including research question 1) to provide the basis of material needed for research question 3.

5 ‘t Paradijs

This short history of ‘t Paradijs is presented to set the context; it includes a typical day’s schedule and some examples of the activities that clients could participate in. The chapter is interspersed with a typical representative from several groups of stakeholders. These continue throughout the remainder of the report.

5.1 History of ‘t Paradijs

What follows is a background to the establishing of ‘t Paradijs as a care farm and an insight into the reasoning behind it. IJsbrand and Caroline share their personal stories with both successes and struggles in an attempt to unravel their motivation and ultimate goals.

Planting the seed

IJsbrand and Caroline had been living in Bennekom (the Netherlands) and decided that they would like to move into fostering children, but their house was too small so they started to look for alternative solutions. IJsbrand's role as a care farm advisor had introduced him to different farmers in the vicinity and increased his knowledge on the subject. At the same time, Caroline was becoming fed up with her teaching job as she felt like the children who needed the individual care were being overlooked for the sake of efficiency and lack of time; she also felt as if what she was doing was of no real use. Instead Caroline spent more and more time assisting IJsbrand where necessary using her experience as a secretary, and became equally intrigued with the concept of care farming. IJsbrand established his own company and Caroline gave up her other employment to work with her husband. This was a challenging period as they were finding a balance working and living together. “We also had to get used to each other because we were of course married, we had children, and now we were colleagues also then you have to find out what are your talents, and how does it work together” (Caroline 9:59). Their shared vision was to organise children’s activities whilst advising farmers on how to expand into the care sector and helping the sector to work together across Gelderland (the province).

An opportunity presents itself

‘t Paradijs had originally been a successful working farm but the owners were tired with increasing physical problems and none of their three children desired to take over the business. As the business floundered, the cows, calves and milk quota were all sold off and the farm decreased in output and in income. IJsbrand was helping the owners to find a buyer and invited care institutions to visit in the hope that they would purchase the farm for their own use. “The care institutions came here with IJsbrand and looked around to see if they wanted to buy it. They all said, “oh what a beautiful place”, but it has an Agrarische bestemming (has to be used for agriculture). The gemeente (council) in Barneveld wants it to be a farm. Care is also ok, but it has to be a farm and productive” (Caroline 9:72). This detail, tying the land to agricultural use, meant

Dominique: Group Leader 30+ and autistic clients She feels the most important thing ‘t Paradijs can offer is a safe space for clients to be themselves. She feels the clients should always be put first and that ‘t Paradijs is a model example of care farming – it is unique. She does not feel it is necessary for staff to know anything about farming as they can learn from experience.

that the care institutions were not interested in purchasing it. Caroline spoke to the wife was the fifth generation of her family to be living at the farm and was particularly distressed with the prospect of it becoming redundant (9:69). It was this personal meeting that moved Caroline and she began to look favourably towards care farming as an opportunity for herself. She reflected that “IJsbrand always wanted to be a farmer and I always said “no I don’t want to be” and there were no farms in the family so I thought it was ok. But when I have seen 40 or 50 care farms right now and they touched me, the way the work for the people with the animals and vegetables” (9:66). It was at this point that the farmers asked IJsbrand and Caroline to think about taking over the farm although they lacked any practical experience, but the idea fitted with their desire to provide space for foster children and their interest in care farming. “We thought, we always did children and youth work in the churches, but also in classes. And IJsbrand always did volunteering work in the churches with children and young people, so we thought we at least want it to be a place for children” (Caroline 9:94-96). Within a week they had sold their house in Bennekom and found a buyer for the farm who was happy to hand over all the responsibility for running the care farm to the couple. This ‘success’ has been attributed to the fact that they both prayed intensely for their dream to be realised and firmly believe that it was God’s wish and will that they open the care farm and provide children with a respite opportunity.

The beginnings of care

When IJsbrand and Caroline took over ‘t Paradijs there were only a handful of goats, chickens and a peacock on site so they had to reinvent it and start with care as there was no agricultural activity and

Renske: Trainee She needs to collect 200 hours of work experience. Renske enjoys working at Paradijs and likens it to being “like a hobby rather than a job”. She feels very calm when she is at the farm and as if she has more energy at the end of the day.

the business needed financing. Initially they delayed their idea of fostering as they needed to find a more sustainable income generating method. They were approached by some families of autistic children who were interested in using the facilities at ‘t Paradijs for care of their children. This initiative was seized upon by the couple who immediately enrolled in a course to learn more about autism and started two weekend groups. Word spread quickly and soon they were inundated with requests and

they now have three weekend groups and several day groups for autistic young people. Soon after this older people in the area were asking if they could attend the care farm. At this point neither IJsbrand nor Caroline had the necessary experience for this type of care and they relied heavily on volunteers.

Ultimately it was the ‘needs’ in the area which drove the direction of development for ‘t Paradijs. IJsbrand however is keen to see the agricultural aspect of the farm grow, but recognises that the process is long and slow. “Every new year the turnover [from farming activities] is doubling. It is very good. It means it needs more time. When we have 1 child extra for overnight then the next day I send an invoice for 400-500 Euros and in one week it is on my bank account. So it is hard to compare...We want to increase the farming” (IJsbrand 10:427). As originally intended, alongside the day care, IJsbrand and Caroline have continued to provide foster care for a number of children at irregular intervals, 8 children in the last 3 years. This is an important role for Caroline and she takes

great pleasure in being able to help the children find themselves and encouraging them to enjoy being at the farm (9:133).

5.2 An agenda for a typical day in 't Paradijs

Example of daily structure at Het Paradijs

Below is a generalised example of a 'normal' day for the client groups that were involved in the research. In all cases, personnel and clients eat and drink together.

9.30 -10.00 Personnel assemble and share coffee and information.

10.00 – 12.30 Clients arrive around 10am and everyone shares coffee time in their respective groups. Around 10.30 activities start. These 'jobs' can range from playing outside (autistic clients) to collecting eggs (older clients) and grooming horses (30+ clients). A refreshment break around 11.30 is usually observed and the groups reform for approximately 20 minutes.

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch time begins with Grace being said and ends with a reading from the Bible. The elderly clients are fed freshly prepared food and the 30+ clients bring their own sandwiches, but in all cases, food is eaten around a large table within the groups.

13.30-15.30 The afternoon activities begin. Usually clients are given the opportunity to take a walk before recommencing their tasks.

15.30-16.00 Older people begin to be collected by taxi from 15.30. The last half an hour is time for a final refreshment break and a reflection on the work completed – the group leader shares stories of clients' achievements that day. The autistic clients are collected by their parents and the 30+ clients leave by their own accord.

16.00 – 17.00 Staff put tools and equipment away and clean common areas. They exchange information with one another and write up an evaluation of the day's events.

5.3 Activities at 't Paradijs

Activities on the mixed farm evolve around livestock care (cows, pigs and several varieties of chickens), horticulture and a separate chicken shed. There are also planned activities with horses including riding and feeding or grooming them. There are several rabbit hutches and clients assist with cleaning and feeding the rabbits as well as petting them. The vegetable gardens produce products for the shop as well as the farm kitchen and thereby for the consumption by actors who often assist with the preparation. The garden has been designed to be active all-year-round with the less productive months creating an opportunity for structural maintenance work. There are 2 polytunnels, a large greenhouse and a garden storage shed to provide sheltered work space and different growing conditions. In terms of farming skills, there is a head gardener and the care farmer

shares his knowledge and experiences with different actors and involves them in general farming activities such as fencing and butchering where appropriate. Additional skills learnt include woodcraft and cookery lessons, although these appear to be seasonal depending on what work is available outdoors.

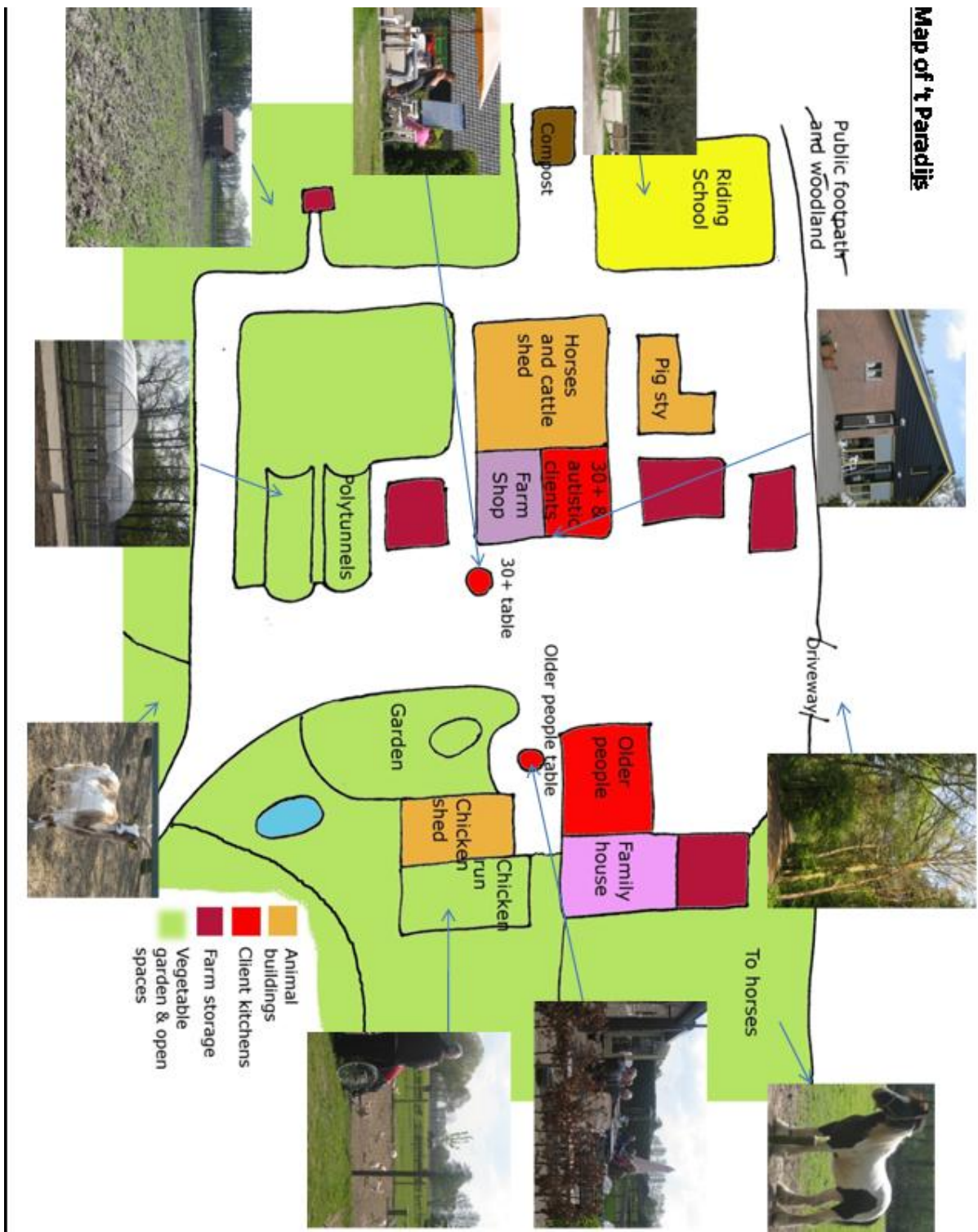
The farm shop is run as a business but the responsibility is shared amongst employees and clients for its design, stocking (such as packing and labelling meat), maintaining and the actual day-to-day running of it. Other noteworthy income generating schemes that are embedded in agriculture include the growing of strawberries, seasonal vegetables and free-range eggs. The latter feature is a significant feature not only economically, but also as part of the activities for clients – they are involved in feeding the chickens and collecting, cleaning and dating the eggs before boxing them to be sold to local outlets and on site.

Tamara: Older people client

She is often assisting in the kitchen and feels good being able to help out by looking after others. Although she gets exhausted at the end of the day, it is a good exhaustion and she is very happy. She feels there is no individual element that makes 't Paradijs, but

This chapter has provided a comprehensive background into the establishment of 't Paradijs as a care farm. The motivations and directional vision of those that are responsible for running the care farm play a crucial role in the decisions taken and the philosophy employed. Because of this, by understanding the history to 't Paradijs, we can better understand the current day situation.

Figure 6: Map of 't Paradijs



6 Research question 1: What characteristics of care farming are attractive for social care activities?

As a care farm, 't Paradijs has designed itself to meet the social needs of the clients that participate. By considering the different elements (physical, mental and social), the providers have made a serious attempt to address the multiple needs that such a broad spectrum of clients demands. But to what extent is this successful? The following chapter provides a brief overview of the understanding of both green care and more specifically, care farming, as it is understood by the researcher emerging from the relevant literature. Chapter 7 goes onto to look at the experiences of the participants and identifies the main factors of interest for those involved. Chapter 8 will compare these needs to those highlighted from the literature and reflect on the successes and weaknesses of 't Paradijs as a care farm overall.

6.1 *Care farming definition and understanding*

Care farms are predominately mixed extensive farms with both livestock and some form of horticulture or woodland resource available. However, this is where the uniformity ceases. There are still a number of terms that care farming is known as across Europe for example, in Italy it is called 'social farming' and understood as being an moral or ethical decision rather than financial (SoFar 2007: 58), and includes "all activities that use agricultural resources, both from plants and animals, in order to promote social welfare in rural areas" (SoFar 2008:2). In this circumstance, the main objective should be on the inclusion of people rather than care farming providing a different source of income through diversification which is arguably one of the driving forces of the movement in the Netherlands. As such, care farming can be a solution to finding innovate ways to maintain and sustain a small family farm through the concept of broadening farming related activities (Van der Ploeg 2006).

Hassink et al. (2010:424) shortlist the potential clients that care farms are aimed at to "include people with a mental illness, addiction background, learning disabilities, older persons, children, problem youth, and long-term unemployed". Other client groups can also include people suffering from poor physical health for example issues related to obesity. This is a broad, yet not totally comprehensive, range of potential clients, all with varying needs, both physically and mentally, epitomizing the diversity that care farming can cater for. An example of how these needs can be met was identified during a study in the Netherlands looking specifically at older people clients. It was found that "most patients have an affinity with farming life,



Volunteers and clients weed the vegetable patch together.

such as gardening and taking care of farm animals, or simply enjoy country life” (Schols and van der Schriek-van Meel 2006:457). The patients therefore felt distinctly more comfortable on a care farm in familiar surroundings and smaller groups where they were able to grasp onto some form of continuity with their working background.

The activities of a care farm are often limited by the natural resource and opportunities that the local environment offers (Ploeg et al. 2008 and Wellbrock et al 2010). Many are also introducing new ‘placeless’ activities such as learning traditional skills (Howarth 2010) and are adjusted to the local social or health care needs of the surrounding population. More explicitly, the multitude of different activities can include horticulture and animal management. Therefore the focus is often not only on the physical exercise, but also about reconnecting with nature and the values of working as part of a group to increase social skills (ibid 2010); thus combining farming, nature and communication.

Essentially, the concept of care farming operates as an holistic approach to different physical, mental and emotional (or social) health care needs which attach “importance to the restorative effect of being in a natural environment” or caring for animals and plants (Bock and Oosting 2010:20). As explained in the introduction, for the purpose of this project the label ‘care farm’ will be used to provide consistency and clarity for the reader. Similarly, for this research, the working definition of care farming will be:

The social care of people with an emphasis on interacting with nature and productive agriculture.

Although this is similar to the understanding presented by van Dijk (2008:26): “Care farms combine care of the land with care of vulnerable people”, there is a distinct difference. This research project looks at how *all* stakeholders studied can experience care farming rather than considering the main, or sole, recipients of care are ‘vulnerable’ people that the concept was initially designed for.

6.2 Critique of care farming

There are number of criticisms regarding the concept of care farming and its failures. These are addressed below and re-examined during the discussion (see 9.0).

Firstly, as noted above, the understanding of care farms is not universal. This difference in experiencing care farming has fundamentally lead to disagreement over how it should be ‘labelled’ or viewed on an European platform without boxing it into a definition that may lessen the diversity of examples that makes care farming so favourable. Even so, there are advantages of creating a ‘home’ for care farming so that it can make itself more appealing to policy makers across Europe and reinforce itself as a concept, thus strengthening its appeal, finances and security.

Secondly, the purpose of care farms is not agreed upon. Elings and Hassink (2008:321) identify care farms as a temporary ‘resting place’ between a history of instability and an unknown future. Following their research with focus groups, they argue that whilst care farming placements help to increase self-belief, they fail to create an easy ‘pathway’ back into the world of work, if that is the desired route. Instead, many clients move onto different volunteer projects, which challenges the extent of recuperation that is achieved. Others however argue that one of the purposes of going into

care farming can be seen as a way of actually conserving the landscape and van Elsen believes that clients should be given the recognition they deserve for actively playing a role in preserving the countries heritage and landscape rather than this just being a by-product of activities (cited in SoFar 2007:56).

Thirdly, the controversial issue of rewarding clients for their work is very emotive. For example, 'labourers' in Italy are paid workers in many situations, whereas in the Netherlands they are mainly 'clients' who participate in work activities for their health benefit rather than financial gain (So Far 2008). This issue was also highlighted by van Dijk (2008) who articulated her concern that everyone should be rewarded for work they undertake and to provide a salary, or something similar, demonstrates that peoples contributions are taken seriously.

Fourth and finally, there is a question over the terminology of care farming. To what extent should it be on a 'farm' and does this mean it is restricted to 'rural' areas? Both of these issues are subject to much disagreement and negotiation, especially due to the increasing number of projects within urban environments such as the city farm movement.

6.3 How is care farming suited to meeting the health and well being needs of participants?

Following a study of 76 care farms in the UK, Hine et al. (2008) concluded that there are active, green and social benefits. These are similar to the benefits described by Hassink (cited in SoFar 2007). The physical, mental and social benefits experienced by clients (see figure 5). Physical health benefits include general fitness improvement and learning of farming skills. These 'active' benefits of participating in tasks can increase self esteem and enable physical and spiritual growth to occur harmoniously. Mental health benefits can include a variety of indicators from increased self-esteem and confidence, to learning to trust one another within a group. This also includes the restorative effect of being in a natural environment and more specifically, a rural environment. A third category of benefits can be identified as 'social' which refers to the interaction and inclusion as part of a community whilst also linked to work ethics and learning to tackle responsibility for actions. This feature is often missing from more traditional forms of health care such as home visits, where the client will only be engaged with one health worker during periodic visits to their house. The idea of creating a 'homely' and welcoming environment for people provides a social context for interaction and to keep mentally stimulated.

What follows is a further breakdown of these factors to understand the experiences and outcomes that can be related to participating in care farming. To summarise, the discourses discussed in 2.1 help to structure the type of care farms that are established and attitudes towards them, but the benefits identified in figure 5 determine the different experiences participants can expect when participating in care farming.

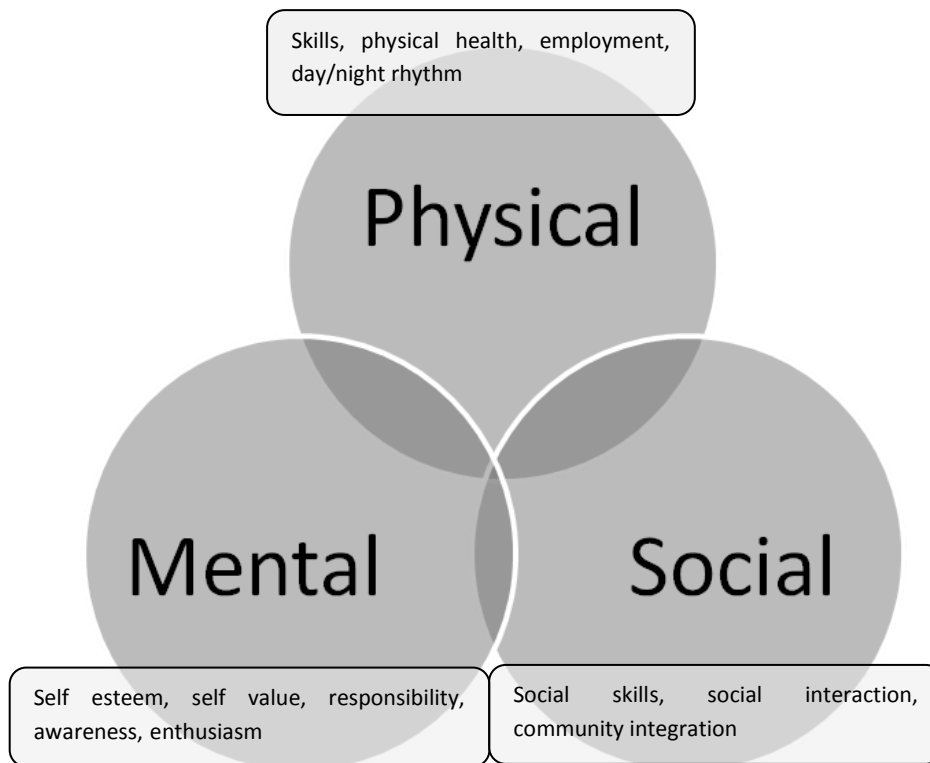


Figure 7: An interpretation of Hassink’s reported effects on users of care farming (cited in SoFar 2007:46)

Physical

Exercise can have “an increased sense of well-being, a relief of tension, a decline in anxiety, enhance cognitive performance, greater self-confidence, greater emotional stability, less depression, an improved self-concept, and an improved body-image” (McPherson 1990:170). Other outcomes can include tiring participants physically, building up muscles and increasing stamina or energy (Elings and Hassink 2008). Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the natural environment could become a significant tool within the healthcare system.

In general, physical exercise is recommended for everyone to participate in, with multiple health benefits, especially for the elderly. “Physical exercise serves not only as a protection against illness but also as a salutogenic factor that, independent of possible illness or depression, enhances older people’s quality of life” (Rennemark et al. 2009:1). Activities on care farms can offer different forms of physical exercise, including maintaining a vegetable patch, clearing out stables, moving hay and other farming related tasks depending on the resources available. Often participants will learn new skills that can increase their confidence or ultimately lead into a new trade once they move on from the care farm. This has implications in increasing their employability or helping them to change their behaviour and lifestyle. Similarly, the importance of stopping to take a break can be built into a routine of a short walk during the day ensuring clients learn to recognise their own limits. This type of ‘green exercise therapy’ is thought to be an effective form of treatment for mild to moderate depression in particular (Sempik et al. 2010).

An element of the physical health benefits of care farming can be associated with the opportunity to maintain a healthy diet, such as the chance to prepare and eat a healthy nutritious meal from pasture-to-plate. A commonly observed advantage is the improved nutrition of clients as they learn more about the pasture-to-plate cycle and are encouraged to eat the food which they harvest; thus if they enjoy the process of eating their diet will be more sufficient leading to long-term benefits (Wiskerke 2007). As such, the microenvironment can influence food intake and so the environment becomes an important feature associated with healthy eating. Sobal and Wansink (2007) talk about different ‘-scapes’ explain influencing diets and eating habits. For example, the way a room has been designed and is operationally used can determine the roles people have and the control over their own plate of food and consumption options. They argue it is the ambience in a kitchen and the way the furniture is arranged that sets the context. Similarly, by preparing the food in a visible manner can increase “the salience of food to potential food consumers in the room and increases the consumption” (ibid 2007:128). Thus, the whole environment, not just the kitchen or dining area, can influence an individual’s approach to food and as such, their approach to care and health. In reference to care farms, it is often the case that clients are involved in some outdoor management tasks such as vegetable growing or feeding pigs and therefore invest their own energy into the production or preparation of food. This shared responsibility encourages participants to engage with foodscapes on a multitude of levels, and ultimately can improve their diet and consequently their health. Similarly, by encouraging clients to eat together regularly when they are visiting a care farm, staff are ensuring that there is a substantial and nutritional meal intake. The support of others encouraging them to eat well is valuable and can be seen as a ‘buffer’ to the psychological and behavioural stress triggers associated with poor diet (McIntosh et al. 1989), and is therefore part of preventative measures against ill health.

Mental

“One way to view ‘mental health’ is the adequacy with which action energy can be mobilised and put to use in ways meaningful to the self and others” (Williams and Wirths 1965:8). Changes in mental health are difficult to measure and even harder to determine what the influence of care farming is in any changes. Despite this, improvements in mental health are frequently cited by both clients and practitioners when reflecting on their involvement in care farming. It is for this reason that Sempik et al. (2010) identified five indicators of mental health status: self-esteem; self-value; responsibility; awareness; and enthusiasm. Increasing self-esteem for people with mental disabilities seems to be



An older client responsible for the rabbits shows some new babies to the autistic group clients.

especially important and “the cornerstone of both assertiveness and sound social skills” (Vadnal in Bock and Oosting 2010:45).

Well being

Piliavin and Siegl (2007) differentiate between hedonic (feeling good about ones situation in life) and eudemonic (feeling good about oneself) well-being. While social activities and hobbies can contribute to the former, outward-looking activity such as volunteering adds to the later, enabling individuals not only to enjoy the activity itself, but to have a great sense of

satisfaction in feeling that they are contributing to society. Piliavin and Siegl (ibid) argue that it is this focus outside ourselves that makes the greatest contribution to our mental health and well-being, not just as a result of enhance self-esteem but as a result of 'mattering', as in feeling that we are a significant part of the world around us and that people notice, care about and value our existence. This notion was identified by Sempik et al. (2010) who argue that it is meaningful activities that promote developing both physical skills and in return, can increase the feeling of capability and that motivate and promote the development of physical and social skills which in turn leads to feelings of capability and talent.

Organic gardening

The restorative elements of gardening frequently play a role in care farming and green care. During research on community gardens Kaplan and Kaplan (1990) identified the tangible benefits associated with gardening, be it growing vegetables or flowers, or even just being in the natural environment. The fascination with nature seemed to account for the long-term interest and commitment participants held for the gardening projects. Other features were the peacefulness and quiet that was associated with the process. "These results are consistent with the hypothesis that fascination constitutes a powerful force in fostering tranquillity. Both fascination and the sensory pleasure of walking through the garden can play an important part in enhancing tranquillity." (Kaplan and Kaplan 1990: 240). It is therefore not only the participating in gardening activities, but actually spending time in the environment, including passive appreciation, that can result in a feeling of peace and thus contribute to the restoration of well being. Lewis (1990) argues that the participatory nature of gardening lends itself to experiencing small rewards, such as witnessing new shoots appear from the ground after planting. "Something of the human spirit is invested in the gardening process. Gardeners make a personal commitment in accepting responsibility for the well-being of their plants" (Lewis 1990:246). This investment results in pride and consequently, an increase in self-esteem. Both Lewis (1990) and Kaplan (1983) also identified the significance of socialization enabled via gardening, including sharing advice, food and the common bond for people from different backgrounds.

More so than conventional approaches, organic or biodynamic gardening requires more patience and participation in the process. It also encourages people to feel a sense of 'oneness' with the earth (Kaplan 1983:153) and is often based around the natural rhythm of the earth's seasons and moon cycles. "The gardener soon learns that he does not control the growth of plants, but that he participates in their growth" (Lewis 1990:247). Plants have a different rhythm to the 'fast-paced' and stressed modern world. The growth and life cycle of a plant is consistent and regular, depending upon environmental conditions. It is this 'slower' pace on often smaller scale farms that lends itself so well to care farming and as such, the vast majority of facilities are based upon organic principles.

Social

One universally recognised strength of care farming amongst practitioners is the importance of the human relationship between people who are involved in farming. Participating in care farming can create a 'safe' environment for people to develop their social skills and learn how to interact with one another. Whilst traditional health care has not been concerned with the social aspects, care farming holds this element at the heart of its activities. This aspect of the socialisation of care is often referred to as community care and concerned with improving the 'quality of life'. Rapheal et al. (2001 cited in Hassink et al. 2010:423) define quality of life as "the degree to which a person enjoys the

maximum possibilities of his or her life in three areas: the areas of being, belonging, and becoming.” Essentially, there is a long-term investment in individuals rather than a swift treatment of an ailment which is more associated with the ‘traditional’ medical view.

Belonging and identity

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that people derive identity from a specific place but that spaces are not autonomous and they need to be understood how they are viewed by the individual before they can be deconstructed. The idea of a care farm is arguably to create a community for participants to develop and support one another, with a sense of shared belonging or ownership in a project. This notion of belonging is closely related to the idea of identity; Identity is constructed both how we see ourselves and how we are seen compared to others. Work, especially for men, has often been a way of defining one’s identity (Williams and Wirths 1965) and as such, it is often seen in care farming that the value of a person is what they *can* do that is important.

Social capital

There is concern that the renewed interest in social capital in rural areas, especially in relation to the decentralization of government services such as health care, falls victim to “a romantic naive view of romantic communities” (Shortall 2004:110). As Shortall (2004) argues, bottom-up projects emphasise social and community development more so than the ‘normal’ economic indicators of success. There are many more goals to be achieved, especially by small-scale projects such as care farming where the focus is on meeting the needs of the clients within a sustainable farming environment. Care farming responds to a need and can create circumstances and an environment to build on positive social capital linkages which can ultimately provide a network of valuable support.

Bas: Volunteer He first attended ‘t Paradijs as a 30+ client following a burn-out. He feels the care farm gives him a balance between both the fast-paced office working life vs. slower farm life. “I really like the silence, the genuine silence so all you can hear are the birds.” He thinks that as it is a commercial farm there is more purpose to working and therefore more rewarding. He feels the social support he receives increases his confidence.

Inclusion

The activities on care farms are fundamentally based on the philosophy of ‘inclusion’. The idea of integrating clients with one another, or with the activities and farming process as a whole, limits the risk of feeling ‘excluded’. The benefits of inclusion have been extensively researched concerning children with autism, but the findings can arguably be applied to a variety of different clients who participate in care farm activities. Mesibov and Shea (1996) argue that in general, the advantages of inclusion include increased learning capacity, the ability to model behaviour on peers, increased self-esteem and a challenge to the isolation or stigma that may be a common part of the clients or their families’ lives. Social care, in theory and in practice, reinforces this philosophy of ‘inclusion’ by caring not only for the physical or medical needs of a client, but also for the mental well being or individualised social needs. In general, care farming provides an ideal context for inclusion and integration to occur (Bruins 2009). By being part of a care farm, clients and other stakeholders ‘belong’ to a community which is not just a network, but a sharing of similar values and beliefs.

6.4 Conclusion

Care farming as a concept has the ability to provide appropriate circumstances for social care activities. However, there is a broad spectrum of demand and supply of these activities which makes generalising of the success of care farming a fundamental stumbling block. Even so, it is possible to acknowledge that whilst care farms are highly individual, if they all follow similar guidelines and create circumstances for clients to experience the benefits, then the possibilities for alternative social care options are fruitful.

7 Research question 2: How does care farming meet the demands of participants?

't Paradijs was investigated deconstructing the approach to care and marrying it with the experiences of the participants. From these findings, it was possible to distil how care farming is meeting the needs of the participants involved.

7.1 *What is the philosophy and what are the motivations driving the development of 't Paradijs?*

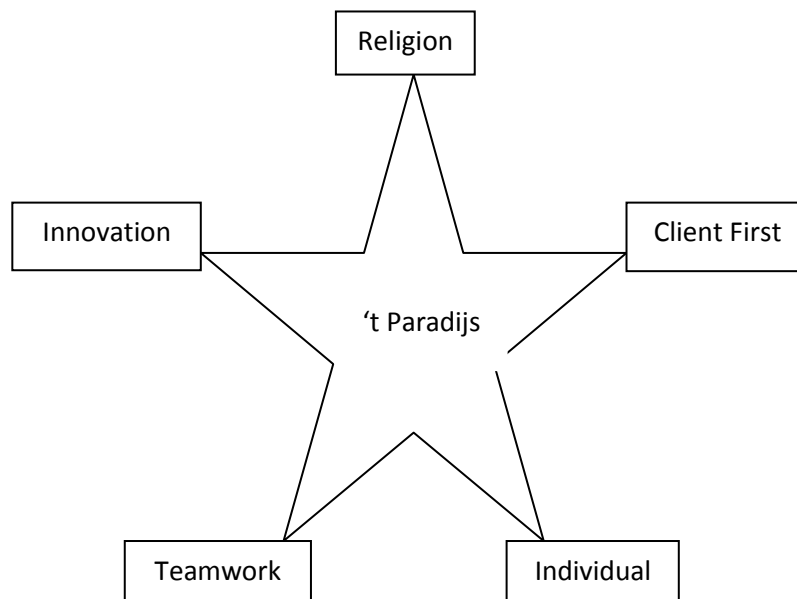


Figure 8: The philosophy star of 't Paradijs

Philosophies are values and “shared expressions of what we believe in” and they are part of a continual process of influences reflected upon by individuals to establish their attitudes (Francis 1994:75). The philosophy of an entity or community contributes to the actions and decisions taken, and also the atmosphere that is created. Therefore to understand the philosophy behind 't Paradijs is to understand the meanings and intentions of those involved in its survival. Figure 6 summarises the five components of the philosophy that have been identified at 't Paradijs and these are explored in more detail below.

Religion

For the founders especially, the most significant point of the philosophy star is 'religion'; the establishing of the care farm came from a belief that God had a mission for IJsbrand and Caroline. Establishing the care farm was a natural progression after their desire to help more children meant that they needed more space for accommodation and they prayed for help with this dream. IJsbrand firmly believes that "It is deep deep in the heart that every one, every soul needs a saviour and every soul needs to be important" (10:268) and he sees himself as carrying out a mission to help others – both in terms of improving health and happiness, but also in terms of being at peace with oneself. Caroline also talks about wanting to help as many people as possible but is very realistic that others do not necessarily share their evangelical beliefs and she argues that "It is very important to look over the church walls" (Caroline, 9:280) not only to see what is happening, but also to see who made need help.

Grace is said at the start and end of meal times with all the client groups and there is a reading from the Bible after food has been finished for the older people and 30+ group. The older people also join in a song together at the end of the meal time, but not everyone seems to join in with the prayers with the most notable exceptions being some clients and a majority of trainees. Caroline explained that personnel and volunteers need to be Christian, but there are no requirements for other

Remco: Father of Autistic Client He said Tessa enjoys going for walks and seeing the animals. She has friends at the farm and the space and freedom at 't Paradijs helps Tessa to release some of her energy. It also gives the family a break and time to focus on their other children, who also enjoy seeing the animals.

participants to be practicing Christians. This 'rule' emerged after an incident when an atheist volunteer was spending a lot of time questioning the clients about their beliefs and it was felt that this behaviour detracted time and attention away from the care of the clients. At present, despite the difference in attitudes towards religion, everyone seems mutually respectful for one another and their beliefs.

Whilst the religious aspect of the farm may not be obvious at first glance, there are plans in the future to make it more visible such as the idea of renovating a storage shed into a chapel. This seems to be for a dual purpose according to an enthusiastic volunteer (Vera) who is looking forward to not only having a place of worship onsite, but also somewhere to display photographs of people who have passed on. This is something she feels the older people will particularly appreciate as it will show them just how important they are to the farm even when they are no longer physically there (7:125).

Client First

The second point of the star is that the client must always come first. Aside from coffee breaks and lunch time, the structure of the day is heavily dependent on what the clients wish. There is an inherent flexibility and accommodating attitude amongst all the personnel who are proud to be part of such an organisation where the client's needs or wants are at the forefront of their care approach. A demonstration of the attitude towards clients is that the staff see themselves as being there to care for clients within the environment of a farm rather than the clients being there to assist with the workings of the farm.

"The people working here take care very seriously".
(Merel 10:89)

Again with the emphasis of putting clients first, personnel take the attitude that each client visiting 't Paradijs should be treated as if it was a "special day" (Vera 2:19) and observations certainly correspond with this. Clients are greeted individually as they arrive and an effort is made to accommodate them within all groups. The older people are assisted from their taxis by at least two personnel and more are waiting inside to give them coffee. The 30+ group are invited to sit around the table and again are welcomed individually. And the autistic group clients were not only greeted with a smile, but time was taken to speak to the parents to check on the clients well being. The feeling of personal attention is sustained throughout the day as personnel either seem to make themselves accessible or there are an abundance of them anyway (especially with the older people) to meet the needs of clients. Caroline explains that to work at the care farm "you have to want to give personal attention to people" and you have to be able to balance this correctly as some weeks one person may need more attention than another (9:245). The motivation to fundamentally want to help people is the clear driving force behind this philosophy.

"It breathes activities, it breathes society. It does not breathe that you are treated here or that you need care. It is an open space. Everyone can see what we do. It is not behind walls, but open, transparent activity and everyone can see it and feel it." (Ulsbrand 10:271)

Individuality

A third, but similar message of the philosophy, is that all participants are to be seen as individuals and not as patients. 't Paradijs views clients as people who are working on their own health at their own pace. Across all the groups there is no pressure to join in with activities and it seems as if clients are always given the choice of what they wish to do, albeit it choosing from a predetermined selection where appropriate. Similarly, it is openly acknowledged that it is equally acceptable to sit out of activities and be 'at peace'. Caroline says that she tells the older people who are interested in coming to the farm that "you have to do nothing, everything is possible" (9:256). The emphasis is on what the individual *wants* to do rather than the need to follow a strict agenda. This approach is seen as giving the space and freedom for clients to do as they wish and to be given time to discover themselves. The element of 'time' is one that reoccurs throughout the research and seems fundamental both in the way care is given and the way it is experienced. To be given time to make your own decisions in creates an atmosphere at 't Paradijs that is designed to fit with the client's needs rather than the reverse situation of clients fitting in with the rigid routines of traditional institutionalization images.

A core part of this element of philosophy is to focus on what an individual *can do* rather than always pushing them to do more. This was identified by a social worker visiting the farm who believed the 'magic ingredient' of 't Paradijs was that "people here can focus on what they still can do" (Melvin 11:33). The reason for this was explained by Caroline (9:243) who wants to focus on the good people can achieve rather than the bad. Not only is this a method to increase people's self esteem, but it is crucial in making people feel as if they 'matter' and to make individuals feel as if they matter is at the heart of the aim of 't Paradijs. "To be able to matter. That is something that every person wants in their life, whether you are Christian or not, you want that your work matters" (Caroline 9:265).

Teamwork

The fourth point of the star is the method of caring for one and all as part of a whole unit. There is an assumption that everyone looks out for everyone else. This was not made explicit, but was rather implicit in everything from sharing coffee and lunch breaks with different clients and personnel, to keeping an eye on wandering clients who are pottering around the farm. The interaction between people was non-obtrusive but supportive, reinforcing the idea of a large family. This concept of a family, or community building, was a vision that IJsbrand had from the beginning and sees it as his responsibility to ensure there is a growing culture within the group. He argues that the culture is determined by the people themselves and that it can act as a deterrent for potential participants who do not share the same vision or ideas (IJsbrand 10:275).



The autistic group carefully move caterpillars from the trampoline to the safety of the bench

Innovation

The fifth and final point of the philosophy star is the forward thinking nature of those that are involved in determining the direction of 't Paradijs and their belief about the care farms uniqueness. Whilst it is the energy and motivation of IJsbrand and Caroline that can be seen as the glue that is holding together that care farm, it is the needs of the care and agricultural elements that are determining the future developments. 't Paradijs prides itself on being firstly a care facility and secondly an agricultural production unit rather than the more common route of an established farm branching out into care.

In general, visions for the future are shared with participants and their comments are taken on board, although most are just happy to know what is happening rather than wanting to share the responsibility of making decisions. But this integrated management approach creates a sense of ownership so all participants seem to talk about 't Paradijs as if it was 'their farm' with a sense of belonging. But the trust in the farms approach to care goes beyond that; participants really believe that 't Paradijs is not only a great example of how care can be practiced away from hospitals and in the outdoor environment, but they believe that it is *the* best case of the care farms. It is considered

Adrina: Manager of Older People Clients She was a hospital nurse but was unhappy with the busy time schedules and the way patients were seen as blank faces. She believes people being cared for in nature is a more suitable environment for everyone. She is happy to be learning about farming from the clients but does not like to be called the 'boss' because it is a team effort and they care for one another as much as for the clients. She recognises that everyone needs to feel as if they matter.

by participants to be a "must see" for everyone (Nathalie 8:165) and a prominent example of how all the different elements of care farming work together holistically to a great success. This opinion was summarised by Niels as "the future of farming has to include diversity and lots of other farms are trying out new ideas. Here there is clear vision for the future. I wish more farms were like this" (Niels 11:78). This view was echoed by several members of the personnel and clients, even when it became clear that actual very few

people had visited other care farms to be to compare; they just believed that it could get no better than here where the clients were put first.

So, just how important are the different elements of the philosophy for the functioning of 't Paradijs? The philosophy is the driving force behind the day-to-day actions as well as guiding both the founding of and the future development of the care farm. Everything seems to conform to the same ideas and approaches, which is especially reinforced when they are challenged, such as the example of an atheist volunteer. It is the philosophy that people believe in, and often what attracts both clients and personnel to 't Paradijs; even if they do not share all the ideas. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that the different philosophy angles create a holistic care farm that is 't Paradijs.

7.2 What are the key characteristics of this type of care from the view point of the participants and how are they experiencing them?

What follows is a breakdown of the nine specific features of care identified at 't Paradijs. They do not include information about specific health issues, but rather a summary of the approach used with an elaboration from different protagonists involved in this research project. But firstly a quote from IJsbrand that summarises his view of the type of care that is being offered at 't Paradijs:

“For me, it is that people can identify on a fine way themselves what they can eat. Here they are looking after their own health, they are working on their own health. People are not treated or need treatment, or care, or looking after. It is more that people can work themselves on their own health. Of course, they need help doing that. For instance, to go to the toilet or to get their dinner; practical help. But when the focus is [only] on that, like in many care institutes, I guess people [cannot] discover what they can still do. Like here on the farm they are enlightened, they are recognised for their abilities, not their disabilities, then the care is a second part. Then it is fine that they are helped with dinner or the toilet, or a walk, because they also can mean something” (IJsbrand 10:357).

Essentially, the aim is to facilitate people in achieving their own goals and realisations of who they are and see them as real people, rather than to simply take them through basic steps of care.

Seeing the individual

Instead of seeing clients as patients, they are seen as individuals and as people with something to offer to the development of the community. A first time visitor to the open day spoke about how it was clear that the people working on site “see special characteristics of the people” (Vincent 11:120) which seemed to capture the essence of how clients are perceived at the farm. As such, there is a deep reluctance to label people with a ‘condition’ as Caroline explains that “everyone has something, you and me also, only if it’s worse then you get a name for it” (9:232). This approach means that it is left up to each client to reveal their ‘condition’ to others if they wish and everything is handled in the upmost confidence thus encouraging people to be accepted for who they are that day.

“They also do not treat you like you have an illness, but look at you as a person.”
(Niels 11:70)

The individual approach is epitomised by Caroline's understanding of the term 'care': "I think care is looking at every person, because every person is unique. When I have a volunteer who says every child who has autism reacts like that I say 'no, no, no' because everyone is unique. Of course, you have things like they don't feel that they can hurt a person, for people, children with autism, but we think it is very important to look at a person" (9:225). This message seems to be prevalent throughout the farm and underpins IJsbrand's aim of helping everyone attending 't Paradijs becoming more "in balance" (10:367) with themselves between body and mind; the emphasis here is to accept oneself for who you are.

It was clear that the personnel invest time into knowing the clients individually but it was also equally as important for the clients to feel 'safe' with their carer. An example of this is the way Renée describes Claudia as "She does not judge people and will defend them which makes me feel safe"

"Everybody here is like everybody else. Everyone is equal." (Merel -10:82)

(10:191). She further elaborates on this explaining that she feels Claudia supports her when she needs it the most and creates a cosy atmosphere which is comfortable to be part of (10:150). This level of personal attention is also found in the older client group, for example

Vera believes that paying attention to what the clients need and want, and just taking the time to talk to them, is really fundamental to giving good care (8:121).

Sarah was a particularly sick older client who needed an oxygen tank to breathe most of the time, which meant lots of tubing and assistance. However, at no point did this appear to be an inconvenience to the personnel. On the contrary, they helped her move outside to enjoy the sunshine and everyone had the upmost respect for her, referring to her as 'Oma' of the farm and seeing her in a type of matriarchal role. Personnel were overheard exclaiming how they thoroughly admired her for still continuing to come to the farm even when it was so much of an effort, and how they were determined to always make it worth her effort and to spoil her. Other examples of personal attention being given include the elderly being given a choice of drinks and then willingly searching for something more appetising when a client was not taken with the options. Similarly, when another client was not eating much the staff quickly spotted this and rushed to make an alternative meal that may be more suited to the client's appetite that day. This personal attention seemed to be at the core of the client/carer relationship as many personnel highlighted to me the importance of listening to what the clients really wanted as individuals rather than assuming one size-fits-all.

Pascal: Older People Client He is new to 't Paradijs. He feels there are too many names to remember. He used to work with computers and he is not altogether happy about being at the farm, but he needed to get out of a black hole after being ill. He felt that he could exercise by walking in the woodlands. He also talked of being lonely at home and wanting social contact.

Supporting one another

The impartiality experienced by the protagonists is a reflection of the structure of 't Paradijs and is something that is intended to create a sense of 'family'. Mutual support between colleagues, clients and others is an approach that stakeholders are particularly satisfied with and they see this as a sign of equality between all those involved, again echoing the ideal of accepting people as individuals rather than as categorised groups. This close knit working relationship is also responsible for the high level of job satisfaction that is present amongst the personnel. The professional support extends

beyond the immediate leaders and any concerns are passed onto Caroline or IJsbrand who take it upon themselves to address clients in an informal manner. In this way, staff do not feel as if they are left alone to deal with everything but that they are working as a team. Similarly, the staff interviewed express that they felt as if they had a secure network of people around them to share things with.

Likewise, Adriana explained that “We care for one another, not just clients. For me at home, I have 4 children so I am busy, but here I am also busy but people are taking care of me. Everyone is interested in one another” (7:113).

As a form of care, the support given seems to help individuals find the strength to move forward with their personal development. Inge spoke about how the subtle encouragement she was receiving has enabled her to invite her family to visit ‘t Paradijs, which she had previously seen as her personal recovery space and separate from family life (5:86). Similarly, Mariska credits the safety and support that she feels at the farm as the reason that she has been able to start smiling once again (5:60). Another element of the care is to help clients accept themselves. Renée explained that “Here people are on a level – smart, intelligent etc are all mixed together. We help each other, and we know and accept one another’s weaknesses” (10:162). A discussion ensued between the 30+ clients and Bas made the distinction between people who were educated and those who were not and exclaiming that it was funny that they all end up in the same place despite their different backgrounds. It was agreed by all that everyone would benefit from being able to spend time at a farm like ‘t Paradijs and that they felt lucky compared to other people who were stuck working in stressful jobs whilst they had the opportunity to be at ‘t Paradijs (10:125).

The support that appears so crucial to the farm goes beyond those immediately involved in it. The parents of the autistic children frequently seem to look to the staff for reassurance or confirmation about their child’s progress, and this can be seen to be mirrored with the older people. Both Caroline and IJsbrand spoke about the time they spent communicating with relatives of their clients who were feeling guilty about putting their parents into care for a day, or were concerned with their deterioration and so on. They are sympathetic to the feeling of shock that family members experience when they are first called upon to make decisions about their parents. IJsbrand was proud of this support and shared an example of the struggle a son had when he was looking into options for his father, but that he “now says “this is wonderful for my father and that I made this choice”. It is good that he opened his mind to this hard decision. And I think that is wonderful” (IJsbrand 10:373). This central role of reassurance and comforting that IJsbrand and Caroline have created reinforces the idea of a family (see 7.3). These roles can be easily identified by observing both Caroline and IJsbrand move around the farm as they are continually stopped and called to, for which they both make time. An example of this can be found in the way IJsbrand was looking at the gardens but stopped to talk to an elderly client and carer who were on a walk themselves. The small group spent several minutes discussing the plans for growing strawberries and sharing questions and answers.

Dealing with a large group of people, all with different needs at different times means there are likely to be conflicts or disappointments at some stage. But still the overwhelming impression is that to support one another and to be part of a wider family structure is key to the philosophy of the care farm in question.

Farming and animal management

As a characteristic of 't Paradijs, farming is essential to the whole operation. This includes tending the animals and vegetables, as well as selling produce and operating farm shop. It is 'farming' that is responsible for creating most of the meaningful jobs and opportunities for involvement, ranging from wedding vegetables patches to cleaning out the rabbit hutches. Future developments are being designed to fit both the farming and care requirements, as is the case with the new chicken shed which will be more mechanized so there can be a greater output and therefore an increase in farming income, but the design will also incorporate specific elements that clients can still be actively involved in. As Dominique explained, the automatic egg collector will be creating a larger number of jobs for the clients, especially those that need a repetitive and routine task to focus on. Whilst Dominique was not clear on the details, she was fully convinced that it was the right thing for the farm as the egg production was the biggest income generator and the farm needed to be a profit generating business (3:170). For her, it was important that the farm was self-sustaining because that was what she expected from small farms. This is a good example of how the clients need for meaningful work and the range of activities involved in farming influences the decision making process concerning the development of the agricultural business.

How do you think Paradijs compares to other farms? "The main focus is not production; it is caring for people instead." (Niels 11:61)

Interaction with animals plays an essential role in the activities at 't Paradijs, but it is the connection with them rather than just being within the vicinity which is interesting. An autistic client was quoted in the 'quality' display at the open day as saying "I love all the young animals on the farm, especially



A member of the autistic group learns how to ride a horse.

the young rabbits, they are so soft and cuddly. With a little rabbit on my lap I become completely calm" (Appendix 2:17). The animals are utilised to influence the behaviour of the client in many situations. For example, Alma shared a story of how the horses had helped one autistic client (Michael) who "when he started coming here he was really angry and did not know how to communicate to the people around him. We started to let him groom the horses, or at least to have contact with them. It took a long time but he responded well to this and would ask if he could join in with us. When we thought he was ready we let him sit on the horse. This was important as the horse can feel how the rider is feeling. It took a few weeks but Michael was definitely more confident each time. It was good for him because he would sit all

slumped over on the horse so we would explain that he needs to sit up straight so the horse knows who is in control. When he did this the horse would be much calmer so he could see the difference it makes. Now he asks if he can go on the horse at the end of each session. He is the only one out of his group who is interested so we try and make it possible when there is time" (Alma 6:128). Now Michael eagerly watches until clients from the younger autistic group have finished before making himself available to ride the horse around the paddock and there is a distinct regularity in his approach which demonstrates how important this action is to him.

Some older people clients carry out complimentary feeding, meaning the animals are not necessarily reliant on their actions, but instead they are fed waste from peeling the vegetables or some hay using a fork until the client is tired. However, the 30+ group seem to have a more active role in caring for the animals and take on the responsibility for feeding or grooming the horses, cleaning out the

“A lot of the clients are old farmers themselves and they like to care for the animals because it is what they have always done.” (Ellen 10:5)

rabbits and labelling the meat for the shop. Mariska explained that the thing she enjoys the most about ‘t Paradijs is working with the animals and having direct contact with the animals as they are non-judgmental and she does not need to worry about what they are thinking (5:53). Similarly, Inge enjoyed feeding the pigs as they are always friendly and nosey (5:121), which demonstrates the importance of this interaction for many. But beyond this, engaging with the animals does not

necessarily have to be a physical experience, it can also be just an appreciation of their presence or an expectation of what should be on a farm. A 30+ client explains in the quotes at the open day: “I think that horses are beautiful creatures and although I do not really feel the need to take care of a horse or to ride one, I think that the garden looks much better with a horse in it” (Appendix 2).

Whilst some clients are actively involved in working with the animals, other clients such as the autistic group are quickly bored unless they have the opportunity to make direct contact with them. For example, just looking at a new calf was not interesting for the clients, but they were very attentive whilst grooming the horse and holding the rabbits. This fondness for the animals was similar for some older clients whose mobility was challenging, but who seemed to happily take advantage of the opportunity to hold the rabbits that were brought over to them. Whether their needs that are more suited to a petting farm is unclear, as they seem to take advantage of the other things that a farm can offer aside from animals, such as social interaction or a wealth of space.

Space on the farm

The space that is provided by the farm allows people the freedom to explore and be themselves within a safe environment. The idea of ‘safe’ in this respect has a dual meaning. Firstly, it means both safe from harm due to the distance from main roads and passing traffic. There is also a boundary to the farm, although the adjacent woodland and nearby public footpath means that the care farm is not isolated. This caused problems when one elderly client was in the habit of walking off which ultimately meant that she could no longer attend ‘t Paradijs as the staff could not guarantee her safety. A second aspect of being ‘safe’ can be understood as being shielded from judgments or by people in the ‘outside world’. This aspect was crucial for the 30+ clients especially, who frequently cited that the opportunity to be relaxed and themselves at the farm is a significant incentive to keep coming back. This element was echoed by the parents of the autistic clients, such as Rebecca who was grateful of how her daughter is always much calmer after a session at ‘t Paradijs because she has used up her energy and is therefore less frustrated (6:173). In fact, Kirsten believed that it is the space and the sense of freedom that is most popular with the autistic client group as they seem to be bored looking at the animals unless they are directly in front of them (6:116).

Melanie: Open Day Visitor Her autistic daughter was interested in the horses and the family were pleased with how tidy the farm was. She spoke about how the family all need a break, and that they were hoping to find somewhere their daughter was happy to attend.

The way the farm has been designed into certain areas (such as paddocks, vegetable garden and so on) seems to create an illusion of being away from others despite the distance often being no more than a few metres. This helps to explain how the groups separate from one another whilst they are all actually working in the same small area. For example, elderly clients feed hay to the cows in the shed whilst clients of the 30+ group groomed the horses and clear out the stables, also within the shed. All those involved felt as if they had their own space and privacy as well as their own chores to be concentrating on, whereas in reality they were walking around one another in silence – acknowledging one another's presence but not feeling threatened about it. This form of a slow dance was witnessed on almost every visit as people moved from one area to another in what appeared to be a seamless transition, only to reform as stark group entities at every refreshment break throughout the day.

The space associated with care at 't Paradijs reaches beyond the setting for daily activities and care.

Vera: Volunteer She is a retired nurse who found working in hospitals very impersonal and was frustrated with the focus on targets rather than people. She feels it is important clients are treated to a 'special day' and goes home feeling good after caring for other people. She had always dreamed of working on a farm when she was younger.

For most participants the experience begins at the entrance and the long driveway. Several people spoke of how the trees along the avenue were beautiful and made them feel calmer immediately. Sebastiaan enjoys sitting in the front of the taxi and looking at all the trees when he is approaching the farm from its long driveway; He said that this sight makes him feel very peaceful (8:58). Likewise, Vera spoke about how on her first visit to the farm, she stopped the car at the start of the driveway and was

in awe of the trees. She was thinking "I am in Paradise" (Vera 8:109). Thus, participants begin their experience before they even officially arrive at the care farm.

However, the design of the farm and the spatial restrictions means that there is ultimately a maximum number of clients that can attend 't Paradijs. The space available for care farming does have a capacity limit and in order to maintain the optimum level for clients to feel they have some freedom but also sociability, there must be a carefully maintained balance. Caroline believes that they are at maximum capacity at present whereas IJsbrand seems to take a more 'trial-and-error' approach. There is a long waiting list of clients who want to be part of this community, especially for the weekend autistic groups, making 't Paradijs a victim of its own success as there is increasing pressure to expand beyond its means.

Nature

Whilst 'nature' is something that arguably features in all the characteristics identified, it deserves to be appreciated for its own purpose as it is a defining feature of care farms, including 't Paradijs. Working outside

"Since being here, I am really enjoying nature. It is very touching. Very wow. I don't really have a desire to know much about things, but I just want peace." (Renée 10:155)

is a privilege that clients seem to be thankful for as Merel explains that "Now I am working outside there is much less stress. I like the people and the animals. It gives me peace" (10:74-78). This was a sentiment shared by Bas who has continued to volunteer at 't Paradijs after his time as a client ended, simply so he can keep himself in balance by working outside to counter his time spent in

offices. For Bas, it was the escapism element that nature offers which is particularly appealing; “I really like the silence, the genuine silence so all you can hear are the birds” (10:4). Marinus was fond of mimicking the sounds of the birds, so for him to be outside either sitting on the patio area or walking in the woodlands was engaging and rewarding. Another older client (Maurice) was confined to a wheelchair and did not often venture around the farm. Instead the personnel ensured that he was equipped with a book about animals when he sat outside and he was seen trying to identify the different birds in the vicinity, although this was questionable as he had significant vision problems so would have benefited from someone assisting him. Regarding the fact that several older clients were more restricted, ‘nature’ was not just something to be enjoyed and experienced when outside. There were many fresh flowers or small plants that decorated the older people’s area, thus bringing nature to them and creating a homely environment.

Although walking can be considered exercise, many participants are taking part in walking simply because they enjoy being outdoors and in the natural surroundings. One older client (Jennifer) talked about how uplifting it was to walk in the garden on such a beautiful day. Other older clients returned from a walk in the woodlands with things they had collected en route, such as a piece of wood and flowers, so they could share it with others. The idea of collecting ‘souvenirs’ was also practiced by the autistic client group who initiated the idea to make posies whilst on their walk. They stopped along the way to pick out different flowers, considering what was best suited and looking for variety. Ilse and Wendy almost immediately starting identifying bugs as they came across them, with the most excitement being saved for following the pathway of a frog (6:32).



Volunteer and older client enjoying the splendor of the adjacent woodland walk

Own pace and choice

As part of the philosophy to put clients first, people were left to do things at their own pace. An example of this was seen after a lunch break with the 30+ group when people were given the option of changing their work for the afternoon. Everyone discussed and agreed on what they were expected to be doing, and whilst some jumped up immediately, it took more than 20 minutes for some to actually start moving as they were instead talking casually amongst themselves. Not only does this example emphasis the ability for clients to decide when they want to be active, but it also points to the relationship between care and farming (see 7.3). As the jobs were assigned, it was emphasised that clients are to remember to take breaks. Inge appreciates this approach of the care as she feels that the emphasis was less about completing tasks, and more on feeling good about yourself (5:80).

There were many occasions where clients were left to determine what was to happen next such as being given the option of going for a walk or staying inside, or playing games in the woodland with the autistic group despite the rain, until they decided it was time to return, rather than any staff members suggesting it. However this did not always benefit the clients, such as the case when the autistic group chose to play on the trampoline but as a result, excluded Marleen who could not join in for medical reasons so was left to stand and watch and preoccupy herself.

The flexibility of the farm has implications for all those involved, not just the clients. For example, the trainees need to meet a set requirement of work experience hours, such as the case of Renske and Ellen who both arranged to attend more regularly as their deadlines approached. Also family members seem to be accommodated when they have concerns or are interested to visit.

Gardening

The approach of giving clients a chance to set their own pace is linked to a similar idea used in therapeutic horticulture where clients are expected to find a rhythm with nature, watching and

't Paradijs creates "a safe space on a farm" for the clients to "express themselves and leave all their confusion behind. To just be normal". (Dominique 3:80)

helping things grow and then reaping the rewards. An example from 't Paradijs was shared by Caroline who described how "there was a man who took care of the tomatoes last year. He planted them and watched them grow from the ground. He kissed them almost. And they grew and grew. We had a lot of tomatoes and they were so sweet. He got a lot of compliments" (9:296). The

same client showed the tomatoes to his brother-in-law at the open day with immense pride. Niels spoke about how attending 't Paradijs "has done the world of good for [Rutger] and he has flourished here" (11:71). The chance to nurture nature into growth can teach patience and pride, both of which Rutger experienced. Another aspect of gardening was represented by a 30+ client in the quotations displayed at the open day. They explained that "Pulling out weeds clears my head, it is as if my inner "weeds" are being removed as well" (Appendix 2:3). This represents the association clients can make between their actions and their feelings and exactly how gardening contributes to improving a sense of well being.

Meaningful work

In terms of doing work that 'matters', then helping around a farm seems to be providing plentiful opportunities to assist for varying abilities as well as a way to visually see the difference that is being made. Caroline explained that "We don't expect the people here to do all the work, but only what they can do and want to do. For the children, that is also a value. Everywhere they go their behaviour is negatively received, and here it is positive" (9:139). In this sense, participating in activities

Inge: 30+ Client She attends 2 days a week. She says horses are in her blood; it was the horses that attracted her to 't Paradijs. After a day at the farm, she feels wonderful as she smells of horses and her husband say's her eyes sparkle. She feels the emphasis is not on completing tasks, but about feeling good.

can not only assist with the farming business but contributes to increasing clients' self-worth and confidence. Adriana explained that "Meaningful work important for everyone especially for the elderly people. When they have finished their jobs, retired, they just sit at home and think that if they don't do anything, then it doesn't matter and no-one notices. Whereas here it is important that they do something, such as there is a bakery waiting for the eggs to sell or make cakes with – they need the eggs" (7:126). A consequence of this work is that the clients are assisting with the farm's income, which adds an extra incentive and appreciation for the work they undertake. Caroline explained how clients often help out when there are deadlines such as picking strawberries to sell in shops around the area (9:313). Bas echoed this sentiment, arguing that "I also realise that this farm is more commercial than other care farms, but I think that that means our work has a real purpose as it is contributing to the farms income so it makes it more rewarding" (10:26).

Examples of the different activities that people were undertaking ranged from the small such as setting out chairs for coffee time, to the big such as manning the farm shop or packaging the eggs. One older client (Nynke) was restricted in how much she could move but she took great pleasure in assuming the responsibility to fold tea-towels. This was a small and arguably pointless activity, but it gave her a focus and feeling of helping out the staff. Similarly, Tamara assists in the kitchen and she spoke about how good she felt being able to help out and how she likes to look after everyone else



Two older clients arrive early to start collecting the eggs they need to clean.

by preparing the food (7:82). By encouraging, or allowing clients to be active in their time at the farm, they are being instilled with a sense of purpose and drive to help one another; making their work more fulfilling. The term 'meaningful work' is not exclusive to the clients but it can instead be identified in all the participants involved in this research. For example, Peter feels that he can personally contribute by talking to the clients especially as he is the "only male volunteer with older people" and therefore sees himself as offering a different element to the care that the clients are receiving (9:26).

By creating and upholding different roles, there is also a sense of responsibility. Caroline believed that the older male clients benefit from this work more than the female clients as they want to be physically active, rather than the females who are content with talking or knitting together. The elderly male clients who regularly collect the eggs for cleaning and packing often arrive ahead of schedule in the morning and go straight into the barn, stopping only to join in with the morning coffee break as they want to make sure they get the work finished. Their sense of purpose is impressive and they thoroughly enjoy their role, as do the rest of the clients who are involved in the production line. Another example is that of Merel who was at the farm three times a week in the 30+ group and is responsible for cleaning out the rabbit hutches which she takes very seriously (10:63). However, this is a case where things became too much as Merel felt guilty about not finishing the cleaning before lunch time and she was concerned that she had let her leader down. She would have also liked to work in the vegetable garden but feels as though she does not have enough time because the rabbits need cleaning out. Similarly, Renée was finding the responsibility of looking after the shop too much and she felt that she was in some way being exploited. She believes the care farm has grown too quickly and how "in the beginning it was possible to run the farm without people. Now, they lean on people like me. This means there is more pressure" (10:159). These cases show that there is a difficult balance to find between helping someone to feel useful or important, and burdening them with too much in which case it could be counterproductive and even detrimental not only to the individuals progress, but also to the community as a whole.

Another issue that arose was when Peter explained that the elderly clients were cleaning eggs that were just going to be thrown due to change in the chicken feed making the eggs unsuitable for human consumption (9:19). However, it was clear that the clients were unaware of this and spent a considerable concentrating on cleaning the eggs which was felt to be acceptable as it was giving them something to do and making them feel useful. But the question rises, just how meaningful is an activity such as this when it is not of actual use and is this ethical?

Satisfaction and energy

Closely linked to meaningful work, a high level of job satisfaction seems to be a common factor amongst the personnel. The most significant factor shared by those participating in the research is the way people are re-energised at the end of a day's work. Renske spoke about how calm she feels when she is at the farm and when she leaves she feels as if she has more energy (3:60), and Alma described being really "relaxed and revitalised" (6:128).

Similarly, Adriana said her work was refreshing and she feels that she now has more energy for work and family life compared to her previous career working in hospitals:

"[There are] a lot of presents here. When I see a child feeling better, it makes me very happy." (Caroline 9:146)

"Now I still go home tired, but a different kind of tired" (7:122). This comparison to a previous experience was shared by Vera who resented the impersonal structure that hospitals represented, and now she says she feel re-energised when she leaves 't Paradijs as she has been caring for individuals rather than 'patients' (2:13). Vera also explained how her friends had noticed the difference is her and how she was always excited and happy when talking about her experience at 't Paradijs and how she feels rejuvenated and good about herself because she has been caring for people (8:130). This is another example of how the carers are being cared for as part of the structure and philosophy at the farm.

In the 30+ group, Inge told of when she leaves 't Paradijs at the end of the day she feels wonderful and her husband tells her that her eyes sparkle when she gets home (5:76). The satisfaction from taking part in activities can also be understood as a means to find exhaustion and to clear the clients head; this is a need that both IJsbrand and Caroline recognise as important as psychiatric problems are common, especially amongst the 30+ client group.

Different to hospitals

There seems to be a number of differences between the care approaches in hospitals and at 't Paradijs which were identified by both the staff and the clients. However, the most striking difference seemed to be the simple issue of time. Far more time is available at 't Paradijs to meet the wishes of the clients or to practice the care that the personnel feel is more suitable. IJsbrand believed that although the care given may take longer at 't Paradijs compared to hospitals and medical intervention, "the result is much more rewarding" (IJsbrand 10:408). He argues that a decision to come to 't Paradijs is far more challenging than finding a simple treatment: "I hope that there is a deep confrontation in why it is necessary because then the choice is far more a choice of the heart and not a choice of the head" (IJsbrand 10:381). It is this approach that IJsbrand believes brings the most favourable outcomes and results for the clients. Life is "Making hard choices and also having the joy that you made a good decision. Then the joy is much more fruitful and much more honest than when there is no hard choice" (IJsbrand 10:384). This was recognised by one client who was reluctant to come to 't Paradijs as he had did not want to be treated like a patient. However, since attending he had told Ellen that he had changed his attitude because here he was able to do "something useful. For example, feed the cows and clean the eggs" which made it feel less like a hospital and more like a home (Ellen 10:10). Having the availability of time could be credited by the fact that there are a significant number of personnel to begin with which is crucial in providing the individual attention to detail when necessary. Of course, there are disadvantages to relying on a number of unskilled or irregular staff, including the need to supervise them, train them and schedule them in, but it appears as if the advantages far outweigh the drawbacks for this care farm.

Fatima: Cook for Older People Clients She used to work in a large catering firm but had no interaction with people. She believes local and organic food is best for the clients and enjoys using produce from the farm. She uses raw ingredients as it is healthier for the clients and provides an activity for them to assist with preparation. She sees the kitchen as the heart of the group and feels special being able to provide for everyone.

An example of the detail of care possible when there is more time was seen when Vera fetched the farm dog to bring to Rosa who was seated at the table, specifically because Rosa's best friend would no longer be attending 't Paradijs so there would be a void to fill. The personnel had all spoken about this at the beginning of the day and agreed to give her extra care today. As the dog entered the client eyes lit up and she was patting it for more than twenty minutes. Vera herself came from a nursing background but had become frustrated with the

continual fast pace and pressure of the job – she said it was a case of ticking the boxes and move the patients out as there were more waiting. There was never any time to see patients as real people, but instead they were 'jobs' that needed dealing with in a quick, uniform manner (8:97). This was echoed by Adriana who had found nursing unsatisfying, too quick and impersonal. "If ill, it is good to be in hospital, but after that you are just a blank face and it is not nice to work there. I always tried to do more than the medical things, but in hospital there is not time for that. You have to work, change the bed, keep to a schedule, always too much to do and less time" (7:117). Adriana identified a quality of care farming as being a break from the busy time schedules and chance to "take care of people in nature" (7:94) which correspondingly meant a slower pace of life and routine.

The care of clients well being extends beyond mental health and exercise and includes elements such as their diet. There is an overwhelming consistency for hospitals to choose economics above taste or sustainability when it comes to providing food for clients. However, the cook at 't Paradijs (Fatima) was especially proud of her role in feeding the older people using locally sourced organic ingredients and as much fresh produce from the farm itself as possible, which also provides a social activity for some of the clients who assist with chopping up vegetables. Fatima also believed that the less processed the food, the better it is for the clients and she purposefully shares with the clients when the ingredients are from the farm as she thinks that they are very interested and it makes everything taste better. Additionally, she recognised the value of being given a substantial meal as many of the client live on their own and only cook hot food sporadically; Adriana was also proud of how well the older clients eat when they are at the care farm. Again, this attention to detail, time and caring for the individual seems to epitomise the difference between care at 't Paradijs and the institutionalised experiences of the personnel.



Paved pathways on the farm make it easy to move around by bike and for clients to retain their independence.

In conclusion, the nine characteristics of care identified at 't Paradijs covered a broad approach and focused on making the experience worthwhile for the participants. Whilst it is difficult to compare these characteristics to other care farms, it is likely that they will follow a similar pattern – concentrating on the individual, supporting one another, participating in meaningful work, and so on. From the research, it is possible to ascertain that these approaches create a suitable environment for participants to work on improving their own health and well being within the safety and security of the care farm and the opportunities that this provides.

7.3 Are current participants satisfied with the service they experience?

The needs of the participants of 't Paradijs fall under seven description types, as inferred from the research. The 'needs' are identified both by observation and interviews, and are combined with the 'outcomes' to provide an all-encompassing impression of the demands being met and how this is achieved.

Flexibility

Patience seemed to be a characteristic within all participants as a considerable amount of time in the day seems to be spent waiting: Waiting for people to arrive and settle down; waiting for clients to decide what to do; waiting for people (personnel and clients) to start working; waiting for everyone to finish eating; waiting for coffee to arrive; and so on. This was reflected in the slow and steady pace that had been established but can also be understood as the flexibility given to clients to determine the pace.

The opportunity for people to set their own pace and make their own decisions clearly meets the needs of many participants, ranging from the autistic group choosing what to be involved in, to the wheels of a walking trolley setting the pace and direction of a stroll around the farm in the older people group. Similarly, an example from the 30+ is of a client repeatedly painting horses on canvas rather than joining in with any 'work'. She was given the option to choose what to do and seems to prefer to paint over her paintings time and time again, making improvements so they can be hung around the kitchen on display. In this case, the client was extremely happy to be left alone to paint at leisure and then to share her work with others, looking for approval. However, this set up does not seem to work for everyone. For example, René believed that there is a distinct lack of flexibility and feels that there is an under-appreciation of how people change throughout the day. She also felt that in general, people are too busy and do not take care of one another because of this. She explained that there is no time to reflect on your actions, which may have been more of an indication that there are too many people around for her to feel comfortable as she later talked about how the farm has grown too quickly in her opinion (10:147).

Farming

To be working on a farm seemed to meet the wishes of several participants such as Vera, who had always dreamt of being on a farm since she was younger as it was "peaceful, quiet, no bright lights or policemen" and she was particularly excited about ending her working life in this setting (8:110). Similarly, Peter had also retired and was grateful for having the opportunity to realise his childhood ambition after spending his working life in an office (9:14). Looking back to her childhood, Merel remembers wishing that she lived on a farm. She confessed she had an idyllic image of a farm but it is one that she has lived as she did not have any experiences to the contrary (Merel 10:106). IJsbrand also shared the same dream of working on a farm since he was younger and this was a significant motivational factor in his decision to establish 't Paradijs. Even though 't Paradijs is arguably a different from a traditional farm, this seems only to have reinforced IJsbrand's determination to make it succeed and to challenge the understanding of 'farming' in general. In this sense, 't Paradijs is

meeting the needs of IJsbrand in the way that it is allowing him to explore different possibilities and opportunities that farming can provide.

Many of the older clients were from a farming background and they were pleased to be within familiar surroundings and to be passing on their knowledge to the staff where applicable. They also seemed to enjoy practices such as feeding hay to the cattle as it reminded them of their own farms (2:48). In general however, the overwhelming impression was that being outdoors and involved in something 'useful' was important rather than farming specifically.

There was however a lack of agricultural knowledge amongst the carers as their first responsibility and concern was towards the patients. Whilst the approach at 't Paradijs has been designed this way, it can be argued that some clients were not reaping the most benefits that the natural environment has to offer as the staff cannot always impart knowledge or share enthusiasm. There were also incidences when more experience would be beneficial such as when Renske was asked to take the horse out from the stable ready to be groomed but it was fearful and reared up in front on 30+, elderly and autistic group clients as well as some personnel. No-one knew how to handle the horse and left Renske to try and control him herself, despite her never having handled a horse before. Not only was this a potentially dangerous situation, but it also demonstrated the assumption that little 'farming' knowledge is required.

To matter or feel useful

Feeling useful seems to be something that clients benefit from and look for opportunities to make this happen. Whilst older clients were seated outside Marloes brought them some leaflets to fold in preparation for the forthcoming open day. They were visibly pleased to be of assistance and to be doing something with their hands. Staying with the older clients, Tamara talked about how cooking for other people was important to her and that she was happy to help. For her in particular, she said that cooking was in her blood and she wanted to share this passion by helping to feed others (8:201). These are examples of 'jobs' and responsibilities that clients shared and took a sense of achievement or involvement from.



Clients and trainees labeling meat to sell in the farm shop.

Anna is an interesting example of how the cared for becomes the carer. She visited the farm once a week as a member of the 30+ group but always spent some of her time talking to the older clients and making their day more special. She explained that this role of making a difference for the older people is helping her with her own recovery from a burn out (4:17). But the need to feel useful is not exclusive to the clients. As a volunteer Vera was happy that she can still look after people now that she is retired, even more so because it is a continuation of her nursing days but with improvements such as having more time and less stress. Similarly, Nathalie spoke about how her role as administrator at the farm gave her a new confidence and now she sees the responsibility that she has and it makes her feel proud (8:142). In these cases the need to feel appreciated or 'useful' is met by taking part in the activities and assignments at the care farm.

Structure

For some clients there is a need for things to be organised well. This was recognised by Noortje who exclaimed that she was impressed with how things are labelled with coloured tape or with instructions displayed around the farm, indicating how to feed the animals and where to store the equipment. This clarity is not so intrusive as to dominate the landscape, but it does seem to create an awareness and confidence amongst clients who are unsure about what they are doing and simply refer to the directions displayed on the walls. This simple organisation both made it easier for the personnel to maintain order and it opened up space to people who may otherwise avoid areas that cause anxiety if it is unclear what should happen there. The day was also structured for the benefit of clients, with an afternoon walk being offered to all client groups (but still kept separately) in a move to reinforce the message that it is ok to have some 'down time'.

Interestingly, a natural hierarchy was in place simply as a result of the different roles people have, thus removing a true sense of equality. Firstly, the desire to remove any visible authority has caused a lapse in personnel wearing name badges when working with the older client group. Willem complained that there were so many people around that he did not even try to remember their names which made him feel isolated and overwhelmed (7:75). Name badges were supposed to be worn by the personnel but it seems to be a rule that some choose to follow and others forget, or perhaps they feel that they have been volunteering for so long that it is no longer necessary to identify themselves. This could be a particularly awkward situation when dealing with a number of people suffering from different types and stages of dementia.

A second issue that challenges the practice of a flat-hierarchy structure was recounted by Caroline who was uncomfortable being called the 'boss' by an older person with autism but she understands that the names and labels made sense to this person so she accepted it, although with hesitation

"I think there is a combination of traditional farming and taking care of people, but the taking care of people comes first." (Niels 11:74)

(9:302). This highlights the needs for different people to have clarity about other people's roles and suggests that the open and equal attitude is not always appropriate.

Therefore, whilst the ultimate practice of care is to offer support to one another, there are some significant relationships that rely on a hierarchical understanding and thus the support still maintains the traditional horizontal and top-down structure that is present in most organisations. This challenges the 'sameness' that seems to be a significant part of the care approach, but it does not change the fairness and equality that participants are experiencing.

To feel cared for

To feel cared for is also to feel looked after, or to have someone putting your interests first. There are numerous examples of this happening at 't Paradijs, where the philosophy is to care for one another. Merel has been at the farm since 2006 and remembers when she first came here, she thought "yes, finally!" (10:64). For her, it was the realisation that people were going to listen to her as a person rather than focusing on her weaknesses. She said that she needs "to be at peace with myself" (10:97) which is something she feels she can work on whilst at 't Paradijs. "At home I can't relax. Here I feel like I am in a different world. I feel really appreciated" (10:115). This is similar to the experience of Renée who appreciated how both the pace of the farm and other people looking out

for her forces her to slow down and she feels that she is “very much accepted here” for who she is (10:157). Interestingly, Dominique and Renske believed that ‘other’ care farms were misleading and inadequate as they were farms first before introducing care, so they portrayed care farming in a negative light and as a ‘last resort’ for farm businesses; thus clients were seen as an ‘afterthought’ (3:182). They both insisted that care is the priority at ‘t Paradijs which is why it was both so successful for the clients and so rewarding for the personnel.

An extension of the care being given was evident as family members acknowledged the enormous benefit of giving themselves a break. Fiona said that having two hours every fourteen days when Kalle was at ‘t Paradijs gave her chance to spend some quality time with her youngest two sons (6:160). Similarly, Remco was grateful that Tessa was so happy at attend the farm as it not only helped her through periods of stress, but it created a respite for the family whilst she was receiving care elsewhere. Reaching out to support the families and make them feel part of the care approach rather than an external advisory seems to be an important element of the care at ‘t Paradijs.

Whilst the emphasis in the 30+ group appears to be helping clients to be themselves, some feel that they are not being encouraged to develop fast enough. Merel for example, felt that her development had levelled out and that more help could be given to her (10:100). In other instances there seems to be confusion about the extent to which clients are to be cared for. The extent to which the clients are waited on was surprising, demonstrated by an instance where no personnel member offered around the coffee during lunch with the 30+ group and this simply meant that a number of people in the group did not have a refreshment (5:139). This attitude towards being ‘served’ could be rooted in the fact that the clients are paying customers, and as Renée expressed, her insurance paid 800/month for 2 full days so she did expect something in return (10:190). Therefore, to be cared for was also seen as an expected ‘service’ for a paying customer.

To learn

Different participants need, or want, to learn different things at ‘t Paradijs. From the beginning it seems like participants were learning together and from one another. IJsbrand and Caroline had no experience with taking care of the elderly and so relied heavily on volunteers with knowledge. Caroline said that “I have learned a lot. I never had to do it, but since we had to do this, I learned a lot about elderly people” (9:114). This is a symbol of how the community grew together, influenced and enabled by the different members – a sentiment shared by a 30+ client: “[‘t Paradijs provides] the space for new experiences: to live, learn, to see and discover opportunities for growth, to develop and take your place in this mini society. The farm is the tasting ground of life” (Appendix 2:7).

There were several work experience placements for trainees, such as Renske and Ellen, who need to collect 200 hours working and learning from personnel on site (10:1). Whilst they did constitute as extra staff to all extents and purposes, they also demanded effort from the employed staff who are to monitor their actions and help teach them new skills. Similarly, the staff themselves seem to be learning about farming through experience, which is something that was recognised by both Dominique and Adriana who were being taught skills by their clients. Adriana told how “The elderly people mostly come from the farm, so I have learnt from them how to feed the cow, or pick up the eggs” (7:101). Alma also admitted that she has picked up knowledge about farming techniques from

clients, but sees her farming ignorance as an advantage because she is learning *with* the clients so she is experiencing similar things as them (9:30). Clients are also learning new skills, including a foster child with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder that stayed with IJsbrand and Caroline for eight weeks. Caroline explained with pride that he was finding school difficult but since being at the farm he had decided to become a *hoefsmid* (blacksmith) and he is extremely focused. “It is a good success story” (Caroline 9:124). However it is not clear how much drive there is for clients to learn new skills that could facilitate them in moving back into employment. Instead, the focus seems to be on restoring well being rather than enabling future development. As such, the opportunity to learn is not confined to new skills, but also learning about one’s self is an integral part of the philosophy at ‘t Paradijs. This notion is not limited to the clients as Caroline shared that she has been trying to listen to her own body and find out where her limitations are as she felt as if she is working too hard: “I have to say no to a few things and it feels good” (9:171). In this sense, learning is as much about practical and knowledge based information as it is about emotional stability.

Exercise



A short walk around the farm encourages the client to exercise and see the vegetables grow.

For some clients the need to exercise is the main reason for them to attend ‘t Paradijs. Pascal, an older people client, spoke about how it was of no interest to him to learn anything new in his later years, but he was needing to exercise his way out of a ‘black hole’ that he had found himself in recently (7:66). Attending the care farm was more about being gently coerced into walking than anything else for this particular client. Similarly, Marinus was one of the regular walkers and credited his walks at ‘t Paradijs with keeping him fit (7:58).

For others, the need to exercise seemed to be left up to the individual to instigate. For example, Simon (friend of Nick) was disappointed that Nick was not being pushed into being more active as he had health issues that relied on him doing more exercise. That said, Simon did admit that Nick was “liever lui dan moe” (rather lazy than tired) but took advantage of the space around the farm that he could gently pedal around on his bike in safety (11:100). This example seemed to question the extent of physical health awareness that is being imparted to clients.

Social interaction

Being given the opportunity for social stimulation can make a difference to people’s confidence. With the regular coffee breaks, shared experiences and attention giving or support, most people seem to be content with the option to communicate with others at their own leisure. “It is nice to meet one another. The opportunity to speak in a comforting and positive atmosphere. The being part of, being spoken to, recognising and automatically greeting each other as good friends” (Appendix 2:15). For the elderly people in particular, many live at home on their own and their trips to the care farm are essential to their social contact. Tamara regularly visits her daughter who lives on a farm with lots of green and some horses, but she explained that although it is beautiful, it is too quiet for her and she craves the social contact with other people that she finds at ‘t Paradijs (8:197).

Even so, there are some instances where the current structure did not seem to meet the requirements of clients. For example, Pascal wished there were more opportunities for academic or in-depth conversations rather than just superficial pleasantries (8:24). This surface depth was reflected also by the fact that fellow colleagues knew so little about Vera despite her volunteering at the farm for five years. Similarly, Merel felt that she benefits the most from having contact with other people and she believed that Monday's were too quiet for her as there were not enough people around to talk to. Interestingly, she also viewed the conversations that she had at 't Paradijs as inadequate depth to meet her needs at times and believed that she would benefit from a more therapeutic approach when necessary, or at least more time and attention to be focused on really talking to one another (10:99).

7.4 Conclusion

Overall, it seems as if the clients were generally very satisfied with their experience, in particular they felt they 'mattered' which is fundamental to any work on improving well being. Importantly however, this experience was not restricted to clients only and instead all participants benefited from taking part in the care farm activities. This is a significant realisation and one that should not be ignored. The seventeen features identified during the research provide a comprehensive overview both to the service being provided and how it is being experienced by the participants. There are however some discrepancies when things are not meeting the needs of one or two individuals. Whilst this is understandable, as there was a wide range of participants involved in 't Paradijs, it should not be overlooked. It is likely that the structure was not as flexible as it appears at first and individuals were expected to fit into certain boundaries about activities, expectations and so on, without feeling the pressure to do so. This in itself is a difficult ambition and one that requires a constant subtle negotiation between personnel and clients to find the ultimate balance to keep everyone satisfied and to continue to meet the demands of the varying participants at 't Paradijs.

8 Research question 3: How fundamental is the role of the farm in care farming?

8.1 *Is 't Paradijs a farm?*

Fundamental to the concept of care farming is the understanding of what is a 'farm'. Care farming can ultimately define the difference between a petting zoo or vegetable garden, and the idea of care being practiced on a farm. What follows is a reflection on the way farms have transformed the relationship between rural and urban, their role in today's society and issues such as understanding the role of the family.

What is 'Rural'?

The practices of frequent rural-urban interface demands that we reconsider the very notion of terms like 'farms' and ultimately, 'rural'. Rural can be understood as a characteristic of the countryside, usually associated with agriculture, forestry or natural un-built spaces. It also pertains to the relationship between a small community and their surroundings (Johnston et al. 2000) and it can become a significant factor when establishing a community of common interests, such as the case at 't Paradijs where the farm is the hub of interest. Participants described how the rural location was a factor in their choice to attend 't Paradijs such as Vera or Peter who dreamt of farming since they were young, or the older clients who came from a rural background; but they all had their own



The open fields next to 't Paradijs provide the ideal playing space.

interpretation of this concept. In fact, van der Ploeg et. al (2008:19) define the rural as, amongst other things, "the place of co-production between the social and the natural, between man and living nature'. Care farming sits perfectly within these terms if it is conceptualised as an interaction between man and nature, despite the vast variation within this scope. It supports the idea that 'rural' is understood by the way it relates and is used by, or experienced by, those that interact with it.

Historically, the rural-urban dichotomy has determined how both constructs are seen, but the fluidity of the boundaries cause discrepancies of where to draw the line between rural and urban definitions (Wiskerke 2007:20). For example, Bas declared that other care farms in the area were too urbanised because it was possible to hear passing traffic, but to a resident of a city, the care farms in question would undoubtedly still be considered as being in a rural location. The rural idyll portrays the countryside as traditional and trustworthy; it romanticises an imagined state of being rather than a bound place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:38). Equally, the rural idyll portrays the 'urban' as a sinister, dark environment where trust is lost and violence is common. As such, the rural is often pictured as a bright sunshine lit landscape of with space or at least, little urban evidence and small, friendly communities. Even so, it is this image of tranquillity that arguably attracts people to the idea of care farming. "People not only perceive natural environments as more restorative than urban environments, they also tend to perceive natural

environments as more beautiful” (Van den Berg et al. 2007:84). But there is always a risk of tension when imagined places must become lived in places and Van den Berg et al. (2007:82) argue that this view “idealises nature in a naïve manner” which overlooks existing and substantial threats such as isolation or moving against expectations. Nooij (1997) identified the problems facing farmers who choose to do something different than the ‘norm’, despite rural areas being viewed as the farmers’ domain, as societal expectations and acceptance make it harder to try something new. This issue is one that is facing care farmers in particular, as they move away from what is traditionally expected from a farmer and work with the care sector to provide a suitable environment for clients whilst still maintaining the idyllic nature that is favourable for this type of care.

Is ‘t Paradijs really a farm?

Of course, this view is dependent on each individuals interpretation of a farm to begin with, such as Niels exclaiming the “I still think it is a farm because it does still produce lots of food to eat” (Niels 11:62). Even the appearance of ‘t Paradijs seems to surprise people who visit for the first time and see how well organised and “tidy” things are (Melanie 11:45). “Everything was working fine. Things look new and it felt very much like a ‘clean’ or sterilised farm, but I guess that is what comes with the regulations that need to be met” (Vincent 11:128). Thus the impact of operating as a care facility as well as a farm affects the way that ‘t Paradijs looks visually as much as determining the activities and production.

Multifunctional farming encourages innovation and diversification (SoFar 2008:5), but it also brings a conflict with tradition. IJsbrand encountered this when meeting with a local farmer at the start of his management of ‘t Paradijs. The farmer challenged IJsbrand and declared that ‘t Paradijs was not a farm. “Actually it was not a farm, but it was our ambition to build up a farm and in beginning I was

“The future of farming has to include diversity and lots of other farms are trying out new ideas. Here there is clear vision for the future. I wish more farms were like this.” (Niels 11:78)

angry. How can this man say this?” (IJsbrand 10:339). Whilst IJsbrand believed that this misunderstanding predominately had to do with the farmer's refusal to accept his religious beliefs, IJsbrand also recognised that the farmer's view was very traditional and following a long career in an advisory position to others within the industry. When talking about this view, IJsbrand explained: “I think it is a very conservative image. A traditional

way of farming. I think farming offers much more for society because the large-scale farming or just the end phase of farming is just one way of looking at a farmer. It is highly productive, very efficient and high-tech, but it is also not from society and not small-scale or close to the people” (IJsbrand 10:434). From this, it is possible to ascertain that IJsbrand believes the potential for farming is not only to provide food, but it is also to strengthen people and communities, which is an underlying theme for ‘t Paradijs. This aim means involving many people in the process which again, is a break from the tradition. “We are different in the number of people who come, we have many more people [...] So, for an organisation we are different because we have more employees and volunteers who have their own responsibility. A lot of farmers have problems because they cannot let go of their own responsibility. They think they are central person [...]there is maybe more community and vision here in how we create our agricultural work and care” (IJsbrand 10:416). IJsbrand fundamentally believes that the concept of farming is evolving and he is part of this process; farming is being reconnected to the people and both the land and the people are benefiting from this strengthened

relationship. This understanding links closely to the idea proposed by Van der Ploeg et al. (2008) that farms are relying on utilising their own internal resources to negotiate a more accessible or useful approach to farming.

The income of 't Paradijs is still dependent on care at present, although there are plans to increase the farming business contribution as the farm grows. More farming dependent activities can also increase the pressure the clients experience so the balance has to be carefully managed. This is not unusual, with Van der Ploeg (2006) arguing that over 50 per cent of family income on Dutch arable farms is reliant on activities other than agricultural. However whilst IJsbrand considers the reliance on care for the sustainability of 't Paradijs as a temporary situation, it is clear that the care sector will always be fundamental to the farm and everything will be designed on site to maximise this potential. However, some consider this focus as being disloyal to 'traditional' farming. "I don't think 't Paradijs is still a traditional 'farm' though. I think it is still a farm in the sense that it is producing things, but it is clear that 'care' is the priority and comes first (Melvin 11:27). This new positioning of agriculture fits in perfectly with Van der Ploeg's (2009) argument that agricultural needs to be tailored to the specifics of the ecosystem and natural resources available and the deepening of the value, which is precisely what is occurring at 't Paradijs. The environment is determining the activities available to clients as much as the clients are choosing the farm for the environment. Even so, the situation echoes that of a key issue emerging for the SoFar (2007:51) platform discussion, which was "Should a professional farmer remain a real farmer on a real [productive] farm?". This leads to the question of how much care should be involved in agriculture, and how much agriculture should be involved in care? These issues are addressed in the discussion chapter.

Are you a farmer or an entrepreneur?

Whilst the role of the farm is important, so too is the role of a farmer. IJsbrand expanded on his desire to be a farmer from an early age, and seemed to be defensive when thought of as anything else. "For instance, it is very personal, many people have said in the last years and all my life "you are not a farmer" [but] It is my faith, my fate is my destiny" (IJsbrand 10:335). However, when asked directly if he is a farmer now, he answered controversially that he is a farmer only in his heart. Instead IJsbrand calls himself an entrepreneur. But what does this mean and how does it affect the concept of farming? An entrepreneur is a calculated risk-taker; it is someone driven by new ideas as much as the assumed profit margin goal. IJsbrand made a conscious decision to enter into farming rather than inheriting the role, but he chose to take a more managerial approach, employing a full-time farmer to share the responsibility. He is actively involved in policy making decisions and in campaigning to reconnect the rural and urban, but these activities reach beyond the farm gate and are taking him away from the site for significant periods of time, an option that a sole farmer would not be privileged to. Salamon (1992:95) understood an entrepreneur as "innovators eager to try newly introduced methods or equipment. An impatience with drudgery motivated a certain restlessness. An entrepreneur's planning horizon was short and dominated by financial concerns." This definition can be applied to IJsbrand, who was at the forefront of a social evaluation indicator concept coordinated between care farmers who are looking for ways to provide evidence of their concept. Similarly, both IJsbrand and Caroline confessed to a restlessness and seem to be continually on the lookout for new ideas. And as for a short horizon, things at 't Paradijs seem to have evolved as a reaction to a need or desire rather than a long-term plan; both in terms of financial need and a

demand from client groups. These features have seemed to have confirmed IJsbrand's role as an entrepreneur rather than a farmer which was at a conflict to how the clients see him, even if they acknowledged the more active role of David. Therefore, whilst differences between a farmer and entrepreneur remain subtly allusive, the question remaining is, to who is this distinction important? As people try to define themselves, participants and colleagues draw their own conclusions from the actions taken and the roles played by their 'leader' of the community.

8.2 How important is the role of the farmer and family?

A farmer and the farming family are associated with different concepts such as 'belonging' and 'community' but where do these materialise from? What follows is a breakdown of the different roles that are inherent in a traditional farming structure and a reflection on how these relate to the situation at 't Paradijs. To begin with the changing role of the farmer is explored, then the idea of a 'family' is examined. Integrated into the theoretical explanations is a reflection on how 't Paradijs is balancing a new approach to farming and how stakeholders need to be part of an innovate structure.

The role of the farmer

A farmer's role, in both time and space, is often associated with working the land and providing both enough food to meet the family demands and surplus to sell. For it to be seen as an isolated role is misleading as farming communities have traditionally come together to help one another with tasks, such as harvesting or baling (Hunt 2004:100), and in this way a farm is, or was, arguably the heart of a community and the farmer a significant player. Salamon (1992:1) argues that "farming is rarely a solo occupation" and it is only part of a wider line of production that determines the use of the countryside. As such, it is not a surprise that the role of the farmer changes over time, depending on the demand of the consumers and market. Whilst this entrepreneurship is long embedded in farming, it is becoming increasingly pronounced as more farms are moving into multifunctional uses for sustainability purposes, and the farmer has to take on a different persona, as well as widening their knowledge and skills to accommodate the new activities.

Role of IJsbrand and Caroline

Despite overseeing the farming, IJsbrand did not consider himself to be a farmer. Instead, he described himself "more as the entrepreneur on one hand, and a kind of, in all modesty, a kind of head of the family. Someone who is saying what to do, but is inspiring what could happen and what to stimulate people in discovering who they are themselves, as an employee or an volunteer, and to create their own capabilities. So more like an empowerment of people, more a management that is supporting people" (IJsbrand 10:228). This demanding role was heavily emphasised on facilitating people them to discover themselves, but is also notable for the absence of farming duties in this reflection. Caroline also shared the focus on people and she spent the majority of her time ensuring everyone is well and happy, whether it be personnel or clients. But again, farming activities seemed to be absent from an average daily routine.



Open day visitors meet the horses.

The role of David

Whilst IJsbrand and Caroline were the heads of the family, David was the full-time farmer at 't Paradijs. Part of this role was to spend time answering the client's questions, which is something that he enjoyed but also take very seriously, even if it did take up a considerable amount of his time. When in doubt about anything to do with the farm, the generic answer from both clients and personnel was always that David was the one to ask. This role seems to be especially important for the older clients who have previously lived or worked on farms. "For this group though David is the farmer and they ask him any questions about the cows, eggs, strawberries and so on. It is important that there is a farmer and he likes to spend time with them" (Adriana 7:148). This involvement added to the value of the clients 'mattering' and created opportunities for them to stay involved with the familiar issues or share their knowledge and experience. In this sense, there were two farmers at 't Paradijs, and although only one called himself a farmer (David) and the other an entrepreneur (IJsbrand), everyone around them made their own distinction between the roles.

How it works In practice

Therefore, it follows that if there is no clear distinction between roles, stakeholders will draw their own conclusions based on their needs or interests. In this way it was not an issue for the elderly people that Caroline and IJsbrand were still farmers, but considered themselves to be more people-orientated with only a limited (but growing) actual knowledge about farming. The elderly clients instead saw them as the farmer and his wife, because this was a role that is important for them to be able to recognise; The idea of a family was still key and they made sense of the situation by fitting individuals into what they expected. "IJsbrand is the owner but also the head of the family" (Adriana 7:144). Ultimately, IJsbrand summarised his role at the farm best in his own words: "Like an innovator, an inspirator and looking for the whole, that all the different parts get closer together and that in the end people are satisfied with their work, that the finances are right, the policy is good for the coming year [and] that the investments are secure" (IJsbrand 10:218).

Impact on how care is understood

Care farming is a typical example of multifunctional farming and the associated changes in roles that are needed to accommodate the range of services or outputs. Farms are moderated to meet health and safety requirements for different types of care, thus changing the make-up and functionality of the unit in question, as well as changing the way care is being given. Hassink et al. (2010) proclaimed that on care farms within the Netherlands it is the farmer that is chiefly responsible for care, despite the distinct lack of health care education. This dominance of the role of the farmer, opposed to the role of health care professionals, is a startling yet promising discovery. As such, the relationship between farmer and client is often seen as fundamental to the success of the placement, because the role of the farmer carries so much significance in determining behaviour, expectations and appreciation. Again, this highlights the importance of the characters of those involved in care farming. In this way, for Renée the decision to attend 't Paradijs was heavily dependent on her rapport with Caroline when first introduced.

Hassink et al. (2010) highlighted the concern expressed by some health professionals who were unaccustomed to there being so few boundaries between carer and client within a personal relationship. Their main issue was the unprofessional nature of the relationship and a potential disappointment that the farmer may experience due to the volatile nature of some client groups.

Also emerging from the same research study was the health professionals concern that the farmer was not adequately trained in the area of care, echoing a well established medical paradigm that is challenged by new approaches. However, in some way, the success of care farming can arguably be attributed to the fact that the farmer is approaching clients from a non-medical background but from their individualised background. The farmer should not be expected to possess all the correct qualities that clients will need, but instead should be surrounded by a multi-disciplinary guidance team that will provide the necessary support such as monitoring the safety of the surroundings. This way, the farmer can also concentrate on being himself which is to say he can 'normalise' the situation rather than become 'medicalised' (SoFar 2007). 't Paradijs is an example of where care professionals have become an integral part of the personnel team who share their knowledge. Within the workforce there was still a distinctive weighting towards care professionals rather than agricultural professionals; but there was also an inherent ability to work as a team and to support one another which created a distinctive community feel to the whole process of care farming at 't Paradijs.

Even so, the actual role of the farmer remains ambiguous. Are they a person of authority? And how does the role of a professional farmer combine with that of someone giving care? The parental image of a male farmer is often associated with the idea of a father figure who leads the family with knowledge and confidence. In the case of 't Paradijs, IJsbrand was not the visible farmer but he was still viewed as the 'leader' which questions how much the role of the 'father' needs to be actually associated with farming. Or if instead farming provides the context to enable participants to position their own understanding of the role of the person with authority – in this case, to accept IJsbrand as both a farmer and a leader of the community.

Role of the family

Salamon (1992) argues that farming families are historically responsible for founding communities. "Farming families constitute the building blocks of farming dependent communities: their conjugal roles are related to the network of relationships that integrates the community" (ibid 1992:125). Similarly, Francis (1994) argues the farming family is a unit *par excellence* as it not only shapes and reinforces social norms, but it is also the epitome of a production and consumption unit. He also identifies that the farming family offers continuity and stability that is difficult to find elsewhere. It is this image of stability and acceptance that seems to be most appealing to potential care farming clients, although the meaning and interpretation of 'family' is actively different for everyone. Because of this different elements need to be considered to fully understand the role and expectation of farming families in care farming.



Building a grave for a dead bumble bee found when playing nearby.

Another consequence of engaging with care farming is that family farms are able to remain within the inheritance line, thus providing a potential future for the next generation as well as the present. In fact, there is a 79% chance of there being a successor amongst care farmers compared to only 60% for conventional farmers (Di Iacovo and O'Connor 2009). However, there is a concern amongst those involved in the care farming sector that introducing the 'care' aspect can transform agricultural practices and lose the normalization of farming that seems to have been the initial attraction of this concept (SoFar 2007). Striking a balance between care and farming is ultimately a decision for each individual farmer and their families and as there is no 'formal' guidelines to beginning a care farm, it relies on the ethics of the farmer and the motivation for moving into such a sector. This personal wish to move into the care sector may have different foundations, but preliminarily research shows that there is, and arguably has to be, always the desire to 'do good' underlying this decision (Hassink and van Dijk 2006). Supporting this view, Bock and Oosting (2010:22) summarise that providers of care farming "feel motivated and responsible for rendering modern society more inclusive and offering a home and sense of belonging to those who live at the margins of society".

Structure

Homes, who runs a care farm in England, believes that the thing that residential clients love the most about care farming is the feeling of being in a family and being involved in ordinary family life. He recognizes that many of the male drug offenders that pass through his farm gates are coming from broken homes and they flourish when given the chance to fit in with the family structure that the care farm is centred around (cited in Elliott 2009). The stability that clients are offered can provide them with the support that may otherwise be missing, especially in the case of clients from an unstable background.

Francis (1994) argues that the farming family is not necessarily one of blood-relations, but instead consists of people who work and play together or share a common activity. This interpretation expands the commonly assumed notion of a nuclear family in terms of direct relations, and potentially broadens the notion to a wider 'community' that share values. Even so, the role of the

family is still essential in setting the tone. Clients have identified that when choosing a farm, the farmer and the family are crucial for the decision, rather than relying on simply what the farm can offer in terms of facilities and activities. The personalities of those that are running the farm and their attitude to the clients are essential to a successful care farm and a welcoming atmosphere (SoFar 2007). This is a factor identified by Merel who describes the atmosphere at 't Paradijs as being the result of Caroline and IJsbrand themselves and their influence. She said "it is their personality. It is open and kind. They really mean it when they want to help and they really care" (Merel 10:84).

Overall, the role of IJsbrand and Caroline seemed to be interwoven yet distinguishable. Adriana describes them both as being "the farmers and in charge" (7:144). Caroline admits that business decisions such as building a new shop or accommodation are projects for IJsbrand rather than her (9:185), just as she directs people to IJsbrand if they have a question about the vegetable garden. However, Caroline is responsible for elements such as coordinating the volunteer schedule and working alongside the staff team; a more human resources management role than farming maybe? Something that is clear throughout the structure at 't Paradijs is that people play to their strengths, and together they work as a team to create a holistic approach to both care and farming. It is this combining of skills that IJsbrand considers special about 't Paradijs.

Both IJsbrand and Caroline made a conscious effort to interact with the community during the morning coffee break at a minimum; IJsbrand with the 30+ group and Caroline with the older clients (9:215). When Caroline joined the older people for a birthday celebration she took hold of the attention and made a short congratulatory speech. Clients and personnel seemed to really look up to her with fondness as well as respect. Caroline was surprised that farmers chose to keep their care farms small with fewer participants, exclaiming "That is hard to me" as she takes pleasure in being surrounded by so many people (9:156). IJsbrand took a different approach with the interaction. In one morning introduction he sat at the back of the group and spoke to David predominately, and on another he was conducting a meeting in the corner of the room whilst the coffee introduction took place, thus he was not actively 'present' (7:4). This could have been a reflection of the heavy workload that IJsbrand was facing during the research period, but it can also be understood that he preferred to observe and have an overview rather than to participate in the groups. As IJsbrand himself reflected on his role as 'head of the family' there was a sense that the head leads from above whilst the rest of the body follows and enables the head to move forward. Even so, when it was necessary, IJsbrand remained behind during a break, openly asking clients if they had any questions which he then answered as fully and patiently as possible until his phone persisted to ring (10:36). Once he had left the group there was a clear sense of satisfaction from the clients that they had been given the respect and time that they expected. IJsbrand himself recognised that there are some questions that he is in the best position to answer and he took this responsibility very seriously, also seeing this time both as a way of formulating his role and as an opportunity to gauge how the care farm is evolving. "It is important to be among the people, to hear what is happening. If there are questions, they are 90% solved by the people themselves. But if it is about the new part or something else I am there and I can react. It is also good to feel how people are, if everything is going alright with the planning" (IJsbrand 10:303).

Belonging

Looking specifically at a farming community in Northern Ireland, Heenan (2010:43) concluded that “within the farming community there was a strong sense of belonging [...] the farming communities were viewed as being ‘different’ and indeed often better than other communities due to their strong levels of cohesion”. This strong bonding and bridging capital, as popularised by Putnam (see 1993 *Bowling Alone*), is an essential resource, especially in rural areas where people’s identity was associated with a long-standing relationship with the land. This cohesion could be seen at ‘t Paradijs where participants all greeted one another as equals and shared their time and knowledge with one another. In particular, the making of ‘best friends’ within the older peoples group indicated how socially important the care farm is to those involved, especially as many of the clients were house-bound, thus making their trips to ‘t Paradijs even more fundamental to their social stimulation needs.

This sense of belonging was also displayed in the way people took pride in ‘t Paradijs, declaring it to be the best care farm available, despite having not seen alternatives. Also Sebastiaan spoke of how



The autistic group run through the trees looking for frogs.

he held a recent birthday at the farm as he wanted to show it to his family as he felt the farm was so important to his daily life and that he was part of a larger community. The idea that ‘t Paradijs is not just a thoroughfare was upheld by Vera who explained that they will be displaying pictures of the clients who are no longer at the farm (passed on) in the planned chapel, so that they are still ‘with’ the people. She felt like this was a way for her to show people that they are cared for and not just a job, but part of a family and will not be forgotten. The notion of always ‘being’ at the care farm may not be unique to ‘t Paradijs, but is certainly a break away from a care approach only concerned with medical issues and neglecting the psychological notion of belonging to a community.

Family leadership

During their research, Hassink et al. (2010) found that youth care professionals in particular consider the farming family as role models. This is double-edged, as it provides a mainstream experience for some clients, but it also imposes a great burden on the farming family. Caroline was struggling to maintain a balance between her own immediate family and the responsibilities that are associated to running the care farm; something that is difficult as she lives and works in the same environment and much of her work is behind-the-scenes. “For some people I am always just at home and they are thinking: what is she doing? But sometimes I get 60 mails a day. But that is difficult to explain to people [...] We also work in the weekends and the evenings. Sometimes I work almost every night. I was thinking this weekend about that because I was very tired. And I was thinking “I have to stop that, I have to stop in the evening and I have to learn to say no” so that’s where I am now. That is a big step” (9:157). This overwhelming feeling of exhaustion that Caroline was experiencing reflected the pressure that she felt to maintain a leadership role for others. It is also one of the clearest indicators of how care farming is arguably a lifestyle choice rather than a profession.

People leaving

An unbalancing factor when establishing such a tight-knit community is when a member leaves – either by choice, circumstance or request. In many ways, how this is dealt with sheds more light onto the philosophy of a community than its premise on how to accept people; As people leave the dynamics are altered and the group boundary is challenged and reinforced. The following section looks at how people experience and understand this process.

'Family members' moving on

Whilst there seemed to be a lot of satisfaction and celebration when the situation occurs for clients to move on from the care farm, there was a distinct notion of regret from those that remain behind. Caroline spoke about the foster children, explaining that “when they are in my home, and they leave, I always have one day that I have to cry because when you have them at home, they are so close to your heart, and then they leave and I hope that everything is going well. They become part of our family” (9:147). This experience of ‘loss’ demonstrated the attitude towards one another at ‘t Paradijs and how the concept of family is being practiced. It is an element that is arguably missing from institutional care when clients may also participate one day a week, but their absence or departure is not as emotional. Similarly, Caroline had a motherly attitude towards the autistic group members. “I also love the children who come here at the weekend because they come here for almost 4 years. I don’t like to think that they are leaving, but they are one day” (Caroline 9:149). ‘t Paradijs is portraying the safe and secure elements of family life, but it is also challenged by issues faced by traditional family units, as clients move on and out of the protective realm.

But how do the clients feel? Like others, Mariska was pleased with her progress at ‘t Paradijs, but she was also apprehensive about what would happen when her funding to come to the care farm finished. One way of managing this fear was found by Bas who first attended the care farm as a client for three years and now continues to visit once a week as a volunteer in order to maintain some balance in his life. IJsbrand was particularly pleased with this situation and acknowledges that he has built a respectful relationship with Bas and will be sad to see him leave, but proud of his achievements. “We would celebrate and we will make a good farewell when he goes away, but I cannot see it happening now. Then we would shake hands or make a hug, because we had this good time together and made the connection” (IJsbrand 10:389). Again, there is a hint of the family structure at ‘t Paradijs, as IJsbrand and Caroline clearly cared for the individuals' welfare.

No longer suitable

Aside from deciding who should join the care farm, there are also occasions where clients have to be asked to leave. Whilst IJsbrand would prefer for people to be able to make their own choice about when to leave, he accepted that a ‘hard hand’ approach is necessary when the general policy of the farm is being threatened (10:234). A situation arose during the research when it was decided that one elder client was no longer safe at ‘t Paradijs. The process of making this decision involved meetings between staff and ultimately with the family members. It was clearly distressing for all those involved, but it is a very real concern. The client in question suffered from dementia and frequently walked away which could be dangerous considering the open boundaries that are part of the design at ‘t Paradijs. As such, the staff could no longer guarantee her safety or security and therefore it was felt that she posed a threat to herself. The first day when the client in question was absent, the personnel were alerted so that they could pay extra attention to her best friend, Rosa.

It was clear that she will be missed, but there was also a feeling of relief and the phrase that the farm 'just wasn't suitable for her anymore' (4:27).

Exploring the process further, Caroline explained that the decision to stop a client from attending the farm was one that was difficult, but also one that was necessary. She cited an example of an older person who was physically very strong, but was suffering from Alzheimer's and would just walk away. He held Lianne's arm so tight that she bruised and it was clear that he posed a threat to staff, albeit it unintended. Caroline was pleased to share this responsibility with her team members and grateful that Lianne and Adrienne knew when their limit had been reached so they could act together and trust one another's judgment. However, she still found it difficult because she felt as if she is turning her back on someone. When remembering the first time that it occurred, Caroline became emotional recalling how the daughter asked if they could not tell her mother it was going to be her last day at the farm as it would have been devastating for her. Caroline explained that it really feels like losing a member of the family and it never seems to get easier for her (9:204).

Limit to community size

Whilst the concept of community has long been debated, traditionally it has a geographical connotation. It is defined by Johnston et al. as "a social network of interacting individuals, usually concentrated into a defined territory" (2000:101). Using this definition, there will always be a limit to the capacity of 't Paradijs, and thus to the size of the community associated with it, albeit hypothetical. IJsbrand's approach to this issue was that he will rely on feedback from the community. "They will say when it becomes too big, or you feel it. We [ask] several times a year, for feedback in a natural way, such as a conversation. Of course, you have to do what you say then. Then there is trust. It will never be too crowded here. Although other care farmers say "what, 130 people? It is impossible. Much too big. Much too large scale" (IJsbrand 10:410). It was clear that 't Paradijs intends to evolve around the needs of those involved rather than expectations from those outside the project.

8.3 Conclusion

So in conclusion, the role of the farmer and farming family is central to the way care farming is both approached and carried out. Whilst the role of the farmer can be ambiguous and open to interpretation depending on the perspective, it is undisputed that the person identified as the farmer is an essential participant in care farming and one that can determine the atmosphere as well as the notion of 'mattering' as clients help to assist them via participation in activities. What remains questionable however is how the role of the farmer can be fully understood when someone as prominent as IJsbrand is seen as the farmer but David is the expert on farming and the one participants approach with questions.

Despite this theoretical confusion, the farming family, or the notion of community, reinforces the sense of belonging and acceptance of individuals, even though this also means dealing with the emotional consequences of people leaving. What is important however is the fact that participants take part in care farming, such as that at 't Paradijs, with a pre-disposed idea of what to expect from the key players. Therefore the fact that 't Paradijs had both a manager and a care farmer is perhaps not significant as participants appreciate both roles and decide for themselves how they fit in with the overall structure; generally in this case David remained the accessible farmer and IJsbrand was the role model for the community. The roles of others such as Caroline were sculpted out of the idea of a family structure and therefore a support network that participants can place themselves in. As such, it is without doubt that both the farmer and the associated family structure are essential to the success at 't Paradijs, and that similar roles are likely to be consistent across the care farming sector.

9 Discussion

The idea of the discussion chapter is to highlight and address some issues that were raised during the research. What follows combines both the empirical and literature based research to present potentially contentious themes and dilemmas about how care farming is understood and practiced. Whilst some of the themes are regularly addressed in care farming, such as the role of the farmer, others have received little attention even though they could be just as crucial, for example the question of ethics. All the themes have emerged in some form during the empirical research and they are considered to be relevant to answering the research question: “what makes a care farm a ‘caring’ environment that contributes to the health and well being of clients?”. The chapter cumulates in a reflection on the methods used and suggestions for further research.

9.1 *Is care farming ethical?*

Many care farms have emerged as part of a decision to move into multifunctional agriculture, and thus clients have become part of the production line, often contributing to income-generating activities that can contribute to the farm’s profit margin; as a result, the issue of using ‘free labour’ needs to be explored. Both SoFar (2007) and van Dijk (2008) argue that there is potential for the service user to be employed and paid a wage, in some form. Whether this is a financial agreement or a payment in-kind (such as ‘credits’ to cash in at the care-farm) remains to be negotiated on individual farms if they chose this pathway. But essentially, the idea of providing a return to a paying client for their input emphasises the role they play within the farming process whilst justifying how important their ‘work’ is. Simultaneously it can make clear how much the clients matter and encouraging them to participate in society as active citizens (Boardman 2003 cited in Sempik et al. 2010). It can also reflect the ‘added value’ that products can achieve if they are associated with a social enterprise project such as those sold in the ‘t Paradijs farm shop. Of course, there are endless dilemmas associated with the concept of paying clients and how it affects their rights, especially as the focus is on the individual making a generalised scheme difficult to comprehend; but it is certainly something that should be considered as care farming continues to evolve.

Similarly, activities are often designed with the intention of giving clients meaningful work to help them feel as though they ‘matter’. But, as was the case at ‘t Paradijs where the elderly clients were cleaning rotten eggs that would just be disposed of, it is questionable as to what extent is this idea of being ‘useful’ or ‘mattering’ is undermined when the activities are falsified and ultimately a waste of time and effort? Could this be actually detrimental to health and well being care if discovered? The volunteer overseeing this activity believed that the clients were experiencing the same level of ‘helpfulness’ regardless of the final use of the eggs. However, this was an assumption as he also made it clear that the clients are not told if the eggs are redundant, so their true feelings of ‘usefulness’ in this situation are unknown. These are issues that need addressing with delicacy but are essential if the value of work undertaken is to be truly comprehended.

Again linked to the idea of participating in meaningful work, there is a sense that some clients can take on a feeling of too much responsibility, as was the case with Merel and Renée who both felt as if there was a pressure exerted on them to complete their tasks. Whether or not this pressure was actually being asserted is a moot point as it was something that they felt and experienced and

therefore it was real for them. This in itself reflects how they interpreted the structure and their roles at 't Paradijs. Merel in particular found herself sometimes becoming stressed that she had not finished cleaning out the rabbit hutches and felt guilty, thus bringing into question the health and well being benefits that were supposed to be experienced through participation in farming activities. This example questions the extent to which clients should be relied upon to undertake necessary farming work. In particular, it also highlights the need for some clients to be challenged and encouraged to develop further once they become comfortable with their role, therefore returning the focus onto the process of care.

Many questions still remain regarding ethics: Is helping a small farm increase its profit if enough to encourage a feeling of self-worth and 'wellness'? Then maybe this is enough and no form of payment is needed? And if cleaning eggs that are destined for the dustbin still creates a sense of worth and value through participating in a routine, then why ruin this by sharing the news that the role is pointless? Essentially, the issue of ethics seems to boil down to questioning whose interests are being pursued, and can clients health and well being be improved if things were done differently?

9.2 Does care farming actually contribute to people's health and well being?

The actual contributions of care farming to health and well being are undisputedly hard to measure as there are many different external factors and incidences that can have varying degrees of impact. Also, there is a fundamental concern that care farming may only be a temporary respite for some participants, rather than providing a long-term outcome to their care; for some it is a sideways step rather than a forward progression or a temporary improvement in their own sense of wellness rather than a long-term 'cure'. The three categories of the effects on users of care farming as identified by Hassink (cited in SoFar 2008) are used to look at the contributions more closely – they are: physical, mental and social.

Physical

What is sometimes lacking at 't Paradijs is the encouragement for clients to be more physically active as many are left to make their own choices about what they are involved in. For example, Nick has been advised by his doctors to do more exercise but he had not changed his routine or habits because he was left to decide for himself when at 't Paradijs. There is an argument that the care staff could have played a more active role in the ongoing health status of clients rather than emphasising the importance of well being, but this could of course create a different atmosphere and a more institutional approach, thus ruining the 'escapism' that made 't Paradijs so attractive to participants.

Mental

Improvements in mental stability can be attributed to increased socialisation, learning new skills or taking on responsibility. In this sense, green care and care farming as understood as an 'intervention' rather than a 'cure' for difficulties experienced, and a means to make clients feel as if they 'matter'. However, changes in mentality are infamously difficult to prove and account for, but the experiences of those involved needs to be considered seriously. There were times at 't Paradijs where clients felt exploited or burdened with the responsibilities they had been issued with, which can ultimately stall any progress so the delicate balance between encouragement and containment still remains to be difficult. The extent to which these grassroots observations need to be justified and explained remains a dilemma for policy makers. But whilst improvements in health and well being continue to be encountered, these experiences should be weighted heavily in any justification for funding care farm placements. There is also an argument to make care farming more therapeutic for some clients with on site counselling and more active involvement from health professionals as some clients at 't Paradijs expressed a need to address their issues more directly. Again however, this challenges the purpose of care farming and the role of the farmer or personnel within a care structure as it seeks to medicalise farming.

Social

The social effects category (Hassink cited in SoFar 2008) represents the feeling of being in a 'safe' environment and a family style of structure which are common features associated with care farming. However, there is a threat that a romanticised view of communities will overlook circumstances when the individual needs more attention. For example, Marleen at 't Paradijs was left to watch the group enjoy play on the trampolines as she could not participate due to medical restrictions, thus excluding her from the activity. Therefore, whilst clients are encouraged to make their own decisions, it should be taken into consideration that each individual has different wishes and needs so there will still be some compromises or concessions that need to be made.

Similarly, when clients come to leave 't Paradijs they are not just leaving a care farm, but they are leaving a family structure and community that they have become involved with. Mariska was fearful about what would happen when she would no longer receive the funding for her placement at 't Paradijs as she would miss the people. But aside from the people, it was also clear that she appreciated the structure and familiarity of her surroundings and environment which she had grown comfortable with. The family structure brings associations of security and appreciation or acceptance, all elements that can improve a clients well being but can also be problematic when they are removed.

Whilst the health and well being benefits for clients of care farming are much debated, it is important to recognise that others also benefit. As in the case of 't Paradijs, the volunteers, trainees and staff feel satisfied and re-energised from their work environment which also leads to job satisfaction and a caring environment for one another. Similarly, other parents, siblings and offspring were encouraged to engage with 't Paradijs as their peace of mind was considered important. This widens the perspective that is needed when looking at the various stakeholders who can experience the benefits of care farming.

Judgment

However, the final reflection on this issue is concerned with the actual experience of clients and other participants. If they feel they are benefiting and can notice an improvement in their health or well being, then should this not be weighted heavily against the concern with providing scientific proof? It is, after all, the individuals whose quality of life is lifted who are in the best position to judge the worthiness of care farming rather than the academic observer who is on the outside looking in. Just as a patient can feel 'cured' when taking a placebo drug, if the mind is happier, the body can respond. Whether or not health is actually improved could arguably be seen as irrelevant if the participant is experiencing an increase in self-worth or wellness and therefore is experiencing better health, even if it is a by-product of socialising, engaging in farming and so on, rather than an actual marked proven physical improvement. The ultimate question remains as to what clients want to get from the experience: is it a heightened sense of well being, or is it farming techniques? Only by judging the experience from these viewpoints can the benefits of care farming be appreciated.

9.3 Is care farming for everyone?

Care farming is traditionally seen as an appropriate activity for vulnerable people. But maybe this is the wrong approach? Who are the vulnerable? Warnock (2009) argues that although she is old (80 at the time of writing) she does not consider herself vulnerable, but due to her age she is often viewed as such. Instead she is looking to be active and not sidelined as someone needing care. Care farming could evolve to embrace people like Warnock, especially with an increasingly aging population who will all be physically 'aging' at their own pace. Indeed, care farming can help to overcome one of the biggest fears of aging which is loneliness, as identified by McVeigh (2009) who also found that the most important thing to people over 50 in England was having access to the countryside; another element that care farming can help to address.

Green care, the umbrella concept for care farming, is understood as an approach to care involving the 'green' environment as a means to promote health, wellbeing and social connectivity (Hine et al. 2008). As such, it could be argued that everyone has the potential to benefit from participating the care farming as a means to counter daily stress (Ulrich 1983), remain healthy in body and mind (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989) or increase sociability. As a preventative measure, engaging in care farming could have a wide audience of interest which moves beyond the idea of only caring for someone that has an identified medical 'label' or need. By interacting with nature, children gain respect for living things and it stimulates their curiosity (Groenewegen et al. 2006). There are numerous studies looking into how early age interaction with plants and nature can have implications in later life, especially regarding conservation attitudes which call for early and regular 'green' interaction to assist with the wellness of body and mind (see Lohr and Pearson-Mims 2005 for more information).

The notion of 'reconnecting' with nature has further benefits that could be experienced through care farming. The extent to which the need for nature is determined is very individualised, but Kellert and Wilson (1993) argue that it is inherently present in everyone as a part of our biological make-up, thus we *all* need interaction with nature to different measures. It was even discussed amongst clients how lucky they felt being at 't Paradijs and how they believed everyone should be given the chance to attend a care farm because the experience was so rewarding. The clients saw themselves as being in a better situation than those stuck in an office job with lots of stress associated with it. This was

interesting as from the outside looking in, stereotypically clients are seen as 'sick' or unable to cope with the daily stresses and therefore less fortunate, whereas their argument was that they were in a fair better position than the 'normal' population.

It is important to look beyond the clients, but also to those that are involved in the care or farming and even to the families of clients or farm customers. Examining the approach at 't Paradijs illuminated how many different participants were involved in giving or receiving care, and therefore those that benefited from this experience went far beyond the boundaries of 'vulnerable' people. For example, the personnel would invest time and energy into supporting family members of clients as a means of care, not only for the client but also for their main carer away from the farm; making it a more holistic approach to giving care.

9.4 Makeup of groups

Volunteers

There is a risk that services become reliant on volunteers which has its own complications and sustainability issues. To find a balance is notoriously difficult with a fluctuating personnel pool, as it was at 't Paradijs, and it is made all the more challenging when the lines between volunteer and client are blurred. Bas moved from being a 30+ client to a volunteer with the same group but there were no obvious indications in his actions that he was a volunteer and instead he was still being served coffee and working alone rather than assisting the staff and clients. Whilst this arrangement may suit the volunteers in question, it does lead to the questioning of payment for the services as there is very little to distinguish between volunteer and client, especially when the clients are arguably doing 'jobs' such as helping out with the care of others or more practical based work such as serving the coffee; the roles and expectations are not clear. This may be on purpose, as 't Paradijs prides itself on being a large family, but it is more likely to be a state that has evolved naturally over time. The concern is that incorporating willing volunteers and trainees needs to outweigh the disadvantages of absorbing time and energy away from the care of paying clients.

Client groups

Another issue is the way that groups are constructed. For example, is it better to keep 30+ clients in their own group or to mix members of 30+ and the older people group? How do relationships develop between different members and is their sociability progress increased when they interact with others with a different need or background as themselves? On an initial orientation visit to 't Paradijs it was presented as a large community made up of smaller groups that cumulates in a big family. However, this turned out to not necessarily be the case. Refreshment breaks and lunches are still very separate between groups and the personnel rarely overlap. The set-up meant that whilst the farm was a relatively small area, there were clear unspoken boundaries between the groups that determined what clients did and who they communicated with. Even so, there were moments when these boundaries were 'breached', such as the case of Nynke walking around the farm on her own and talking to Inge and Mariska. The 30+ clients spoke about how they appreciated the way they can talk and listen to one another on site. The issue remains then, to what extent should groups remain separate and would it be more beneficial for clients to interact with clients or personnel with different needs?

A similar topic is the question of whether older male clients benefit from participating in care farming more than older female clients. Adriana admitted that many of the older female clients enjoyed talking to their friends or knitting, whereas it was the older male clients who physically engaged in farming related activities such as feeding hay to the stock or collecting eggs from the barn. It was thought by members of the personnel that most male clients came from a farming background and were enjoying being in familiar surroundings; this view is shared by Schols and van der Schriek-van Meel (2006) who found that comfort was found in the continuity of their working life for patients. Does this then mean that care farming should be something for rural populations only to take part in? Pascal was adamant that it was too late in life to be learning new things for him so the interest of care farming for him was exercise; but why is a care farm more suitable than alternative ways of spending his personal budget and time? Similarly, the older client women seemed to enjoy being outdoors and looking around in 'nature' but their participation was limited to domestic duties. However, taking part in physical activity was identified by Caroline as being especially important for the older males who are looking for a way to spend their energy and take part in meaningful work whilst utilising their farming skills. These examples suggest that participation in farming related activities is not always at the heart of the care approach but it instead creates a background to providing other care needs; it is a suitable environment to meet needs such as health and sociability.

9.5 What does 'care' mean?

Ultimately, green care activities are about providing care (Sempik et al. 2010:25). However the term 'care' is vague and does not make it clear what type of care is being offered or experienced which can lead to the assumptions of medical care being given within a farm environment. Historically in the Netherlands, care farming has been associated with nurturing people's healthy core (van Dijk 2009) which is not necessarily a medical intervention issue. The type of care seems to vary depending on the needs of clients and the expertise that personnel share, thus making it difficult to generalise. Understanding the phrasing is harder because it is still easier to decipher the 'care' being given to the older clients who need practical assistance with hygiene or feeding rather than the support and mental strength that clients experience from participating in care farming.

A common theme identified at 't Paradijs was the difference in its health and well being approach compared to hospitals, as judged by the participants. It was frequently expressed that the care was more personal and effective, arguing that whilst it may take longer, the result is more substantial. It was also the case that the personnel involved felt more satisfied with their work and re-energised by it, thus creating a holistic approach to care which involves those giving it as much as those receiving it. But perhaps the most startling difference between care farming and institutionalisation was the aspect of time – there always seemed to be lots of it. There was also a ban on mobile phones for most participants on site and a distinct lack of clocks with the consequence that the actual essence of time was sidelined. A high personnel to client ratio meant there was always time for the individual or time to have some space, just as there was always time to share food and drinks or activities. The flexibility that is associated with the removal of time pressure provided many more options for clients to really focus on what they wanted to do.

There must be a concerted effort to avoid the medicalisation of farming as the differences between care farming and mainstream care are fundamental to the success and experiences of participants.

The concerns about the type of care being practised are somewhat misplaced as the romanticism that is associated with care farming partly lies in the fact that farmers actually do not have the medical backgrounds found in hospitals. Instead they are experts within their own environment and it seems that this is important to the clients experience of care farming and therefore of their well being.

Ownership

An issue regarding the suitability of care farming concerns care institutions. The original plan for 't Paradijs was for it to be owned and run by a local care institution, but they considered it too much of a financial burden so IJsbrand and Caroline stepped in to manage it privately and provide placements for clients. What remains unclear is how the care institution would have run things differently and if the future of care farms is to be affiliated with a small number of institutions within the area going into farming rather than approaching from the perspective of a farmer entering into care. Although green care has been used in institutions such as prisons and hospitals for some time (Sempik and Aldridge, 2006), they are usually managed by the institution responsible for the overall welfare of the clients. Would the clients experience be different? Whilst it is highly improbable that a fair reflection can be made on this issue due to the localized and individualised nature of care farming, it is an important factor to consider when negotiating policy structures and attitudes towards care farming overall: Should they be independent of institutions or owned by them?

9.6 *How has care farming impacted on the countryside?*

The literature review highlighted the changing roles of the farm but this was also seen in practice via participant's experiences at 't Paradijs and how they understood farming in general. Interestingly, care farming was being presented as a solution to many issues such as income generation opportunities and extended life related care. But these solutions come at a cost, and the following discussion reflects on what the consequences of the rise in care farming may have been or are set to be.

Concept of farming changed

The Dutch care farm model is structured within an economic frame (SoFar 2007) which means that the move into care farming is often made for financial reasons over philanthropist motivations. The fact that over 50% of family income on arable farms in the Netherlands is made up from other sources such as care farming payments (Van der Ploeg 2006) is a pertinent reflection on the state of financial security for small farms in the current climate. In this respect, care farming can be accredited for helping to sustain or conserve the countryside as small farms are being given a new source of income. However, the change in farm services addresses the issue of what can be called 'farming' when a significant proportion of productivity stems from 'extra-curricular' activities such as care. This is also reflected in the way some clients at 't Paradijs were content with just looking at the animals or enjoying the nature around the farm rather than engaging in farming practices. For example, the autistic clients were quickly bored unless they can physically touch the animals and many of the older clients did not interact with the farming environment at all but instead choose to be confined to the seating areas or the nearby woodland for exercise. In cases such as these, the boundaries between the different types of green care are blurred and care farming seems to have accommodated a wider range of activities and needs than other approaches such as therapeutic horticulture.

Aside from the collaboration of approaches, there has been a change in the relationship between farming and people, with care farms being at the heart of this movement. The role that 't Paradijs played is significant as it is not only making itself accessible to a large number of people, but the management, especially IJsbrand, were actively engaging with campaigns beyond the farm gate by coordinating local farm support groups and being an national advocacy figure for care farming. These highly visible roles continue to challenge the relationship between people and farming, both what farming can do for them and what they can do for farming. As care and farming are such fundamental sectors of our life style, it seems like a potentially harmonious relationship, albeit it highly localised and individualised. Arguably then, 'care' is a key part of a movement to redefine the concept of farming at a grassroots level. However, this could be a superficial movement as whether or not people are actually engaging in farming or simply acting out their 'idyllic' notions is questionable. Even at 't Paradijs, participants spoke about how their choice to attend or work at 't Paradijs was partly founded on their images of farming when they were younger, yet very few held any practical farming knowledge, nor was there any distinctive drive to remedy this situation. This meant that there was a limit to how participants developed their relationship with the 'land'.

Similarly, SoFar (2007) asked the related question of whether or not a farmer should remain termed a farmer if the focus of the farm is giving care? In this instance, they also specified that a farm was a

productive unit rather than a place of work or a setting. This was echoed by Sempik et al. (2010:37) who argued that the main difference between care farming and other green care activities such as therapeutic horticultural projects is that “care farms are primarily focused on production on a commercial level”. Some judgment about the productivity that a farm needs to reach in order to retain its title as a farm (rather than for example a smallholding) is fodder for further ponderings. But in the meantime, it is raising significant questions about how the farming, care and observer communities are changing their expectations of farming and thus challenging the fundamental concept.

Is there enough farming in care farming?

A remaining obstacle in furthering care farming, is appreciating how much is farming actually suited to giving care? Small-scale farming is a traditionally labour intensive industry which commonly relies on tight deadlines and a continuous flow of work, from feeding to harvesting and maintenance (Hunt 2004). This alone is at odds with the flexibility that was present at ‘t Paradijs. The philosophy of allowing the individual to choose what they wish to do and when they wish to do it removed the drive and demand of farming from their experience. On the one hand clients can sit and relax when it suits them, on the other hand the jobs still need doing and animals still need to be fed. So where is the balance? Whilst ‘t Paradijs is perhaps at the extreme end of giving care on a farm, its focus entirely on the individual could arguably be seen as neutralising the actual purpose of participating in farming activities. Therefore this type of care is perhaps too centred on the individual, albeit it set in a nice and attractive environment. The real demands of farm life experience are not being shared and it is this aspect that could be more significant in assisting clients to find a passion or help increase employable characteristics.

How has the role of the farmer changed?

‘t Paradijs presents an interesting dilemma in terms of the role of the ‘owner’: are they a farmer or an entrepreneur? Whilst these two roles are often mutually reinforced, IJsbrand was arguably more focused on new innovative techniques and putting the care of people at the heart of the concept; he viewed himself categorically as an entrepreneur. That said, whilst he was clear that his role on the farm was as a leader, he also struggled on a personal level to justify his role as a farmer to outsiders which could be an indication of trying to conform to the expectations of others. Traditionally a farmer was seen as a provider in terms of food and shelter, but IJsbrand also focused on strengthening people, not just the land. It would be interesting to research if there is a difference in the approach to care farms between farmers with little health care knowledge who invite clients onto an existing farm, compared to entrepreneurs who establish a farm for the benefit of clients. Whilst both are likely to have a shared ethos, there may be significant differences in the approaches to the practicing of both care and farming.

In other instances, the role of a farmer has undergone fundamental changes as more women are moving into the sector to combine their skills within the field of care with those of their (usually) husbands skills in farming. Whilst the feminisation of agriculture is creating new jobs and a more diverse workforce, it is challenging the traditional perception of a farmer. However, this change is not necessarily mainstream yet as at ‘t Paradijs whenever there was a question relating to the farm, participants told how they directed their enquiry to David. Whilst David was the official care farmer,

it was Denise who was responsible for the vegetable growing area. Whether this was a reflection on gender expectations or on whether the participants did not consider the vegetable growing to be part of the farm work was not clear. Whilst approximately 90% of the personnel at 't Paradijs were female, it is still a male dominated hierarchy at the management level.

A general concern within farming is the disinterest in entering the farming business by younger generations. However, care farming as a form of multifunctional agriculture has introduced a new means to sustaining small family farms and is attracting different skills that are of curiosity to the younger generation. Whilst care farming does not claim to solve all these problems, it does create new opportunities to challenge the restrictions that farmers previously felt and for a wider source of revenue streams to be accessed for financial sustainability.

Role of the farming family

One part of the philosophy of 't Paradijs was focused on team work and how everyone should work together as single family unit. Caroline was even shocked that people choose work in farming alone as she finds it infinitely more rewarding working with others and sharing the responsibility. This in itself challenges the traditional image of a farmer and their family being isolated to struggle with their livelihood. However, there is a sense of personal emotion or investment in this venture, only now the 'heartache' is less associated with a failed crop and is instead directed towards the people involved in the project, especially when they leave the community. As such, the family structure can be deeply emotional for the owners as they are effectively opening their personal space and lives to others and therefore find reprieve when things become overwhelming. There is a blurring of private and personal space as much as the borders between private and personal time is debatable. Whilst living on site and opening their home to others Caroline and IJsbrand face issues as a consequence of styling the community in the form of an extended family and trying to maintain their own family life. It seems as if this sacrifice is made willingly and with belief, but there are also moments when the responsibility can seem too much, especially for Caroline whose input was much more hidden.

9.7 Farming or nature?

Farming

The role of farming itself was ambiguous. The participants own ideals of farming contributed to how they saw their role at 't Paradijs. Only a handful spoke about how a farm needs to produce an income or be productive. Most understood the idea of farming through the notion of being outside in rural surroundings and a peaceful setting whilst still being useful. The idyllic image of a farm that stakeholders shared focused around being outdoors and a sense of peacefulness; few identified the role of farm animals in their vision. Animals only became more prominent in the stories when they were associated with making clients feel useful or accepted. The elderly clients in particular feel comfortable on the care farm as most come from a farming background.

Nature

Similar to farming, 'nature' is difficult to distinguish as a standalone entity, but it is instead something that stakeholders all experienced in their own way. The most popular feature of being in nature seemed to be the peacefulness and idea of escapism that was associated with it; this was often responsible for tempting clients to exercise by walking through the woodland looking to reaffirm their rural idyll. Nature seemed to be something to be enjoyed rather than learnt about which could retrospectively highlight the difference between care farming and other green care approaches. However, green care approaches, such as care farming, does demand more than simply being in a 'green environment', but instead either a 'passive' experience of nature (using different sensory elements or awareness) or a physical interaction with nature or animals. Either way, the emphasis of activities should be on 'care' or other therapeutic outcomes for vulnerable people (Sempik et al. 2010).

Engaging with nature could also create potential learning opportunities such as conservation techniques that are not considered as important at 't Paradijs. Other skills are picked up by individuals on an ad hoc basis such as personnel learning farming techniques along with clients as and when it is necessary. This element of increasing a skills base is something that can assist with the clients' development and help them prepare for employment after their time at 't Paradijs if appropriate. However, this may be contradictory with the philosophy of the farm that encourages clients to choose what to do with their time; it would be interesting to compare this to other care farms to appreciate the long-term effect participating in care farming has on re-entering employment.

The role of gardening combines both nature and farming as it encourages the clients to interact with nature in terms of tending the plants and maintaining the soil for example, whilst also producing an end product that could be seen as being 'productive'. This was seen at 't Paradijs with the tale of Rutger who took considerable pride in the caring for the tomato plants and the fruits of his labour were then shared with other stakeholders, awarding him praise that in turn helped to increase his self esteem and confidence. However the role of gardening is equally beneficial as a means of a restorative activity when it is not associated with the goal of producing goods to be sold or consumed by others as proved by Kaplan and Kaplan (1990) and Lewis (1990). This calls into question just how important is the need to be productive for the client? Volunteers such as Bas argued that they felt

their work was valued higher because it was helping the economics of 't Paradijs, but others such as Renée felt that it added an undue pressure. So who is the notion of being productive benefiting the most? The client or the farmer? And how important is the role of nature in this sense of productivity? What is undisputed however is the value of engaging with nature and the tranquillity or fascination that can evolve from this interaction. Arguably, more should be made at 't Paradijs from the accessibility of nature rather than it just being part of the background and immediate environment.

People

But what of the third element of care farming? Whilst both nature and farming were present in the experiences shared by stakeholders, the most overwhelmingly cited element was that of people. The clients were left to identify their own needs and make their own choices but all this was conducted within an integrate support system that enabled them to make these decisions. The attitude of the personnel was consistently concerned with providing adequate care and making clients feel 'special' and accepted; people were always at the centre of any planning or approach. What was also clear was that this was a two-way relationship. The personnel were quick to commend the clients and the clients were equally as quick to thank the role of the personnel for their progress. Often it was the role of the community that was credited with a client's development, rather than the role of either farming or nature. This finding can question the actual role of nature or farming – are they just there to provide a context or a common ground? Or are they fundamentally responsible for creating the 'caring' environment that is so present at 't Paradijs? Of course, this particular care farm has a high number of personnel to client ratio, but the general ethos of putting the client first is one that can be found across care farms in general. So then to what extent does the community size and function determine the restorative or caring aspect of care farming experience by stakeholders? The answers to these questions can ultimately help to guide a broader understanding of care farming and fairly acknowledge the combined roles of farming, nature and of course, people within the equation.

9.8 Discourses

It is possible to conclude that whilst both farming and nature may be the initial attraction and motivation for participating in care farming, it is the structure of a family that perhaps offers the clients the best opportunity to improve their health and well being. The role of the farm at 't Paradijs can therefore be seen as important to some, especially those from a farming background or an interest in animals and nature, but it is also simply a 'safe' environment or a setting for social interaction and development to occur. It therefore fits more comfortably within the discourse of social inclusion. Social inclusion within a community, or family, and the non-judgmental acceptance of individuals are key elements within the philosophy of 't Paradijs, and they are also aspects which seem to be most valued by the participants involved.

That said however, the discourses of public health and multifunctional agricultural are both omnipresent: personnel seem to be driven by a concern for health and the management are following trends found in the discourse of multifunctional agriculture. In this case, the issue is not which discourse is the most dominate, but from whose perspective is the dominate discourse established?

9.9 Reflection on researcher's own definition of care farming and methodology

Looking back over the research, it can be argued that the definition of care farming proposed by researcher (*'Social care within the natural environment and including interaction with agriculture'*) is similar to many care farming experiences found in the literature review as well as those recounted during the empirical stage of the research. What is not clear however, is the extent to which participants are expected to interact with agriculture, and to what purpose.

It can be argued that the role of the researcher to remain objective during the empirical research remains questionable as participant observation required the interaction with the participants being studies and relationships were formed. However, some reflections can account for the process that decisions were made in: after the first day on site, more time was given to recording notes with a greater depth; clarity on ambiguous words such as 'warmth' were sought; and a consideration of why some stakeholders were approached and others weren't was given. During the analysis it was the responsibility of the researcher to delineate clear categories. As, these become merged together, the farming element often found itself being re-categorized more closely with the individuals experience rather than specific farming references. As such, the fact that the research approached this project from a sociological perspective rather than a technical farming background, may have influenced the findings and therefore the 'farming' could be significantly underrepresented. Even so, the emphasis on the role of people in care farming in the outcome of this project remains and should be considered as a significant element for future consideration when exploring care farms.

Overall however, the research remains transparent. Ultimately, Mitchell (2006:27) defines heuristic case studies as a way to develop existing theory and argues that "what is important is not the content of the case study as such but the use to which the data are put to support theoretical conclusions." And in this sense, the research conforms with arguments that care farming is a promising method of health intervention and well being development.

10 Conclusion

This project addressed the benefits to all stakeholders participating in care farming, looking beyond the usual focus on vulnerable people. The benefits to clients are well recognised and cover physical, mental and social aspects including an improved diets, increase in exercise, learning new skills, increased self-esteem and confidence. But it is the notion of participating in meaningful work and being identified by ones talents rather than limitations which seem to be the fundamental characteristics to successful placements. By being productive, clients feel 'useful' which has positive repercussions on their mental health status. However, this raises issues about the extent of recognition clients should receive for their work and assistance in conserving the landscape. Other concerns include the long-term usefulness of care farms related to addressing health issues, or if they are better viewed as a temporary 'resting place' between periods in their lives.

Coming back to the idea of viewing all participants, the value of care farms should not be judged solely on the experiences of clients, but on all those involved. The need to be noticed, or appreciated, is not limited to those receiving care, but extended to those giving care, often with a philanthropic meaning and satisfying their need to care for others. In this sense, care farming meets the social care needs of a far wider audience than first acknowledged as people rely on one another to help and support themselves as a community, nurturing the most vulnerable and giving purpose to all those involved.

Establishing the demands of participants at 't Paradijs highlighted the diversity of needs and capabilities that were innate at this care farm. To be viewed as an individual rather than a 'patient' was immensely important to all the clients who appreciated having the opportunity to become comfortable with themselves; essentially, they are accepted and cared for as people rather than problems. Closely linked to this was the structure of the care farm which was designed to imitate a 'family', each supporting one another and being accepted for personal qualities and talents rather than failings. Participants felt a sense of ownership or belonging and depended upon one another. They also saw Caroline and IJsbrand as heads of the family despite David being the active care farmer. This was fundamental to the general interpretation of care – to see what a person *can* do rather than *cannot* do. The support extended beyond the clients and the personnel seemed to feel part of a strong team with high job satisfaction. Even further beyond this, extended family members were considered important to engage in discussion of care, partly out of mutual respect and partly because they were seen as another category to extend the arm of 'care' to. Fengler and Goodrich (1979 cited in McPherson 1990:339) argue that the care givers of those receiving care are the 'hidden victims' of social support system and it therefore follows that a significant amount of time seems to be spent reassuring client support networks away from the farm. Furthermore, the element of giving 'time' is fundamental to the meeting the needs of the participants as removing time constraints immediately relaxes the atmosphere and forces the focus back onto the individual rather than deadlines.

Most participants are satisfied with their experience at 't Paradijs, citing elements such as belonging to a supporting community, enjoying being in the natural environment, having the freedom of space or caring for the animals. In particular, the social aspect of the care farm played a prominent role in

every account shared or observed as did the fact that people were left to decide their own pace and make their own decisions. Clients even took it upon themselves to socialise with different groups, thereby challenging the unintentional segregation between groups that had evolved and reinforcing the idea that clients will seek to support one another where needed; ultimately, this emphasised the value of working together with a mixed group. Essentially, all the participants felt appreciated and respected and the feeling of improved well being was echoed across the board rather than being limited to the clients. However, there were a few shortcomings such as the failure to provide more in-depth therapeutic counselling. Whether this is an error of the care farm or a misguided expectation of the client is unclear. As a green care approach, care farming is ultimately about the opportunity to work with a farmer who is distinctly unrelated to the care sector and therefore by default, is unlikely to provide services such as certified counselling, but someone who is a professional in their own area of expertise. As such, clients who need more substantial assistance with their health and well being may be advised to combine their placements with professional help off the farm, or seek an alternative green care approach. However, that said, there were a high number of care professionals working or volunteering at 't Paradijs who could in turn change their role to accommodate these highlighted needs, especially as they established as themselves as a caring environment before becoming a working farm. Despite the confusion, what is clear is that the difference between medical and non-medical health care may be markedly obvious for those involved in the sector, but ironically, for the clients there is little clarity: they are ultimately being funded for their placement at the care farm through their health care budget after all. What remains to be agreed upon is where the line should be drawn, and for whose purpose.

The image of a farm is closely entwined with the image of 'rural' which participants at 't Paradijs shaped themselves both from their experience and from their imagination. It seems as if 't Paradijs pushed the boundaries of defining a 'farm' for some participants as the care business significantly dominated the agricultural production that was occurring. However, even the sceptics involved in the research were impressed with 't Paradijs and believed that the understanding of what constitutes a farm, or what can be expected from a farm, should be re-examined to accommodate successful care enterprises.

It is undisputable that the role of the farm, the farmer and their family are key factors in the mechanics of care farming. The farm provides the context and shapes expectations and the farmer is a role model or the leader of the community. As for the family, which can include not only blood relations but also the family as a community, their role is to provide structure and support with a general ethos of noticing the individual. Arguably, it is the notion of being part of a family unit, albeit it flexible in how it is shaped, that offers clients the most beneficial experience, but it can also cause the most distress to those involved when someone has to leave the arrangement. This personal investment of emotions and energy from all participants at 't Paradijs is fundamental to creating the atmosphere and for turning a farm into a 'home' where everyone feels they belong.

Being involved in actual farming such as animal management or horticulture was only important for a small number of clients. Instead 'farming' provided the context for activities or 'jobs' to matter and be valuable to the sustainability of the care farm as a whole. By practicing care on a farm stakeholders have the option to be engaged in purposeful activities whilst also having the freedom of space that suits their needs. In this way, the farm creates the environment for clients to find out for

themselves what works for them. This flexibility and availability of choice, all placed within a calm setting, is crucial to the success of care farming.

Finally, to answer the over-riding question of “what makes care farming a ‘caring’ environment that contributes to the health and well being of clients?” it is important to reflect on all the aspects that have been covered. The ‘greenery’ associated with the rural idyll provides therapeutic care similar to other green care activities such as horticulture as well creating an environment suitable and attractive for exercise or for simply enjoying the tranquillity that it is associated with. ‘Farming’ provides a context and work that is laden with meaning and purpose. It can also be a physical aspect of care and one that engages with animals, plants, responsibilities, rhythm and skills. And although ‘care’ aspect is embedded throughout all the components, including the idea of caring for animals, it is most visible in the way people care for one another – whether this be actively giving clients time and space, or relying on one another for support and encouragement. This observation reinforces the idea that caring for people is at the heart of all approaches associated with care farming.

Care farming as a concept is difficult to capture within defined boundaries. The literature review identified the changing social and economic influences shaping developments; the discussion of the origin of care farms illustrated different routes taken in the establishment of care farms; and the case study showed how personal circumstances, histories and motivation influenced the meaning of the care farm for those involved. At the very least, care farming can be described as an eclectic industry. As a universal definition remains elusive, this research does highlight the need for flexibility to accommodate entrepreneurial enterprises and people-centred care. Part of the charm of care farming is the uniqueness and localisation of resources that each individual farm brings to the table, making generalisations counter-productive and almost redundant. It is even questionable how important the type of farm used is, or even how much care farming has evolved since it was first acknowledged at Geel – is this a time proof concept? Instead the focus could be the ideals such as caring, family and so on, as well as on the benefits that participating in care farming can provide, both long and short term. When identifying the benefits of care farming, all participants should be recognised for rather than just focusing on vulnerable people. As ultimately, participating in care farming can have a profound effect on everyone’s health and well being.

10.1 Contribution of thesis

The knowledge sought at the beginning of this project was to broaden the understanding of care farms and highlight the values that participants associate with the concept. Through this investigation, an appreciation of the role that care farming can play in health and well being care or rehabilitation has been advanced. The methodological interpretive approach enabled the researcher to expand on the theories discovered in the literature by participating and observing the actual workings of a care farm. During this period the researcher obtained knowledge that represented a range of perspectives and experiences within a specific community. By spending time with different stakeholders the researcher gained in-depth access to interpretation of views and opinions that are otherwise under-represented within the literature of care farming. This project also highlighted the expectations of the participants, including their motivations and their understanding of care farming. The triangulation of these findings provided a comprehensive overview into the case study,

presenting a detailed and grassroots level insight of care farming in use. This demonstrated that the concept of care is at the heart of these interpretations, over and above all other concerns.

10.2 Future research

Further research should strive to take into account views of those that were neglected in this research, including customers to the farm shop (do the care activities influence their choice to purchase from the shop?) and also more interestingly, health care professionals or insurers who are responsible for funding the placements of clients – why do they consider care farming a worthy investment and have they noticed any change in health and well being of their patients? It may also be necessary to identify the individual elements, or combinations of elements, that may lead to the same experiences for participants. For example, does having contact with animals within an intensive farming structure still produce the same kind of satisfaction or contentment as having contact with animals on an organically run farm? For further conclusions, a more direct comparison between care farming and institutionalisation is needed, focusing not only on the clients, or patients, but also the working environment for staff and the experience of family members as their roles are often overlooked but could arguably have significant impacts on the clients health and well-being.

Other ideas for more research were raised in the discussion chapter and address issues such as how ethical is it for clients activities to be financially beneficial to a farm business and should clients be paid in some form for their work? How would this affect their rights and quality of care? A separate line of research focuses less on the clients and more on the way care is delivered; such as questioning just how much farming should be involved in care farming to make it more than delivering care within a farm setting with little interaction with the farm or nature. Similar to this, an investigation into the difference in approaches between those with a farming or a health care background could provide more information regarding the role of the farm.

The transferability of this research project is thwarted by the fact that it was designed for a specific case study within a restricted environment that provided a clear context and resources. However, the approaches used can be adjusted and replicated as the illumination of perspectives can only increase the understanding of the way care farming works for different participants; interpretivism supports the idea of understanding how things are constructed by individuals. In terms of changing the methodological plan, it would be interesting to engage with family members of clients or personnel and other stakeholders of the care farm, to record their experiences. As such, whilst research is progressing in the relatively new field of care farming, there is still a long way to go to tie up the loose ends as the broadness of the concept encompasses many possibilities and options. However, each segment of research helps to expand our understanding and to further refine the theoretical understanding of care farming and its promising potential.

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12 Appendices

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Appendix 1:

List of semi-structured interviews conducted and the roles of the interviewees

Staff

Coded Name	Role at Het Paradijs
IJsbrand	Director and Manager of Het Paradijs. Also working with autistic children
Caroline	Manager and working with autistic children
Adriana	Working with older people
Dominique	Working with 30+ and autistic children
Kirsten	Working with 30+, autistic children and horses
Nathalie	Administration
Fatima	Chef for older people
Alma	Working with 30+, autistic children and horses

Volunteers/Trainees

Coded Name	Role at Het Paradijs
Renske	Training with autistic clients
Marloes	Training with older people
Vera	Volunteering with older people
Peter	Volunteering with older people
Ellen	Training with older people
Bas	Volunteering with 30+

Clients: Older People

Coded Name	Role at Het Paradijs
Tamara	Older people client
Rosa	Older people client
Nynke	Older people client
Marinus	Older people client
Pascal	Older people client
Sebastiaan	Older people client
Bob	Older people client/managed rabbits
Sarah	Older people client

Clients: 30+ Group

Coded Name	Role at Het Paradijs
Mariska	30+ Client
Inge	30+ Client
Renée	30+ Client
Merel	30+ Client
Anna	30+ Client and volunteer with older people

Clients: Autistic Group

Coded Name	Role at Het Paradijs
Marleen	Autistic Group Client

Other: Includes visitors to open day and some parents of autistic clients

Coded Name	Role at Het Paradijs
Fiona	Parent of autistic client
Rebecca	Parent of autistic client
Remco	Parent of autistic client
Noortje	Open Day Visitor
Melvin	Open Day Visitor
Melanie	Open Day Visitor
Niels	Open Day Visitor
Sharon	Open Day Visitor
Simon	Open Day Visitor
Vincent	Open Day Visitor

Appendix 2:

Display of quotes at the open day – ‘How quality is experienced at ‘t Paradijs’ (with translations)



3.1 Quality on the care farm ‘t Paradijs

The theme of this open day is ‘show the quality’: quality of care, of organic production and of life.

We are very proud that our quality assurance system has been approved by the Verenigde Zorgboeren (United Care Farmers). This means that we will soon receive the Certificate of Quality Assurance.

By showing you the following anecdotes we would like to take you through how clients and participants experience quality at ‘t Paradijs.



3.2 Quality is: Shared responsibility

“Working with animals and nature calls on the sense of responsibility within you. I feel precious and useful when the animals call out to me if I pass with the feed buckets in the morning” (30+ client).



3.3 Quality is: The power of symbolism

“Pulling out weeds clears my head, it is as if my inner “weeds” are being removed as well’ (30+ client).



3.4 Quality is: ‘Being merrily amongst the chickens’

“Using your hands is nice. Also when it is a distraction from “difficult” things” (30+ client).



3.5 Quality is: To have an eye for...

"I think that horses are beautiful creatures and although I do not really feel the need to take care of a horse or to ride one, I think that the garden looks much better with a horse in it." (30+ client)



3.6 Quality is: Tasting

"Know what you eat: You can taste that the cow has had good life" (Care farmer).



3.7 Quality is: Space as in the broadest meaning of the word

"The space for new experiences: to live, learn, to see and discover opportunities for growth, to develop and take your place in this mini society. The farm is the tasting ground of life" (30+ client).



3.8 Quality is: Taking care of each other

"You're waving your tail around hard and I know why you do it, but you don't have to, let me chase the flies away, so you don't have to wave your tail and I can brush you with ease." (Staff working with autistic clients and horses).



3.9 Quality is: Doing productive and useful activities

I enjoy helping with the process of the farm, I love working with my hands on the farm, it gives me strength and satisfaction." (Volunteer with 30+ group).



3.10 Quality is: Solidarity and security

"I feel at home at the farm, this is a safe place for me! When I'm here, it is like having a day off for myself. The people that work here are all helpful, I like that. The quality of the farm is simply fantastic, I would not describe it any other way. Everyone here looks after each other. Everything is well organized, it is all clean and the food is delicious! You can be yourself here, there is acceptance" (older client).



3.11 Quality is: Growth

"The liberty and opportunity for produce to grow from its own strength. If you plant a seed and take good care of it, then if you have enough patience a beautiful plant will emerge. The process from germination to full grown plant symbolizes my connection with the earth to me" (30+ client).



3.12 Quality is: Being in touch with [together/One another?]

"Have you ever stroked the nose of a horse? It is the softest thing I have ever felt, it's like velvet. I like to put my cheek against it, Pegasus is ok with it, and stands nicely quiet against me. Warm air comes from his big nostrils! I think he wants to say that he loves me!" (autistic client).



3.13 Quality is: Trust

"If you'd wish you could walk right over me. You look like a giant standing in front of me. So strong, so large and with so much muscle, but you stand still for me, you do not walk over me. When I want to touch, you walk a little in my direction and stretch your nose towards my hand... I like it that you are so careful, you and I will definitely develop friendship between us" (30+ client).



3.14 Quality is: Colour

"I like the green colour of the young strawberries, but what I think is really great is to see them change into beautiful red ripe strawberries, ready to be picked" (30+ client).



3.15 Quality is: Literally and figuratively 'meeting'

"It is nice to meet one another. The opportunity to speak in a comforting and positive atmosphere. The being part of, being spoken to, recognising and automatically greeting each other as good friends" (30+ client).



3.16 Quality is: The surroundings

"In nature, in the clean and healthy outdoor's air, I find peace. Everything around me on the farm is lovely! Here it truly is a little Paradise!" (30+ clients).



3.17 Quality is: Life

"I love all the young animals on the farm, especially the young rabbits, they are so soft and cuddly. With a little rabbit on my lab I become completely calm" (autistic client).



3.18 Quality is: The farm

"The farm... an oasis, a place of tranquility. But also a place to work. The support is good: the stability and the attention of the carers work for me. They are there for people and they all want to convey that. They respect everyone, even through their (temporary) limitations. If you do not function so well they make you feel that you are valuable. They have been an instrument from God, appreciating those people for what they are."

