



The Framer's Manual

Edition II; The Evidence

i **Foreword**

Statement of Intent

Ecological traps are observed environments of spatial manipulation that result in pressures on natural species populations, as the harm they elicit is greater than the benefits the organism gains from inhabiting the environment. Ecological traps, therefore, are a new form of dangerous environmental condition that calls for the need for a greater protection of animal life in the face of human activity. The project proposes that these protections argue towards a new form of 'legalhood'. The way to enact this 'legalhood' in these trap contexts is through 'framing'. 'Framing' provides the narrative tool that exposes the agency, or lack thereof, of animals in their given context and, therefore, highlights the need for legal protection.

Towards a new 'Legalhood'

A level of capability, with regards to the legal system, correlates with a level of culpability. By this, I mean; once a theoretical threshold of capability is met, it moves criminal actions past a point to which an entity then becomes responsible for them. In a simplified sense, we see this with the juvenile legal system, in which humans from the ages of 10-17 are tried and prosecuted within a different legal system, with different legal weightings. This is because juveniles are considered fundamentally different from adults, resultantly having less agency and, therefore, less responsibility for their actions. It is outside of even this realm, in which we find animal life, to which we do not even provide this level of legal standing.

Therefore, when we consider the behavioural responses of organisms to the environments in which they live and the infrastructures, objects and entities in which they interact, the absence of a legal stance on these actions could, and I argue should, be questioned. The legal lens has an ability to act as a barometer on what is considered 'correct' and 'incorrect' with regards to human behaviour - and from this it has the ability to provide protections, or prosecutions, as required.

The project argues towards a new form of animal/organism 'legalhood'; one that is able to provide the protections offered within our legal system, aligned with an understanding of situational agency and behavioural capability.

As suggested, any form of 'legalhood' has the capacity to work both ways. The system which is used to prosecute can also be used to protect. And this is an important point. The ability to understand that an organism is indeed responsible for the way in which it acts, and that it acts with behavioural determinism, means that organisms should be held accountable for these actions; whilst they should also be protected for their actions as a result of other organisms. Perhaps to example this; the legal system affords actions against murder, theft, arson whilst also affording protections towards the coerced, the kidnapped. A prosecutor and a defendant. A criminal and a victim.

A 'legalhood', in loose terms, for animal life is perhaps not impossible to imagine. Historically, through Deodand and Noxal Law, an organism (among other, more inanimate, non-human objects) could be tried in a court of Law as a 'chattel', most commonly as the possession of a human. This trial allowed, in the majority of these instances, only for the prosecution of the animal, the owner, or the object itself - and the chattel to be turned over to the Crown. Despite this not being the 'legalhood' the project seeks to encourage, it highlights a history of animal involvement within the court and the legal system which has until recently, been fairly devoid. The Animal Welfare Bill in 2006 began to bring the legal lens back to animals, although focusing primarily on purely domesticated animals. The Bill also suggests that protection is only provided if: 'the suffering is unnecessary'. In 2021, a major step forward occurred with the Animal Sentience Act, a piece of legislation that recognises animals as 'sentient beings' capable of emotions such as happiness or sadness. Resultantly, any new legislation provided by the government would have to be considerate to the fact that organisms could be emotionally affected. How then, can these protections be taken further

Agency

As suggested, the overriding goal of the 'framing' methodology is to expose an agency of organisms within given environmental contexts. The urgency to attempt these framings and to endeavour for such a 'legal hood' is to begin to consider how we can start to engage in a form of world building that is in the interest of a larger ecological web than purely human. Nature and animals, when protected, are often protected legally or by rights in line with the interests of humans, rather than a greater interest of the animal itself. By arguing towards giving animals this 'legal hood' will allow for any person, community or group to advocate on its behalf in a legal setting and potentially afford protective measures. This is where other forms of agency can emerge. The affordances granted by the 'legal hood' are not far removed from the idea of 'personhood', but rather than proposing a duplicitous meaning to that concept, the 'legalhood' I argue for suggests that animals, through the agency they have within the environments they reside, can be held accountable and have accountability taken for their actions based on behavioural decisions. What this affordance aims is to find protections for animal behaviours, conditions and actions that are derived from a direct interference with humans, be it directly or through manipulated space.

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Episode 1; The Sea Cow (A Preview)









































