



From a Community-cat to a Pet: Volunteer Driven Cat Transformation within a Cat Shelter in Western Latvia

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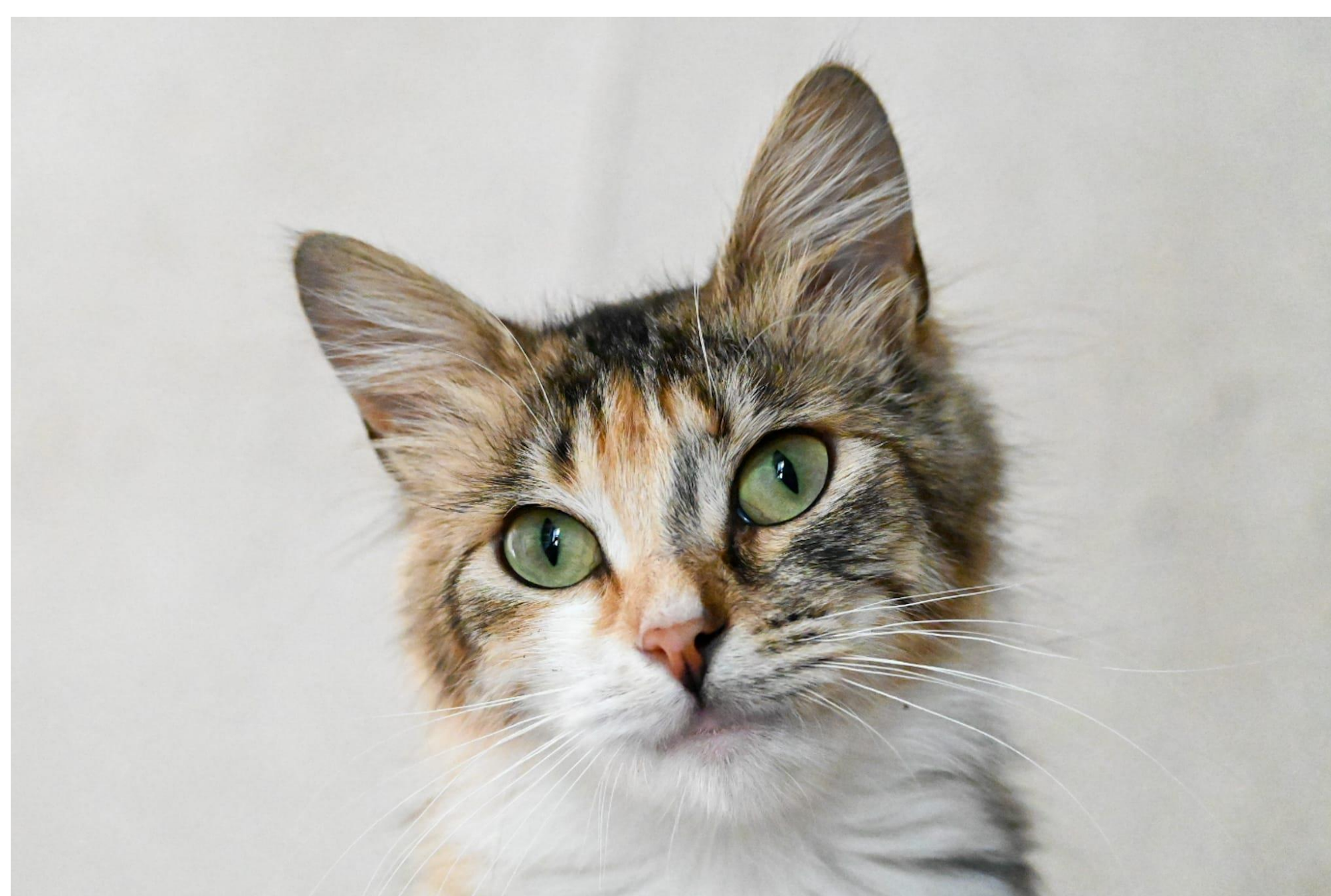
Context: Community-cats grew up and live outdoors, often close to humans – at the basement of apartment buildings or near waste containers, in both urban and countryside areas. An animal welfare association is trapping these cats for the sterilisation and bring them to the temporary home – The Cat House*. Some of the cats, who are flexible enough are socialised and can be adopted afterwards.

Methods:

- Informal conversations
- Semi-structured interviews
- Participant observations
- Photo documentation of cats

*In order to ensure the anonymity of research participants, I have changed the name of the animal welfare association.

Research question:
How does the caretaking and socialising of community-cats within the association The Cat House shape the lives of these specific cats, and what motivates the volunteers to follow and legitimize the methods being used?



Results:

- The socializing of cats – caging, petting and playing with them until they accept human contact, is based on their previous work-experience.
- Outcomes of the socialisation: unsocial cats are returned to their previous environments. The social felines can be adopted and live in families.
- Cats in volunteers' perspective: Pets of family, that should live in a safe, human controlled environment.
- Volunteers are recognizing cats as valuable, person-like non-human beings, but as a result of their experiences with human-animals, they tend to develop negative attitudes towards the society.
- The motivation to work with community-cats may be linked to their past experiences (both positive and negative) with non-human animals, their individual perceptions of cats and to the unconscious neurological processes of human bodies (the biological definition of love).

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