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Introduction to A Research Agenda for Animal Geographies: visioning amidst socio-ecological crises

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Introduction

We are struck by this moment of socio-ecological crises: climate crisis, global pandemic, anti-Black racism. Crises brought to the fore with a visibility and intensity that demand deeper understanding of the world around us and alternative trajectories that are, at their core, more just and sustainable. We are also struck by this moment of disruption where mass protests and demands for genuine action are mounting. We now know how quickly society can pivot – even fully shut down – when our existence is threatened. Humanity is at a tipping point as we grapple with what we have become, what has become of nature around us, and where our individual and collective responsibilities lie amidst the tumult.

The framing of our research agenda for animal geographies thus takes on more urgency than we originally imagined. Indeed, this moment has raised questions for us: What is the relevance of animal geographies in these moments of socio-ecological crises and disruption? Are animal geographies too insular, too White and privileged, too peripherally situated to address the magnitude of injustice and trauma being experienced and witnessed? How might animal geographers become stronger allies in shaping a more just and sustainable future?

We have spent decades ‘bringing the animals back in’ to the discipline of geography. It is time to bring the animals outward – into broader dialogue and action to address grand challenges – through animal geographies’ theories of power, methodological innovations and commitments to praxis. Animal geographies have much to offer in terms of understanding and explaining dynamics at the root of the pressing issues of our time. Our volume offers a modest basis on which we may move forward the agenda of ‘bringing the animals back out’ and beyond geography to address socio-ecological crises, to facilitate positive change via disruptive scholarship and engagement, and to ensure allyship with those most vulnerable among us.

Bringing the animals back out

Animal geographies reflect an innovative and thriving subdiscipline. Animal geographers ‘investigate how humans think about, place, and engage with animals, how animals shape human identities and social dynamics, as well as how broader social cultural, political economic, and ecological processes influence animal distributions, circumstances, behaviours, experiences, and well-being’ (Hovorka, 2020: 127). Animals feature as both objects and subjects of geographical study, rather than being backgrounded as ‘nature’ in human-environment explorations. Animal geographies have challenged entrenched humanist ontologies and epistemologies and advanced multispecies theoretical and empirical understandings in geography. Animal geographies at their core explore human-animal relations through attention to animality, animal spaces, and beastly places as grounded in eclectic and integrative methodological approaches and ethical commitments to improving more-than-human lives (Hovorka, 2020). Animal geographies have also ‘firmly joined the ranks of broader animal studies scholarship by infusing debates with context specific, place-based, and spatial frames that extend understanding and explanation of the ways in which humans and animals interact’ (Hovorka, 2020: 131). Key texts trace this history and tout the contributions of animal geographies scholarship and engagement (see, e.g., Buller, 2013, 2014, 2015; Gibbs, 2020a, 2020b; Gillespie and Collard, 2015; Hovorka, 2016, 2017, 2018; Philo and Wilbert, 2000; Urbanik, 2012; Wilbert, 2009; Wolch and Emel, 1995, 1998). Notably, animal geographies have pushed the discipline of geography to be more-than-human, holistic and justice-oriented, and have offered clear theoretical and empirical evidence of the uneven and inequitable relations that result from human-environment (and indeed human-animal) relations.

At this time, then, we need to articulate a set of broader aspirational goals for animal geographies as a subdiscipline. Two goals currently stand out: ensuring relevance amidst socio-ecological crises and engaging further with public dialogues and actions. Relevance may best be thought of as ‘an attitude and set of practices intended to produce research that will be useful in some way ... or even in changing ways of thinking or conceptualizing issues’ (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2005: 357). In determining relevancy, critical and reflexive thinking on who we are as a collective (for example, what positionalities we embody, whose non-human and human lives we hope to represent, what issues we highlight) are vital, as are critical and reflexive thinking on who we are not. We need to reflect on our relevance as the world changes rapidly around us, by drawing to the surface those dynamics we have long investigated, and those we have not yet had the courage to explore. Striving for relevance means that we must continue reflecting on our contributions to geography and academe as a whole; we need to hold front and centre how we may be (re)producing inequities and injustices within and through our subdiscipline.

Further, with this reflexivity fully and continually engaged, we must draw our insights, tools, and values outward into public dialogues and actions to help address the socio-ecological crises in our midst. Animal geographers have something to say about everything from the climate crisis to the global pandemic to anti-Black racism; while our work has direct bearing on understandings of these issues, current public debates shine a light on those areas that as yet remain to be more fully explored. Ultimately, animal geographers ‘need to become seen as repositories of insight on matters of contemporary importance’ (drawing from Murphy et al., 2005: 164). We should draw ‘confidently on the potential of the sub-discipline to inform public debate ... considering how we might participate institutionally and how our social activism might be powerfully mobilized’ (Murphy et al., 2005: 164). This is the moment for more explicitly pointing to the interconnectivity of animals–humans–environments, as well as highlighting the experiences of marginalized human and nonhuman groups.

A brief glimpse at current socio-ecological crises reflects these tenets well. The climate crisis, for example, reveals to us how animal lives are necessarily implicated in and impacted upon by unsustainable (and unjust) human–environment interactions. Animal-based food production is in the first instance a key driver of climate change, with significant amounts of greenhouse gases emitted through energy expenditures required in the rearing and slaughtering of animals, waste storage and disposal, water use, and transportation. In the second instance this sector and the animals enrolled in it are significantly impacted upon by extreme weather events in a changing climate, whereby

floods, fires, and droughts compromise animal lives. The global pandemic, as a second example, is at its core an environmental crisis born out of imbalanced or unjust human-animal relations such as habitat destruction, intensive livestock production, wildlife trade, and microbial resistance that lead to increased zoonotic disease transmission. In turn, animal bodies feature prominently in humanity's fight against the virus through lab-based testing and vaccine development. Ultimately, precarious human-animal relations lead to compromised health for animals, people, and the planet. Renewed dialogue and action around racism and White supremacy, as a third example, brings to the fore how 'othering' of marginalized social groups persists through systemic racism fuelled by discourses of animality, with devastating consequences for Black and Indigenous communities in particular. Animal geographers have critiqued racialized modernist structures, divisions, and orderings through empirical work demonstrating, for example, how: animal practices among some communities are deemed 'out of place' by dominant (White) groups to reinforce racial stereotypes and hierarchies; animal-based racialization grounded in religious and nationalist tropes reproduces dominance of particular political and ethnic groups; and unjust and racist associations operate between animality, savagery, and Indigenous societies (Hovorka, 2020). Ultimately, racial and colonial dynamics of species constructions, as well as human-animal relations more broadly, are necessarily entwined.

Our goal, then, is to urge all those concerned with animal lives, environmental sustainability, and a just and equitable society to push further a transformational agenda that ensures relevance and engagement amidst socio-ecological crises and strives to address the challenges facing us. Doing so requires conceptualizing the interconnectedness and intersectionality of crises dynamics; embracing values of interspecies justice and sustainability; and decolonizing ourselves and our scholarship. The resulting *Research Agenda for Animal Geographies* is organized around three parts that feature theoretical frames which offer productive insights on species relations of power, methodologies best suited to investigating animal lifeworlds, and actions that animal geographers may take in advancing praxis that challenges animal injustice. Ultimately, our knowledge, skills, and values equip us as a subdiscipline at this time not only to 'bring the animals back out' of geography but also to move them firmly into broader public dialogues and actions to address socio-ecological crises in our midst. We hope that this volume offers an aspirational springboard for emerging scholars, especially new graduate students, and established researchers in Animal Geographies alike.

Part I: Power

Though early waves of animal geographies (that is, zoogeography and cultural animal geography) were criticized for being largely apolitical (Hovorka, 2008; Urbanik, 2012), power has been a central tenet of the subdiscipline since its re-emergence in the 1990s. The ‘new’ animal geography has focused on how animals are ‘placed’ by human societies materially and discursively, as well as the lived, subjective experiences of animals themselves. Since the 1990s, animal geographers have recognized animals as subjects in their own right rather than objects under human control, and have been developing an explicitly political commitment to improving the lives of animals (Collard and Gillespie, 2015).

Species relations of power have been explored through a variety of conceptual and theoretical approaches. Conceptually, by considering animals as subjects with their own realities and worldviews (Wolch, 1998), ‘wild lives’ (Collard, 2014), and ‘beastly places’ (Philo and Wilbert, 2000), animal geographers have made strides towards illuminating nonhuman difference (that is, unpacking the category of ‘animal’ between and within species); recognizing and supporting the autonomy of nonhuman lives; and acknowledging the needs of nonhumans including spatial requirements, homes, and social ties. Additionally, by conceptualizing animals as actors with agency (variously defined as the capacity to influence, make a difference in the world, produce a phenomenon, or modify a state of affairs, among others), animal geographers have illuminated the ways in which animals ‘have the capacity to direct change – shaping politics, culture, social life, economics, and the construction of space and knowledge’ (Collard and Gillespie, 2015: 8). Finally, animal geographers have long recognized animals as a social group within society and have thus explored the conceptual placing or positionality of animals in human societies. Philo (1998) traces the conceptualization of animals as a social group at least back to Tuan’s (1984) *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets*, wherein he explores the social and cultural processes through which ‘superior’ groups hold power over ‘lesser’ ones, including animals. Wolch and Emel (1995: 632) affirmed this conceptualization when they wrote definitively: ‘Animals are the ultimate Other’.

Beyond these conceptualizations, animal geographers have brought a variety of theoretical approaches to the subject of species relations of power. Feminist ideas such as intersectionality, performativity, and standpoint have been fruitfully extended beyond human identities to the lives of animals (Collard, 2012; Collard and Gillespie, 2015; Emel, 1998; Geiger and Hovorka, 2015; Gillespie, 2014; Hovorka, 2012, 2015; Kim, 2015; McCubbin and Van Patter, 2020). Such

engagements reveal how, for example, speciesism is a Western-based hierarchy that mutually supports racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and other structures of domination (Wolch and Zhang, 2004), as well as how animal subjectivities are produced and reproduced as societal relations of power work in and through animals' bodies (Hovorka, 2015). Further, drawing on the theoretical insights of a host of literatures such as de/postcolonial theory, critical race studies, Indigenous studies, and political ecology, animal geographers and animal scholars more broadly have investigated species intersections with racial, cultural, and colonial relations of power (Anderson, 1995, 2000; Belcourt, 2015; Bennett, 2020; Boisseron, 2018; Collard et al., 2015; Elder et al., 1998; Gillespie, 2019; Isaacs and Otruba, 2019; Kim, 2015; Neo, 2012; TallBear, 2011; Todd, 2014), illuminating how racial and colonial relations are mediated and expressed through human-animal relations (Hovorka, 2016). Moreover, building upon the growing body of work on the commodification of nature, animal geographers have brought the insights of political economy to the lives of animals, exploring how animals are entangled in the broader political economy, how animal commodification occurs, as well as the lived experiences of commodified animals (Barua, 2019; Collard, 2014; Gillespie, 2014).

Building on these conceptual and theoretical foundations, Part I of this volume proposes several interventions regarding the theoretical and conceptual approaches that may advance our understanding of species relations of power.

Jody Emel and Padini Nirmal (Chapter 2) propose a renewed feminist research agenda for multispecies justice that is informed by critical race, decolonial, and ecofeminist theories. Their chapter poses four interconnected questions, which aim to evoke the shape and form of a multispecies justice framework. After describing the key questions with which multispecies justice must grapple, they apply their framework to an important realm of human-animal relations, namely, food systems. Specifically, they take a multispecies justice view of the industrial model of animal production, insisting that animal geographers take a system view of the complex, interrelated oppressions inherent in industrial animal production, rather than singling out any one aspect of animal politics. Concerned primarily with generating conditions for multispecies flourishing and justice and drawing on the insights of anti-racist scholar Ibram X. Kendi (2019), they propose that future animal geographies scholarship focus centrally on policy change, targeting and changing the systems that oppress animals and entangle others.

Jenny R. Isaacs and Ariel Otruba (Chapter 3), joining efforts to decolonize animal geographies, offer animality/coloniality as a heuristic device for analysing asymmetrical relations of power between humans and nonhuman others.

Drawing upon decolonial scholarship, they propose this framework to help animal geographers conceptualize animality and colonialism as inseparable, historically contingent, and co-constituting. Animality/coloniality brings a more-than-human dimension to coloniality in three premises: that ‘the Animal question’ or defining and delimiting the animal is a dangerous ontological practice; that negative constructions of animality underwrite modern colonial structures of power and violence; and that animality/coloniality affirms the decolonial imperative to delink from colonial knowledge systems and processes. They bring their approach to the timely example of COVID-19, where they apply ‘the Animal question’ to viruses; explore the ways in which viruses, coloniality, and racism operate through one another; and consider how the COVID-19 pandemic might encourage us to disentangle animality from coloniality, as it throws into stark relief asymmetrical power relations between human communities, other animals, and the broader environment.

Lewis Holloway and Christopher Bear (Chapter 4), building on the theme of animal agency and the roles played by animals in the constitution of and resistance to power, advance the concept of ‘divergent conduct’ as a way to get beyond the anthropocentrism of concepts such as ‘resistance’ and ‘transgression’, which remain centred on animals crossing human-imposed boundaries. ‘Divergent conduct’ instead allows us to explore how entanglements of humans, animals, and technologies altogether co-produce trajectories that are different to those intended. They illustrate the utility of this concept using the case study of automated dairy farming in the UK. Drawing on Foucault’s biopower, they unpack power relations within this setting, revealing the co-production of cows and robotic milking, as well as how cow and farmer subjectivities are produced in and disciplined by robotic milking systems. Here, divergent conduct helps to conceptualize the unintended outcomes of entanglements of humans, cows, and robots in farming systems. They conclude with several focal points for a research agenda, namely: the continued value in applying Foucault’s biopower to the study of animals’ lives; the further development of animal agency through concepts such as divergent conduct; the need to investigate the roles of non-charismatic animals; and the importance of relational and topological thinking in animal geographies.

Anita Hagy Ferguson (Chapter 5) proposes Integral Ecology as a framework that may be employed by animal geographers interested in contributing to wildlife conservation discourse and practice. Integral Ecology operationalizes two conceptual shifts – the (re)animation and the (re)animalization of conservation landscapes – as a means of advancing the realm of wildlife conservation, which tends to overlook individual and collective animal interiors, animal agency, and multispecies relationships. She demonstrates how Integral

Ecology facilitates a more holistic understanding of conservation landscapes, which can account for factors including values, economics, emotions, histories, and power relations that are highly influential yet often sidelined in existing approaches. By applying the Integral Ecology framework to a case study of the controversial reintroduction of Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest United States, Hagy Ferguson illustrates how conservation researchers and practitioners may use this approach to better attend to multispecies biopolitical, psychological, and cultural entanglements.

Altogether these chapters suggest exciting new horizons for our research agenda for animal geographies concerned with species relations of power. The contributing authors demonstrate the ways in which we can continue to advance existing theoretical orientations in fruitful directions. For example, Emel and Nirmal's multispecies justice framework (Chapter 2) pushes forward feminist approaches in animal geographies by joining forces with other justice-based social movements, while Isaacs and Otruba's animality/coloniality (Chapter 3) paves a new path through which animal geographers can continue their efforts to decolonize animal geographies. Moreover, the contributors illustrate the value of returning to, rethinking, and advancing seminal animal geographies concepts about power (for example, Holloway and Bear's 'divergent conduct' (Chapter 4) as an advancement of 'transgression' and 'resistance') and seminal questions about animals (for example, Isaacs and Otruba's return to 'the Animal question' (Chapter 3)). Finally, the contributors press animal geographers to drive our concern with species relations of power into the realms of policy and practice change. Notably, Emel and Nirmal (Chapter 2) call for animal geographers to focus their attention on policy change, targeting the systemic core of oppressive institutions, while Hagy Ferguson (Chapter 5) calls upon animal geographers to push beyond the realm of critique with approaches that can be operationalized in practice to serve the lives of animals and improve their circumstances.

Part II: Lifeworlds

Exploring the lives of animals remains one of the central concerns of animal geographers. In Philo and Wilbert's (2000) foundational volume, the need to explore animals' 'beastly places' was first advanced as a research agenda. The authors noted that a great deal of animal geographic scholarship took as its primary concern 'animal spaces', or the 'human side of human-animal relations' (Buller, 2015: 424). This lingering anthropocentrism remains a barrier in encountering animals on their own terms, and there is great scope to expand

our conceptual and methodological repertoire to find ways to “hear the cry”, or get at the lived experiences, of animals themselves’ (Gibbs, 2020a).

Methodologically, there have been increasing appeals for, and experimentation with, tools, techniques, and technologies for an enlivened approach to animals’ geographies (Hodgetts and Lorimer, 2015; Hovorka, 2018). These range from ‘dwelt’ animal geographies grounded in a responsible anthropomorphism (Johnston, 2008), to videographic methods (Bear et al., 2017; J. Lorimer, 2010), and ethnographic and ethological approaches (Barua and Sinha, 2019; Jerolmack, 2013; Pooley, 2016; Van Patter and Hovorka, 2018). Some of the most exciting and ground-breaking work in animal geographies has mobilized experimental methodologies and interdisciplinary collaborations to approach animals’ lifeworlds, including Bear’s (2011) individual animal geography of Angelica the octopus in a UK aquarium; Gillespie’s (2017, 2019) feminist and politicized multispecies ethnography of cows enrolled in dairy production in the United States; and Barua’s (2014) exploration of the ethologies and environmental, social and material entanglements of a herd of crop-raiding elephants in rural India. Such works foreground the agencies of animals as co-creators of social, cultural, ecological, and spatial dynamics, processes and relations, and animals’ subjectivities, subverting their frequent treatment as objects, commodities, or in mechanomorphic terms (Crist, 1998).

Recognizing animals as subjects orients us towards their lifeworlds, or *umwelt* (von Uexküll, 1992). Phenomenological ethologies of multispecies studies (see Buchanan et al., 2014; Lestel et al., 2006, 2014) are increasingly permeating animal geographies, providing an avenue that ‘takes seriously the alterity and world-making of animal points of view and the imaginative task required of an ethology that desires to understand them’ (Lestel et al., 2014: 130); for instance, H. Lorimer’s (2010) reflection on the potentials of calibrating phenomenology and ethology, which he illustrates using observations of seals, or Garlick’s (2019: 231) non-human cultural geography of Scottish osprey extinction, wherein he engages a phenomenology which ‘defers to the animal: I place significance in where (and how) ospreys direct perception’. Barua and Sinha (2019: 15) advance an etho-geographical approach, detailing the impacts of urbanization on macaque behavioural repertoires, life history strategies, cultures and skills, and affording a nuanced understanding of ‘the ways in which [animals] inhabit dynamic environments according to their own knowledges, durations and rhythms’.

Building on these conceptual and methodological conversations, Part II of this volume advances a set of interventions concerning how we might approach animals’ geographies and lifeworlds, finding creative and rigorous means of

orienting towards, elucidating and communicating more-than-human experiences, needs, and knowledges.

Rebecca Ellis (Chapter 6) discusses the potential of multispecies ethnographic methods in advancing animal geographers' engagement with the 'intimacies of everyday life'. Her approach focuses on the spatial and the sensuous dimensions of more-than-human experiences as a means of fostering the 're-enchantment of the world' (Federici, 2019). Ellis describes how sensuous engagement by researchers can relocate the wonder of everyday life by foregrounding embodiment and a multisensorial focus. A spatial focus, she states, centres 'one's own connectedness and ethical obligation to place', and the mundane spatial practices that give rise to shared worlds and experiences, such as gardening. Ellis illustrates this potential through a case study of urban bee-keeping and pollinator gardens in Canada. Noting animal geographers' lack of engagement with animals radically different from humans, she challenges assumptions about invertebrates by coming to know bees through a sensually immersed and spatially attuned methodology. In detailing the ways in which her body also communicated with the bees, her chapter highlights the reciprocal nature of multispecies ethnographic knowledge production. Overall, Ellis argues that an ethnographic orientation to everyday more-than-human lives and labours focused on the spatial and sensuous can push the focus of animal geographers from understanding to knowing animals.

Jamie Arathoon (Chapter 7) advances walking methods as an underresearched and promising approach for animal geographers exploring multispecies lifeworlds. As a spatially sensitive and place-based approach, mobile methods enable research to unfold within cultural and spatial milieus of human-animal relations. They are attentive to practices and experiences emergent *in situ*, foregrounding the affective and sensuous dynamics of shared more-than-human experiences. Walking methods are one means of approaching animal lifeworlds through a focus on mobility, practice, non-representational, and intercorporeal dynamics. Arathoon illustrates this potential using the example of human-assistance-dog relationships. He engages ethical considerations, including the potentials for subverting anthropocentric tendencies by allowing animals to 'speak for themselves' (Bear et al., 2017: 225). Overall, he states, mobile methods centre the 'affective, embodied, fleeting and sensuous characteristics of animals' experiences and human-animal relations'. An expansive view of mobile methods that continues to foreground situated and shared practices, but which is open to experimentation and combination with diverse tools and technologies, holds great promise for approaching more-than-human lifeworlds within animal geographies.

Carley MacKay (Chapter 8) details a multispecies participant observation grounded in feminist approaches of embodied empathy (Gruen, 2015) and intimacy (Gillespie, 2017). She advances that emotional connections between humans and other animals enable us to relate to their experiences, and that these connections should be central to efforts in multispecies research. MacKay illustrates the politically and ethically transformative potential of such an approach through a case study of the lives of cows on a small grass-fed beef farm in Canada. She demonstrates the ways in which attending to spaces of intimate encounters through multispecies participant observation is a political gesture which deconstructs the animal-as-commodity, resituating her as living subject. Ultimately, multispecies participant observation involves learning through both intimate stories about animals and directly from animals in interactions. As MacKay notes, it has the potential to produce counter-knowledges through which animal geographers can advance the agenda of 'being better to, for and with animals in our entanglements'.

Anindya Sinha, Anmol Chowdhury, Nitesh S. Anchan, and Maan Barua (Chapter 9) continue developing vital conversations in etho-geographies (Barua and Sinha, 2019), asking what concepts from the social sciences – affect theory in particular – might have to offer in terms of producing more nuanced and generous ethological knowledges. They develop the concept of affective ethologies, illustrating their potentials for producing what they call 'richer geographies of other-than-human lifeworlds' through a case study of human–bonnet macaque relations in urban India. They describe the emergence of novel, affectual, cross-species communication wherein macaques engage vocal and gestural acts while seeking food from humans. Through the lens of an affective ethology, this performance – standing, gaze locked, arms outstretched – becomes visible as an 'embodied intelligence' manifested by macaques in response to the unique challenges and opportunities of living in close association with humans. Overall, this development of affective etho-geographies holds great potential for continued work in animal geographies which, in their words, seeks to approach 'animal lives as lives: sentient, imbued with meaning and generative of socio-political outcomes'.

These chapters highlight key avenues of future research in animal geographies, delineating an exciting agenda for pushing the field into ambitiously experimental yet empirically rigorous engagements with the lives of animals. They extend animal geographers' conceptual and methodological repertoire for approaching more-than-human lifeworlds by focusing on the sentient and sensuous, the material and affective dynamics of more-than-human experiences and relations, and approaching animals as research subjects or participants, taking seriously their world-making practices. In terms of future

opportunities for engaging animal lifeworlds, the authors collectively inspire animal geographers to continue experimenting with emergent approaches that combine the ethological, phenomenological, and ethnomethodological. They encourage us to do so in ways that challenge narrow entrenched doctrines and approaches (Arathoon, Chapter 7; Sinha et al., Chapter 9), transform research relationships (MacKay, Chapter 8), and encounter the world as enchanted (Ellis, Chapter 6). Understanding other-than-human lives as lives is a key blueprint for a sustainable, multispecies future (Sinha et al., Chapter 9). In producing knowledges about more-than-human lifeworlds aimed at ‘being better to, for and with animals in our entanglements’ (MacKay, Chapter 8), we push ourselves to imagine radically different engagements and futures.

Part III: Praxis

Animal geographies are at their core grounded in ethical commitments and emancipatory practices to improve the lives of animals. Since the late 20th century, animal geographers have addressed the silence around animals in social theory and have remapped the moral landscape and balance of power alongside efforts from environmentalists, those championing rights of marginalized human groups, and animal advocates. Core ethical concepts have emerged from animal geographies, emphasizing context-specific, place-based, and embodied encounters as part of moral assessments of human-animal relations (Hovorka, 2020). Notable examples include Lynn’s (1998) ‘geoethics’, Jones’s (2000) ‘ethics of encounter’, and Johnston’s (2008) ‘responsible anthropomorphism’. By centring animals within critical social theory and empirical explorations, animal geographers expose diverse forms of multispecies oppression and lobby to end animal suffering. Further, animal scholarship espouses a normative bent that questions the nature and implications of human-animal dynamics and posits outright how humans might create more equitable realms of co-existence and indeed flourishing with other animals (Hovorka, 2020). Animal geographers are, in various ways and degrees, vocal critics, action-oriented researchers, and engaged activists striving for species-based justice.

Building upon our necessarily praxis-based subdiscipline, then, Part III of this volume offers tangible – and at times provocative – means through which to reaffirm and push forward animal geographies’ ethical commitments and practical contributions to advancing the lives of animals.

M.J. Barrett, Viktoria Hinz, Vanessa Wijngaarden, and Marie Lovrod (Chapter 10) draw readers into the realm of intuitive interspecies communication (IIC) where humans and other animals engage through non-verbal and non-physical means. The authors delve into the practices of animal communicators and share their own intimate moments of interspecies communication to expand notions of situated knowledge. They highlight IIC as a rich research topic and transformational method that acknowledges animals as active partners in knowledge production and facilitates more equitable multispecies collaborations. Aligning explicitly with praxis, IIC reflects a tangible means through which humans may embody and practise the idea that animals have standpoints to offer. Overcoming human-animal dualisms and advancing interspecies justice require epistemological and ontological shifts to foreground animal voices through human conduits. Contemplating and practising such shifts necessarily foregrounds worldviews and ways-of-knowing that take us beyond modern Western culture and science. Ultimately, as M.J. Barret et al. powerfully note: 'IIC calls for interspecies humility; it is a conversation between equals'. This in itself is a radical means of participating in the lives of animals.

Jacquelyn Johnson (Chapter 11) draws attention to how government agency animal data and narratives are produced behind the scenes, often reproducing systemic injustice for nonhumans and humans alike. She encourages animal geographers as activist researchers to embrace critical investigative practices that reveal the 'ghost stories' of animals hidden behind supposed public animal care-taking. Johnson grounds the chapter in her personal experience as clinic supervisor at Miami's Animal Services Department. She recounts how individual cat lives become abstracted statistical reports and a 'hoard of filthy felines' reflects political motivations of an agency charged with their custody. Taking us through their muted shelter pictures and fading paper kennel cards, Johnson offers readers her step-by-step process of data acquired through public record requests. Ultimately, this chapter is a call for animal geographers to further engage and intervene on behalf of animals, be it through media, policy-makers, or supplying reports to investigative agencies.

Richard J. White (Chapter 12) draws inspiration from anarchist praxis and total liberation ethics to push animal geographies forward in attaining trans-species justice. His chapter takes readers through 'critical' iterations of animal scholarship, arriving at a future emancipatory agenda emphasizing political economy, prefigurative praxis, intersectionality, and direct action as key focal points. White claims that 'the absence of archy opens up the possibilities for richer ... expressions of freedom and autonomy to emerge and flourish'. Anarchist advocacy pivots on ways of organizing that are non-hierarchical, non-coercive, and non-violent. Here theory becomes politically crucial given that it is

'intimately connected with practice in the context of praxis'. White posits that veganism is one of the most important forms of praxis that animal geographies should embrace. He notes his profound disappointment with those scholar-activists who choose a different critical praxis, revealing an increasingly spoken elephant-in-the-animal-geographies-room. Nevertheless, White emphasizes the importance of 'our' collective work and what can be gained in seeking common ground.

Taken together, these praxis chapters offer an ambitious trajectory for our future research agenda for animal geographies born from the question: What actions should animal geographers take to challenge animal injustice? The contributing authors demonstrate clearly that we can push forward the extent to which we can communicate with, learn from, get to know the lives of animals (Barrett et al.'s intimate practices and new worldviews, Chapter 10); that we need to investigate and unpack unjust conditions in which animals exist and act on them as part of our research (Johnston's unearthing stories through critical investigative means, Chapter 11); and that we should embody our ethics and values with liberation as an ultimate goal (White's archy imperative, Chapter 12). The future of animal geographies thus entails more intensive listening, more intensive seeing, and more intensive doing than we have undertaken to this point. This embodiment of scholarly ethical practice is not as easy as it might sound. It requires making ourselves potentially uncomfortable with our belief systems and willingness to accept the limits or indeed possibilities of our knowledge (that is, animal communicators). It requires putting ourselves and our livelihoods on the line if we call out systemic injustice as part of our 'objective' research agendas. It requires us to confront our cognitive dissonance such that our praxis is grounded in inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes, as related to our personal behaviours and practices. Said differently, what key pivot points may undermine our collective efforts, namely whose ethical/moral stance is enough to be part of the animal geographies agenda (White, Chapter 12)? Does communicating with animals become too uncomfortable an approach and practice (Barrett et al., Chapter 10)? Does investigating and intervening cross the line where our role as objective researchers is undermined (Johnston, Chapter 11)? Despite these possibilities and challenges, the volume re-establishes animal geographies as a necessarily praxis-oriented subdiscipline grounded in theoretically unearthing unjust species relations of power and methodologically investigating and making visible animal lifeworlds.

Conclusion

Moving forward, we encourage animal geographers to ‘put themselves out there’. As a subdiscipline we have advanced geographical scholarship through attention to nonhuman (and human) animals whose lives are often deemed ‘lesser than’ or fully objectified and disregarded. The theoretical insights and methodological tools we engage have opened up our understandings of and connectedness to the world around us, informed by our ethical commitments to improving the lives of all animals. Our future research agenda for animal geographers is situated in this rich foundation of critical scholarship and praxis, and it is grounded in our call for ‘bringing the animals back out’ amidst socio-ecological crises.

Animal geographers must employ theoretical orientations that enable our analyses to join forces with other justice-based social movements. The contributors to this volume demonstrate opportunities for animal geographies to engage creatively with diverse movements, from industrial farm workers’ rights to intersectional feminism to the environmental movement to racial equality to decolonization. Animal geographers should also embrace the call to focus our investigations on policy change, taking our lead from Kendi (2019), who ‘contends that knowledge is only power if knowledge is put to the struggle for power’ (Emel and Nirmal, Chapter 2 in this volume). Animal geographers should take seriously opportunities that arise from carefully selecting theoretical approaches that can be mutually operationalized in theory and in practice to better the lives of animals (Hagy Ferguson, Chapter 5 in this volume). Altogether, in selecting theoretical lenses, animal geographers should become accustomed to thinking about how we can not just analyse, but enact, multispecies justice through our work.

Animal geographies must continue pushing the boundaries of dominant colonial and anthropocentric tendencies in social scientific research by engaging decolonial, more-than-human, and collaborative research approaches. We see this as not only an epistemological agenda, but a deeply political one as well. Arguably, a core driving force of planetary destruction and social injustice – of more-than-human sufferings – remains the prevailing system of thought (whether termed Western, modernist, Cartesian, colonial, humanist) in which the world is fashioned as dualistic and hierarchical, with a narrow and exclusionary view of humanity, and a dead nature at ‘our’ disposal. Combating the violence of colonial capitalism requires new ways of approaching the world that open up horizons beyond this impoverished and deeply detrimental worldview. Each step towards greater interdisciplinary experimentation, more

sustained attention to less familiar beings, and more genuine engagement with the vital work stemming from Indigenous thought (see, e.g., Belcourt, 2015; Kimmerer, 2013; TallBear, 2011; Todd, 2014) and Black thought (see, e.g., Bennett, 2020; Boisseron, 2018; Jackson, 2013; Yusoff, 2018) furthers the critical work of ‘sketch[ing] a dying world anew’ (Bennett, 2020: 139). Deepening our engagements with the ethico-political considerations and demands central to exploring the lives of animals involves asking questions including: What does it mean to take seriously and value difference, continuing to dismantle the inherited foundations of anthropocentric thought? To take a truly collaborative approach to more-than-human knowledge production (Van Patter et al., forthcoming)? In exploring and relaying more-than-human lifeworlds, we must ask ourselves which realities we bring into being, and what their consequences might be in terms of liveable futures for diversely situated bodies.

Finally, animal geographers must embrace the full range of praxis possibilities for advancing the lives of animals. This means sharing our insights, using our voices and engaging our networks in ways that draw us further into scholarly and, especially, public realms; it means embracing opportunities to serve as disrupters, allies, and change-makers in a world that is rapidly changing and mired in socio-ecological crises. We see this volume as another step in the evolution of animal geographies; we hope that it inspires further growth and engagement among a community of scholars, practitioners, and activists committed to a just and sustainable future.

Note

1. Sandra McCubbin works at Environment and Climate Change Canada, Government of Canada. The views expressed here are her own.

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