

On interspecies domination

Sovereignty, resistance, and human and non-human emancipation

Monday 12 and Tuesday 13 September 2022

University of Liège / Online

International colloquium

Abstracts



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Session 1: Understanding the causes

History, gender, race, animal and sovereignty

A large number of researchers working at the intersection of gender, cultural and animal studies point out that the concepts of race, gender and animality have been developed gradually, throughout modernity, in relation to the white man. Race is a social construction that can be directly attributed to the era of transatlantic slavery, while gender has traditionally been the category to which various statuses and other social roles defined by the patriarchy are assigned. Finally, animals were those beings that were very quickly rejected along with the rest of a threatening nature that, like some humans, had to be domesticated to serve economic production. From this perspective, the modern state - in the sense in which we have come to understand it since Hobbes and Rousseau - is ultimately just sovereignty monopolised by certain types of being who, through the social contract, excluded other types of living being from the field of legitimate democratic exchange. This situation gives rise to epistemic violence: it is only within the framework of this sovereignty that "progress" in the fight against discrimination (both gender and racial) and in animal welfare is seen as ultimately being possible. Thus the modern state decrees what is its property and responsibility (land, animals, workers), and it is only under the framework of this decree that any ethical policy towards beings subordinate to it can be envisaged. As sovereign, the white man is free to absolve himself morally of the harmful consequences of several actions: animal experimentation is absolved in the name of the public interest as is, for example, the flexibilisation of the labour market and the casualisation of employment, which always impacts first on women and racialised people. This is why the links between these different forms of domination must be examined.

Session 2: Doing fieldwork, describing

Engagement, symmetry, translation and co-perception of humans and animals

It has become commonplace to assert that productivist capitalism was built on a double domestication/exploitation: that of nature on the one hand (within which the animal is generally confined), and that of humans on the other. Critical animal studies and anarchist studies have put this observation at the centre of their thinking. However, both seem to lack a method that can help us better understand how this domestication/exploitation is commonly experienced and perceived by the beings that suffer from it, be they human or animal. To grasp what might constitute an animal critique of domination, it may be helpful to understand what it is that "poses a problem" for the animal in the treatment it receives in a work situation, for example, when it is reduced to its exploitable qualities. The traditional answer to this question is welfarist: it is a matter of measuring suffering (or stress) and seeking to reduce it. But this collapses a complex ecological and psychological phenomenon into physiology alone, while once again reducing animals to passive bodies. We should note that animal rights activists themselves often end up reducing animals to suffering beings that need to be protected and are not capable of showing any form of resistance themselves, particularly by demonstrating their opposition through forms of expression that we other humans are still struggling to grasp. Thus the question of language arises in particular, but also that of the researcher's engagement and description.

Here we are particularly interested in empirical investigations and descriptions that seek to account for the experience of animals, insofar as they are beings subject to an asymmetry imposed by humans in how they relate to one another. How can the notion of objective domination be connected to a description of the experience of a human-animal relationship from the animal's point of view? Can domination be captured by ethnography, or does its description always result from an ideological choice on the part of the investigator who takes the side of the dominated? If it is possible to capture it ethnographically, how should we then equip our descriptions? What place, for example, should be given to ethology, physiology and studies on stress, suffering or animal welfare? Through this panel, we wish to deepen the discussion about how to describe these mostly asymmetrical relations between humans and animals, particularly when the former put the latter to work. This discussion ultimately raises the problem of the researcher's choice of stance when in the field: must they go "beyond multi-species ethnographies", when the very purpose of these studies was to make descriptions symmetrical and give voice to animals? And if so: how should we proceed?

Session 3: Discussing theoretical frameworks Pragmatism, Critical Theory, Recognition Theories and Communication Theories

In this panel we want to re-examine the major theoretical paradigms that have been employed to understand animality, on the one hand, and domination, on the other, in order to consider how they can enrich one another. "Experience is critique itself in action", as pragmatists tend to say. And the suffering inflicted by the enslavement of humans and animals is evident whenever it is described. But on what basis can we link together descriptions of the enslavement of humans and that of animals, in order to learn about them in more detail and grasp what they have in common? What place should ethology and biology have in the descriptions of animal behaviour? Does an affective, sensitive phenomenological theory not risk accepting the order of the world as it is, thus depriving itself of a transversality from which we might denounce what, particularly in work, amount to forms of constraint, even subjection, that are difficult to accept? Here we can clearly see the need to supplement the phenomenological and pragmatic perspectives. A textbook case is that of the hens who prefer their cage because they have become unable to stand or walk due to genetic selection that favours the production of chicken fillets to the detriment of bones. It is not enough to describe the hens' experience in the strict sense, as this will naturally lead us to conclude that they prefer their cage and that this is a suitable place for them to live. Instead, we must show how the hens' preference is itself constructed by the context in which they are kept. A little like how Marxist analysis (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, etc.) of the culture industry has been able to marshal various studies of consumption to show the extent to which beings are constructed by capitalist domination and end up desiring the leisure society (TV, fast food, social networks, etc.) that serves their enslavement. Contemporary critical theories, such as Luhmann's communication theory, Honneth's theory of recognition, and Mouffe's agonistic theory of politics could be explored afresh. Each of these approaches - whether critical, pragmatic, phenomenological or interactional - has a particular link with description (and in particular ethnographic description), and each of them brings with them a tradition, concepts, epistemological positions and models of reflexivity. In this third session, we want to ask how capable these different traditions are of accounting for situations of animal or human domination by attempting symmetrization. We want to highlight the impasses, aporias and as-yet-unthought within each of these traditions when they are applied, but also, of course, their contributions, their divergences, compatibilities and incompatibilities.

Session 4: Looking to the future

Emancipations, solidarities and political communication with animals

This last session will directly address the issue of emancipation and interspecies solidarity. How can these be brought to light, and are animals capable of asserting their own rights? The entire literature on animal rights is based on the idea that animals are not able to claim their rights themselves. But aren't certain methods of observation or theoretical perspectives capable of bringing out the claims of animals? How can we think about the spaces in which humans and non-humans can live together in respect? How can we avoid falling back into the anthropocentric biases in our research that we are trying to overcome? Genuinely welcoming animals into the humanities and social sciences requires more than cosmetic changes or the adoption of a form of rhetoric where "co-" is inserted on every page. Cooperation will only make sense if domination is identified and acknowledged. Creating spaces in which to co-habit is obviously a crucial issue, and the social sciences have a role to play here. This depends, in Pelluchon's words, on our moving from a schema of domination to a schema of consideration. What would a social science that takes this ethic of consideration as its object and aim look like? It would undoubtedly rely in part on a broad, multi-disciplinary understanding of interspecies communication, the only means by which forms of co-habitation can be developed. The cultural practices able to support multi-species conversations - which will take the form of rustling, reverberations, roaring, hissing, etc., and which will necessarily involve the body and self-perception - deserve to be documented, with particular attention to their capacity to make room for an ethics of consideration.

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The conference will be organized in a "hybrid" mode with talks delivered on site and by videoconference. Participants can attend onsite or online.

Attendance is free but registration is required. Information and registration: Marie Schnitzler: [mschnitzler\(at\)uliege.be](mailto:mschnitzler(at)uliege.be)
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Session 1: Understanding the causes History, gender, race, animal and sovereignty

Human Sovereignty over Animals and the War against Animals, By Dinesh Wadiwel (Associate professor, University of Sydney).

This talk outlines the main argument in my book *The War against Animals* (Brill 2015). I will discuss hierarchical anthropocentrism as a political problem of violence and domination, which shapes relations of power between humans and animals. Here, I will highlight the way in which different modalities of violence produce a form of claimed human dominion over animals which we might describe as 'sovereign'. Referring to the work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, I will explore the nature of this sovereignty and its applicability to human animal relations, particularly in the context of capitalist industrial food systems. The State, as I argue, has evolved to protect and reproduce this hierarchical anthropocentrism by assuming that human animal relations are essentially a form of private dominion, and therefore the interests of animals are not protected by law. As I shall discuss, this system of violence is all encompassing and almost 'total' in its apparent victory against animals. However, animals everywhere resist: I shall devote time to thinking about how recognising animal resistance is essential for contesting a claimed human sovereignty over animals.

Recognizing Anthroprivilege: On The Question of Being Human, by Simon Springer (Professor, University of New Castle).

This paper challenges anthroprivilege, meaning the pervasive social norms that underpin anthropocentrism and routinely bestow unjustified benefits upon human individuals. Anthroprivilege is captured in the dismissal of the animal other as "Other" and the consequences that this has for questions of race, gender, sexuality, or other positionalities for which privilege and normativity are key spheres of struggle. Anthroprivilege is fundamentally made possible through unwillingness to reflect critically on human positionality or how the category of species sits within contemporary understandings of social justice. Anthroprivilege, as with all forms of privilege, is underpinned and facilitated by a deep sense of cognitive dissonance. Yet the implications of anthroprivilege are no mere thought experiment. Instead, anthroprivilege is a tangible menace to planetary wellbeing as it forms the foundations of human supremacy. It is only through anthroprivilege that processes like extractivism, climate destruction, and factory farming become possible. The implication of such hubris is straightforward. If we don't begin to redress this profound sense of human entitlement, it will ultimately be our undoing as a species.

Les Jewish studies dans la remise en cause du spécisme, by Jérôme Segal (maître de conférences à Sorbonne Université - Assistant Professor at the Sorbonne University)

Si les études sur le genre et les études culturelles sont souvent associées aux études sur le spécisme pour mettre en lumière des phénomènes d'oppression et de persécution, qui peuvent s'entretenir les uns avec les autres, il est plus rare que les études juives soient sollicitées. Pourtant, trois bonnes raisons nous invitent à nous tourner vers une nouvelle forme

d'interdisciplinarité. Sur le plan historique, certains représentants de la libération animale, à commencer par Peter Singer ou Henry Spira, ont lié leur engagement auprès des animaux, vus comme « persécutés parmi les persécutés », à leur identité juive. Pour beaucoup de personnes se déclarant juives et athées, l'engagement prend une forme ontologique et c'est ce qui explique l'importante surreprésentation de ces personnes dans les différentes luttes. La différence entre le judaïsme, simple religion, et la judaïté qui décrit l'ensemble des manières d'être juif, est ici fondamentale. Notons d'ailleurs que la militante étasunienne Roberta Kalechofsky a fondé en 1985 l'association Jews for Animal Rights (JAR) en insistant sur ce lien entre judaïté et cause animale. Au niveau des discours, et on sait combien les mots sont importants, les études juives offrent une base solide pour envisager la pertinence – et les limites ! – de l'analogie entre les persécutions subies par les Juives et les Juifs pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et ce que vivent les animaux dits de rente dans les élevages et les abattoirs. Pourquoi la citation de I.B. Singer – « pour les animaux, la vie est un éternel Treblinka » –, reprise dans le titre du livre de Charles Patterson, est-elle si clivante ? Enfin, dans un domaine plus politique, une réflexion sur la place du véganisme et de la lutte antispéciste en Israël amène à des considérations pragmatiques sur l'orientation possible d'une lutte qui, même si elle fait face à de puissantes oppositions, prend aujourd'hui de l'ampleur.

Agentivité, liberté et communauté morale, by Nicolas Delon (Associate professor, New College of Florida)

L'éthique animale a récemment commencé à reconnaître l'importance de l'agentivité des animaux, non plus seulement de leur sensibilité (la position "sentientiste" prédominante). L'une des conséquences de cette reconnaissance est que la liberté animale occupe une place plus grande dans ce qui constitue une vie bonne pour un animal que de nombreuses théories ne le reconnaissent. Selon une certaine lecture du rôle de l'agentivité dans le bien-être, certains efforts pour réduire la souffrance animale peuvent même aller à l'encontre des intérêts agentiels des animaux. L'agentivité joue enfin un rôle critique dans la structure de nos obligations aux animaux. Je défends ici une conception de la communauté morale appuyée sur la reconnaissance de l'agentivité animale et explore les tensions de cette conception avec l'approche sentientiste prédominante.

Session 2: Doing fieldwork, describing

Engagement, symmetry, translation and co-perception of humans and animals

Gender and motherhood from the perspective of the dairy cow, by Leonie Cornips (Extraordinary professor, Maastricht University).

In linguistics, language is defined as human language, which would seem to exclude research on non-human animals. However, in posthumanist linguistics language is investigated as an embodied, multimodal, and sensory phenomenon including sounds, gaze, movements, facial expressions (kinesics), touch (haptics), space (proxemics), sensorial practices of meaning-making through tasting, touching, seeing and smelling, as well as the mediation of embodiment by material objects and environments. In this lecture, I will add to the state-of-the-art by including non-human animals i.e. dairy cows and by using sociolinguistic methods to investigate how they make meaning in their environment (Cornips 2022; Cornips & van den

Hengel 2021). In doing so I will discuss the multispecies ethnography I'm undertaken which leaves aside the categorical division between human and non-human animals and lends itself especially to new and unstudied communities as dairy cows are in this sociolinguistic project. A multispecies ethnography entails observing dairy cows and promoting shared understanding via bodily experiences with them like brushing, touching, milking, feeding, walking, and being with them. Conducting ethnography is also a reflexive process which should include a dairy cow who is speaking for herself. Regarding this process, I will try to answer the question whether and if so how cow-cow and cow-human interactions and relations are gendered, and how to position dairy cows as mothers with mothers' needs and concerns as the starting point for a sociolinguistic theoretical lens on their empowerment (Gaard 2013; O'Reilly 2013).

Relationships between humans and formerly farmed animals: a description from the inside, by Lucie Nayak (LASC, Université de Liège, Belgium).

This presentation is based on a multi-species ethnography of the relationships between humans and "farm animals" outside the context of exploitation. This ethnography was carried out in two antispeciesist sanctuaries in France and Belgium, by full-time immersion during six months as a volunteer animal caretaker. This research aims to analyze what kind of human-animal relationships are made possible in a context in which animals are no longer considered as means but as ends in themselves, no longer seen as commodities but as persons (non-interchangeable individuals and subjects-of-a-life). This paper will give a reflexive presentation of the ethnographic approach used in this research, which is inspired both by sensory ethnography and by embodied ethnography. It argues that, in order to understand the animal experience in the analysis of human-animal relations, it is necessary to enter (sometimes deeply) into a relationship with them. Indeed, the impossibility of simply interviewing animals forced the ethnographer to engage her body, her senses and her emotions in a process of human-animal meaning-making. This implies the elaboration of shared activities and routines in order to build interspecific rules of communication. In other words, this approach intends to describe human-animal relationships from the inside, in particular from inside the relationship between the ethnographer and Charlotte, who can be quickly described as "a sow" but who was much more than just a member of a species. This approach also aims to develop a more horizontal way of producing knowledge, by recognizing animals as active partners in the fieldwork.

Looking for an animal animal turn. Towards a social history of human-animal relationships, by Violette Pouillard (CNRS, Laboratoire de Recherches Historiques Rhône Alpes, Lyon / Ghent University).

This contribution aims to enrich historiographical debates in, and about, the 'animal turn,' particularly regarding the nature and (historical) role of animal agency. Relying on the results of a research project on the history of human-animal relationships at several urban European zoos, from the birth of the modern zoo in the early nineteenth century to the present day, this paper will offer micro-historical insights on human and animal experiences at the zoo in dialogue with macro-historical dynamics of animal commodification. The results of this empirical approach will be contrasted with recent academic works on zoos and other

asymmetrical, coercive institutions. I will argue that the animal turn, insofar as it is understood as a way to include the animals themselves within academic research, and thus to rehabilitate them, has paradoxically largely contributed to the marginalization of animal experiences in the academic narratives. Finally, I will argue in favor of the development of a social history of animals and of human-animal relationships as a way to achieve a balance between the recognition of structural constraints weighing on animals and the highlighting of their lived experiences which occur despite, and in response to, the forms of violence associated with such constraints.

Multimodal interaction between horses and humans: giving 'voice' to the horse, by Charlotte Lundgren (Senior research coordinator, Linköpings University).

In this presentation, Dr Lundgren will show examples from her research on horse-human interaction and discuss methodological and analytical challenges connected with multimodal interaction analyses of interspecies interaction (Lundgren 2022). Departing from a dialogical theory of interaction (Linell 1998), she will discuss the inherent challenges of representing social actions of participants, be they human animals or other animals, both for analytical purposes and in publications. She will touch upon the tensions between the richness of interaction "in the wild" and the restrictions that come with transcriptions of such interaction. During the presentation, Dr Lundgren will discuss some of the many choices we must make when deciding on what to analyse and how, including the possibilities and limitations of ethological tools such as ethograms. Against this backdrop, she will show some solutions that she has explored to give the horses participating in her data a 'voice', thus treating them on a par with the participating humans (to the extent that this is possible). During the presentation, Dr Lundgren will show how careful multimodal transcription of interspecies interaction can allow not only for analyses of communicative and material asymmetries, but also enable the exploration of moments of interspecies solidarity (Coulter 2016) and the promise of human and non-human emancipation.

Methods constituting historical cow subjects, by Claudia Hirtenfelder (Ph.D Student, Queen's University)

Recent work in animal geographies has developed theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding animals embodied and situated experience through approaches such as multispecies ethnography. Take for example the work of Kathryn Gillespie in following the lives of cows in North American dairy industries; or Yamini Narayanan observing and telling the stories of cows in India's urban streets. These approaches, however, are designed to understand the experiences of living, and in many cases soon-to-be-dead, cows. My historically oriented project asks questions about historical cows who are not available for interactive, participant-observation. Wanting to avoid biological determinism that problematically maps the observations made by animal ethnography today onto the lives of historical animals, I am interested in exploring how the historical record provides a means for understanding and explaining the lives of cows in Kingston, Ontario (the city where I live, and my project is located). My broader project aims to shed light on some of the multispecies dimensions of urbanisation and, in this

presentation, I focus on some of the methods I have used in my work to foreground cows in my analysis. These include a trace methodology, a willingness to engage in a “counter-reading” of the archive and literature, a foregrounding of space, and historically informed fabulation.

Is the Concept of “Speciesism” Fatally Flawed?, by Claire Jean Kim (Professor, University of California).

In this paper, I explore the potentially fatal flaw in the concept of “speciesism” which underwrites both the modern animal justice movement and scholarly understandings of the status and treatment of animals. The Black Lives Matter movement, which seeks to bring attention to structural anti-Blackness as a foundational feature of U.S. society (and the world), has created the conditions of possibility for perceiving this flaw. Peter Singer, following Richard Ryder, defines speciesism as humans’ irrational preference for their own species over others. Yet in an anti-Black world, humans cannot be said to prefer all members of their own species to others. The enduring animalization and bestialization of Black people in the white imagination indicate the complexity of the issue. I explore this intellectual-political contradiction in depth, drawing upon historical and contemporary examples. I argue that we need a new concept to replace “speciesism,” one which is attuned to the inextricable intertwining of animal and racial classification and the ultimate interdependence of animal liberation and Black liberation as utopian political projects.

DAY 2 September 13

Session 3: Discussing theoretical frameworks

Pragmatism, Critical Theory, Recognition Theories and Communication Theories

Solidarity through the senses: Extending intersectionality at the margins, by Nik Taylor (Professor, University of Canterbury).

In this paper I ask what happens when we allow ourselves to look at and think about animals differently. I argue that centuries of thought mired in post-Enlightenment notions of rationality, and its concomitant paradigms of human superiority and exceptionalism, have closed our minds to myriad aspects of other animals and our relations with them, and that this has socially and culturally embedded and justified our dominance over them. But what happens if we attempt to free ourselves of these beliefs? What happens if we start to think not about difference and hierarchy but about shared, intersectional experiences at the margins: sensory experiences we have missed or neglected due to prevailing beliefs about other animals and our own intellectual and epistemological capabilities.

Une émancipation commune au-delà du spécisme ? Analyse à partir d'une enquête sur les mobilisations contemporaines contre les injustices en France, by Réjane Sénac (CNRS Permanent Senior Research Fellow, Sciences Po Paris).

En quoi et comment les mobilisations contemporaines contre les injustices convergent-elles vers un horizon commun d'émancipation ? La place et le rôle du principe d'égalité, central dans la construction du système politique républicain, est l'angle de questionnement de cette recherche sur la possibilité et les modalités d'une émancipation partagée. Le fait d'intégrer les mobilisations antispécistes dans cette analyse se justifie par la radicalité et la transversalité du questionnement qu'elles posent aux systèmes politique, juridique, économique et social en termes de rapport à la domination, aux injustices et donc à l'émancipation. Nous avons effectué une enquête qualitative, entre juin 2019 et août 2020, soit avant et pendant la crise sanitaire de Covid-19, auprès de 130 responsables d'associations ou de collectifs, d'entrepreneurs·ses sociaux·ales et d'activistes aux affiliations fluides engagé.e.s pour la justice sociale et écologique, contre le racisme, le sexisme et/ou le spécisme. Cette recherche permet d'appréhender d'une part, la centralité de la réflexion sur la place et le rôle des allié.e.s et de la parole des premier.e.s concerné.e.s lorsque celle-ci ne rentre pas dans le cadre classique de la parole audible et reconnue, et d'autre part, la question du dépassement - ou pas - d'une perspective anthropocentrée. Même après l'évènement que constitue la pandémie de Covid 19, la double sacralisation de l'homme maître et possesseur de la « nature » et d'une croissance illimitée comme étalon de l'épanouissement individuel est bousculée, sans être complètement remise en cause, dans la mesure où la défense et la préservation des intérêts humains demeurent le critère prioritaire de mobilisation, le respect du vivant lui étant majoritairement subordonné. Cela nous permettra aussi d'aborder le sens et le rapport au principe d'égalité en examinant sa dimension subversive et transformatrice quand il est appliqué à un « qui » du politique hors du politique institué, notamment lorsqu'il s'agit des animaux non-humains.

Autour des animal studies contemporaines : approche conventionnelle, critique ou radicale, théorie posthumaniste, point de vue animal by Emilie Dardenne (MCF HDR en études anglophones, Université de Rennes 2).

Cette présentation vise à offrir un panorama des animal studies contemporaines et des champs connexes. Nous évoquerons d'abord l'approche des animal studies conventionnelles puis le courant critique et, en son sein, l'approche radicale. Nous nous intéresserons par ailleurs à l'apport du posthumanisme pour la question animale et nous terminerons par la notion de point de vue animal. Il s'agira de montrer la diversité des postures adoptées par les chercheurs et chercheuses de ce champ né à la fin du 20^e siècle dans l'aire anglophone et qui ne cesse de se développer, alors que toutes les disciplines des sciences humaines et sociales, des arts et des lettres s'y intéressent désormais. Nous verrons que, à mesure que la question animale fait son entrée à l'université, se développe et se spécialise, la gamme de points de vue s'élargit. Différentes postures sont affichées : de la volonté de ne pas adopter de posture normative à un engagement assumé en faveur de la condition animale, voire à des actes de désobéissance civile en faveur des non-humains. Des communautés académiques distinctes voient le jour. Nous chercherons à les définir et à établir leurs spécificités, ceci afin de contribuer à enrichir la palette d'outils notionnels qui permettent de repenser et de renouveler les relations anthropozoologiques.

Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Human-Animal Domination, By Leslie Irvine (Professor, University of Colorado).

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the negotiation of meaning in the course of social life, whether that meaning pertains to concrete entities such as chairs and trees, or abstract ideas such as justice and compassion. Thus, the perspective is well suited to the task of examining human-animal relationships, which are characterized by contradiction and inconsistency. Human beings can simultaneously claim to care about animals and also dominate them. Rather than assuming that meaning is given, or inherent, symbolic interactionism examines how meaning arises in the process of interaction. Interaction is symbolic because it relies on a shared system of symbols to assign names, engage in discourse, and build systems of knowledge. Once established, meanings guide subsequent interaction. Humans and animals co-exist within relationships that have meaning, and despite the lack of a shared spoken language, both humans and animals interpret the meanings of the actions that occur within those relationships. Informed by the symbolic interactionist perspective, scholars have presented animals as minded participants in social life, instead of passive beings simply responding to stimulus. Drawing on examples from foundational interactionist research, this talk illustrates how the perspective has provided insights into human-animal relationships that are of a compassionate nature and those that involve domination. Symbolic interactionism's focus on meaning has been applied mainly to the micro-level of individuals and small groups, however, and critics have argued that it neglects phenomena at the institutional and societal levels. However, by combining interactionism with critical perspectives, especially feminist theories, its purported weakness becomes a strength. A feminist-informed symbolic interactionism can reveal how the human domination of animals works at both systematic and relational levels. By revealing how domination is maintained and reinforced through everyday interactions, it can also suggest how change becomes possible.

Session 4: Looking to the future

Emancipations, solidarities and political communication with animals

Interspecies Solidarity in (Imperfect) Practice, by Kendra Coulter (Professor, Huron University College)

How to translate aspirational visions into inclusive and accessible language and pursue political and economic labour that moves such ideas beyond the speculative are fundamental challenges for those interested not only in theorizing but in shaping other species' lives, today and tomorrow. In this presentation, I offer fodder not only for thought but also for action that cultivates change from the messiness of our collective soil. I begin by highlighting the importance of strategic analysis of the different enduring and shifting political, economic, and social contexts within which we work and emphasizing the importance of accepting imperfection. Then I identify uneven but promising terrain where noteworthy economic and political work is being done to benefit animals as well as people. I conclude by considering the dry patches that are difficult to fertilize, but still could play an important role in creating more sustainable and just multispecies futures.

All animals speak: From political animal voice to multispecies deliberation, by Eva Meijer (Postdoctoral researcher, University of Amsterdam)

Dolphins have names. Prairie dogs speak about humans. Bees deliberate. Bats gossip. Whales sing love songs that last over twenty hours. Even though studies in biology and ethology show that nonhuman animals have their own languages and communicate with humans in many ways, they are still considered to be mute in philosophy, culture and society. This is a political problem, because power relations determine who gets a chance to speak, and because animal voices need to be included in political interactions for democratic reasons. In my presentation, I first discuss the connections between politics and language in relation to other animals. I then investigate steps forward, by exploring how insights from deliberative approaches to democracy can guide multispecies political interactions. I specifically focus on the following topics: embodied deliberation, systemic deliberation, the role of space in deliberation, and developing new political multispecies listening practices.

Working cowhorses of the American West engaged in multispecies domination: investigating non-human projects through artistic methods, by Andrea Pettit (Postdoctoral researcher, Uppsala University)

Working cowhorses on cattle ranches in the American West are roped into a system of settler colonial species relations that places them as both dominated and dominating individuals. With attention to the claims of animals themselves, this talk explores a consideration of animal actions as part of projects in their own rights, beyond what might be seen as resistance to human-imposed structures and interactions. In this setting, human structures of domination over animals both make possible yet seriously limits such projects. Investigating the triologue of humans, horses and cattle moving together in political negotiations of space on working cattle ranches in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, this talk shows some of the possibilities of using artistic methods such as rhyme, drawing and composing, to document, understand and portray the practices and limits of an ethics of consideration in multispecies research.