

Where are the animals ? Towards a 'humanimal' geography

« Ironically, both the pleasure of bestiality for the practitioner and the horror/humor of the shocked observer rely upon this projection of humanity onto the animal. This calls for thinking of potentially other relationships to animals in which we seek not to exploit human-animal difference but pleasure in exploring the breaking down of this boundary [...] Such a queering of the boundary between human-animal may serve a valuable role in reconsidering our ethical relationship to animals, which has previously hinged upon human-animal difference and hierarchy. This ontological certainty must be undermined to establish a nonhumanist approach to animals in particular and to otherness in general. » (Brown and Rasmussen, 2010, p. 174)

Animals are (still ?) not a central theme in geography, even if research has been done from the early 20th century (Hartshorne, 1939 ; Newbigin, 1913 ; Prenant, 1933 ; Sorre, 1943 ; Veyret, 1951). The field has now gained some prominence thanks to specialty groups (Animal Geography Research Network in the UK and Animal Geography Specialty Group) and significant books (Wolch, Emel, 1998; Philo, Wilbert, 2000). Recent publications are not centered on animals anymore, but on human-animal relationships: they are not interested in geography of animals that could be a subfield of the populations' biology, but in a shared geography that we call « humanimal ». This trend is common to social sciences with numerous connexions, such as sociology (Guillo, 2009 ; Latour, 1991 ; Mauz, 2005 ; Porcher, 2011 ; Sociétés, 2010), philosophy (Singer, 2009 [1975] ; Haraway, 2008) and anthropology (Descola, 2005).

Agency

For a long time animals have been studied only as symbols or statistical information. In geography they have mostly been used as quantitative data which have been interpreted as locations, indicators of biodiversity, objects of human conflicts, symbols of power, or images of the society and its symbols. In these situations, animals were merely mirrors reflecting what humans do and think, without being themselves considered as true beings.

'Agency' (the ability to decide independently) was used to define/describe animals in anthropological and sociological studies which deconstructed the categories that divide humans and animals. A new way of thinking living communities is possible (Descola, 2005 ; Latour, 1991 ; Haraway, 2008) and has been sustained by the evidence gathered in long term fieldwork and methods mostly used in anthropology (Goodall, 1986). The growing number of pets and the attention directed on charismatic animals, such as dolphins or gorillas, are also signs of changing human-animal

relationships. Big Apes were the first to get credited with 'agentivity'; but Despret (2002) explains how research that gives animals a real chance to show their abilities helps more of them be recognized as real actors: dogs, cows, ravens and even sheep are not the same anymore. Hunting is a negotiation with animals and our world becomes filled with meaningful beings, from everyday pigeons and cats, to mosquito that will not let us sleep or polar bears seen at the zoo.

The interest shown by humans towards animals (and maybe for humans by animals) is understood differently when we go beyond symbolic interpretation. Pets are no longer signs of anthropomorphic and sentimental behavior from their masters, replacing children they could not have, as would suggest some interpretations (Yonnet, 1983 ; Digard, 1999). Another interpretation of human-animal relationships is that 'agency' is precisely what matters for both of us.

The right place

Where are the animals? Where are they allowed to go? Where do they become a strange or even threatening presence? If space does not describe animals (is this lion wild because it comes from Africa? From the savannah?), the attribution of places has a key role in our relationship with them (dogs are forbidden from supermarkets, unless they are blind persons' guides). After studying and interviewing the inhabitants of a French National Park, Isabelle Mauz (2005) showed that, for the human beings, the animals have to have a place: a "right place" that may change but had to be defined at some point in order to allow humans and animals to live together.

If, in the human minds, the animals have to stay at their place, it is easy to figure out what happens when it is not the case. Conflicts between humans and non-human animals would be connected to the infringement of these limits: what is this rat doing on the platform of the subway? This cockroach in my living room? What about this wolf in my mountain? The arguments about the separation of humans and animals, as well as their progressive exclusion from most parts of the cities (Philo, Wilbert, 2000; Vialles, 1995) have been widely studied. By looking at 'agency', one could develop this issue or make it more complex, by wondering, for example, whether animals are a minority group? Do they suffer the same type of spatial discrimination? Could some animals be considered as good citizens?

On the other hand, division is not what best characterizes our relationship with the animals because separation and detachment hardly define relationships. Continuity may be a more efficient toll considering they are significant others for us (Porcher, 2011). In a concrete way, continuity is mediated through spatial organisations allowing actors to negotiate a right distance (Espaces & Sociétés, 2002 ; Estebanez, 2011). The zoo is not made to separate people from animals. Its purpose is to offer encounters that are not possible anywhere else. Similarly, leashes, parks, industrial or even urban wasteland transformed into ecological corridors equipped with look-out posts are spatial display. They organise our relation with animals through a constant negotiation around norms and customs. This proximity can go as far as sexuality with animals (bestiality), in which the distance seems to disappear completely, and which seems to last as a taboo of anthropozoological relations (Brown and Rasmussen, 2010).

This question of the "right place" should be defined as a negotiation between separation and continuity (Arluke and Sanders, 1996).

This special issue of "Les Carnets de Géographes" is investigating how space matters in human-animal relationships. This issue welcomes contributions from various disciplinary horizons (geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, etc.) interested in animal agency and how it contributes to the spatial construction of "humanimality".

The texts, in French or in English, might be written for several sections of the journal:

- In the section ***Carnets de recherches***: articles between 30 000 and 50 000 characters challenging the key ideas of human geography. The example of our relationship with the animals could be understood as an indicator of conceptual limits.

If the animals are really significant others for us, creating a part of who we are, we can wonder what would be a human geography which would exclude them. In consequence, isn't it possible to revisit the most classical topics (landscape, city (Blanc, 2000)) and those less studied (domestic space, gender (Brown & Rasmussen, 2010)) through the perspective of our relationship with these non-human agents? The usual categories we refer to (nature/culture; human/animal...) are often based on some *a priori* becoming obvious once analyzed.

On another hand, **theoretical contributions could also analyze the anthropozoological relationship and their spatial organization**. Anthropozoological relationship, as with every exchange, is based on negotiations between actors. Our hypothesis considers two points: those negotiations happen somewhere and the context in which they are produced has a role to play. We propose to analyze spatial organizations in order to understand how the relationship is made possible and is implemented. Following Latour (1991), we can argue that these spatial organizations obey a double ontological and categorical function: by some specific spatial organizations, animals are made radically different from humans. At the same time, these organizations produce hybrids and make them proliferate, disturbing the main categories that make naturalism functional (Descola, 2005).

- In the section ***Carnets de terrain***: articles between 10 000 and 15 000 characters about approaches and methods developed to work on animals' agentivity.

Surveys in geography and sociology concerning relationships with animals have often emphasized their symbolical approaches: when humans talk about animals, they only speak about themselves (Dalla-Bernardina, 2006), or animals reflect concerns that are mostly human. Animals being significant for humans should not make us ignore that animals can have their own agentivity. **To consider seriously animals' agentivity means to implement original methods, following as far as**

possible their point of view (Despret, 2002; Piette, 2009; Vicart, 2010). In order to try and inform about the specificities of the animals and the way they build relationships with humans, researchers need to renew their connection with fieldwork, giving priority to the long term and the establishment of a relationship of trust, in the same way cultural anthropology has been working. Working with animals nowadays implies to legitimate a vernacular knowledge (the one of the dog owner, of the hunter, of the trainer, of the research assistant), discredited during a long time as anthropomorphic and irrelevant. In addition, one could wonder how this contextual knowledge about animals could change the way we consider the territory we share with them.

- In the section ***Carnets de lectures***: reviews of founding or innovative research about animality (articles between 10 000 and 15 000 characters). Reviews could concern geographical studies but also social sciences and even literary or cinematographic studies. This section aims more particularly at spreading English-speaking research dedicated to animals and their place.

In addition, this issue could include, in each section, some articles following the journal's editorial policy but not this specific call for papers.

Issue editors

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The articles with a short author presentation (including institution, status) must be sent by **April, 30th of 2012** to the following address: lescarnetsdegeographes@gmail.com.

The issue will be published in **October 2012**.

The articles will be accepted after appropriate blind review. Anonymous reviewers are members of the *Carnets de géographes'* boards or exteriors. Articles must respect the journal style; please find the guidelines online at this address:

http://www.carnetsdegeographes.org/soumettre_article.php

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