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Situating urban animals – a theoretical framework

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Abstract

This introduction to the special issue of Contemporary Social Science: 'Urban Animals – Shifting Ecologies of Proximities', argues that the focus on urban animals is not to be treated as just another specialisation in urban ecology or biology, rather, as a perspective from where the field of urban studies at large, and the domain of social science more generally, can be re-thought in the novel and challenging ways. To do so, first, the text situates the question of urban animals within the emerging *problématique* of the contemporary urban condition in the context of the Anthropocene; second, it proposes six requirements which may prove valuable to widen the scope of current research; third, it introduces the papers composing the special issue.

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Where urbanisation and animals meet

This Special Issue of *Contemporary Social Science* includes ten original essays on Urban Animals. The introduction that follows outlines a theoretical framework for the research presented in the Special Issue. In general, this issue proposes to approach the topic of urban non-human animals as not just another specialisation in the field of urban ecology, biology, or animal studies; rather, a suggestion is made that urban animals could represent a perspective from where the field of urban studies at large, and the domain of social science more generally, could be re-thought in a number of inspiring ways. That we live in an epoch of dramatic geological and environmental changes is undeniable. The geological, climatic, and biological modifications of the present stand massively before our eyes. Regardless of whether we decide to use the category of Anthropocene to frame the current situation, we cannot avoid to be experiencing a new 'climate of history' (Chakrabarty, 2009), whose material effects prompt us to deeply reconsider the coordinates of our thinking. Urbanisation, in this context, appears as a key driver of the environmental, health, socio-economical and normative reconfiguration of the planet. The accelerated temporalities, extended scales and contracted geographies of urbanisation have decomposed the solidity of well-known Western dichotomies, such as society/nature, urban/rural, and city/wilderness. The social science, which has itself largely emerged out of a conceptual and empirical engagement with the urban environment, and with an almost exclusive lens on humans, faces a major challenge to make sense of the current transition.

In this context, the first conceptual challenge lies in posing new questions, capable of grasping the emerging *problématique* of the contemporary urban condition. Recent reflections on animals in the context of the Anthropocene (see, for instance, Haraway, 2016; Lorimer, 2016; Tønnessen, Armstrong Oma, & Rattasepp, 2016) have already highlighted the importance of a multi-species approach to the biosphere and the study of ecological systems, introducing the notions of ‘interspecies encounters’ and ‘human-animal assemblages’. Now, similar insights can be fruitfully applied to the intersection between animals and the urban condition. Indeed, non-human animals have been co-constitutive of cities. No more than a century ago, even in cities now regarded as the epicentre of modernity, the visible presence of animals was mainstream. In the nineteenth century for instance, ‘human-animal interaction was both an essential part of London’s system of labour and trade, and part of the emotional experience of city dwellers’ (Kean, 2011, p. 55; referring to Donald, 1999). At nearly the same time, the streets of Manhattan were a ‘de facto urban commons where animals grazed freely’, producing relations, arousing affects, and constituting specific atmospheres around which modern questions of civility, propriety, and control were played out (McNeur, 2014). The subsequent physical and normative ‘exile’ of animals from modern cities has progressed with the values of cleanliness, hygiene and motor traffic – a frame for organising the governance of not only animals but humans as well. In this sense, urban biopolitics, security, civility and aesthetics have all been applied across the species. But the contemporary situation shows the limits of biopolitical governance – as seen for instance in cases such as the re-ruralisation of post-crisis Detroit (Draus & Roddy, 2018), or in the spectacular animal repopulation of cities in times of pandemic lockdown. In fact, one may perhaps observe that not simply animals are urban or not, but more profoundly they are in the process of ‘being urbanised’ – either directly or indirectly, either violently victimised or forced to adapt to dramatically modified contexts of living, or indeed actively choosing to move into cities for opportunistic reasons which are not dissimilar from those of their ‘fellow’ human urbanites (Van Dooren & Rose, 2012).

As hinted above, several classic dichotomies have been criticised in the last decades. In particular, the approach of urban political ecology has shown the extent to which cities are constituted by socio-natural metabolic flows and exchanges, in which the materiality and the agency of humans and non-human bodies, relations and infrastructures, are deeply entangled (Heynen, Kaika, & Swyngedouw, 2006). Similar elaborations have challenged the reduction of the urban to a static, bounded entity, emphasising the dynamic and multi-scalar quality of ‘process[es] of continuous socio-ecological transformation’ (Braun, 2005: 635) unfolding at planetary scale (Brenner & Schmid, 2013).¹ A *situated* approach to the urban domain has also been invoked, attentive to the different forms, asymmetric relations and (class, race, gender, territorial etc.) cleavages through which urbanisation takes place (Tzaninis, Mandler, Kaika, & Keil, 2020). In sum, urbanisation is now recognised as a planetary and yet patchy phenomenon, global in scope but materialising through different spatialities and temporalities, breeding a number of multispecies entanglements (Tsing, 2015; Wu & Loucks, 1995).

The impact of this vibrant conceptual atmosphere has helped research to move beyond a more traditional approach that entailed looking at animals *in the city*, where the city mostly appeared as a social and anthropic domain in which animals would appear as ‘out of place’ (Arluke & Sanders, 1996; Philo, 1998). With some hesitations

(Thomson, 2007), the field of human geography has especially taken up the task to expand this insight, so as to reveal not only 'the complexity and range of animal engagements in people's everyday lives', but also the all-encompassing processes affecting and shaping those engagements, primarily the 'neoliberal commodification of nature, wildlife conservation mandates, and animal food production' (Barua, 2017, 2019; Hovorka, 2017, pp. 385–386). Other fields seem to have been slower in receiving these theoretical innovations, such as for instance conservation science, which Robbins and Moore (2013, p. 4) diagnose as being still greatly influenced by a sort of 'Edenic' paradigm. A similar tendency can be observed in the literature on 'urban wildlife', where animals are, by and large, framed as either 'victims' or successful 'parasites' of a space (the city) and a process (urbanisation) with respect to which they remain exterior (Schilthuizen, 2019).

In this context, Barua and Sinha's invitation to consider 'what urbanisation might entail and mean for animals themselves' (Barua & Sinha, 2019, p. 1161), prompts us to explore urban animals as meaningful constructors of socio-spatial relations (Van Dooren & Rose, 2012) and as cultural actors, against the old idea of humans as the sole possessors of 'culture' (see, e.g. Kumar, Singh, & HarRiss-White, 2019 and De Waal, 2019 on primate cultures). Becoming sensitive to multispecies co-existence, research also needs to recognise phenomena of 'co-engineering' (Viveiros de Castro, 2019): animals collaborate in the production of the urban itself, with its relations, spaces, norms, and atmospheres (Lorimer, Hodgetts, & Barua, 2019). Likewise, animals are full participants in 'the public sphere', producing responses, triggering affects, and shaping urban knowledge (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). As shown by Skandrani (2014) in the case of urban pigeons, and by Instone and Sweeney (2014) in the case of dogs, animals are 'already-active political constituents embedded within uneven processes and diverse forms of power' (Hovorka, 2018, p. 457), to the extent that they are 'inextricable to political processes, and integral to the formation and operation of political networks that regulate, protect and exploit them' (Hobson, 2007, p. 250). This effort in inclusion and enlargement calls for an experimental methodology (Hinchliffe, Kearnes, Degen, & Whatmore, 2005; Lorimer & Driessen, 2014) and a transdisciplinary perspective across ecology, ethology, biology, geography and sociology, to attend the functional, strategic, selective, inter-generational, sensorial and embodied facets of urban animality (Barua & Sinha, 2019).

'How do we make room for others?' Answering Pignarre and Stengers' (2011, p. 63) question does not mean to simply add more actors to an already prefigured notion of the urban. Rather, we need to let a number of *illegitimate actors* reshape the very conception of the city (Lorimer, 2017; Rautio, 2017). Retrieving Spinoza's notion of *agendi potentia*, we may recognise that the power of action is much more amply distributed than in the canonical narrative of the social science. A consideration of urban animals thus enables research to read more accurately this complexity, looking at a process that is enlarged in scope, and whose specific rationalities and structures are trans-local, but that, at the same time, unfolds through local contingencies that cannot be erased for the sake of any overall smooth narrative. The value of a focus on urban animals in exploring sociation from a more-than-human perspective is thus noteworthy (Holmberg, 2015): actually, such a perspective entails looking at processes that sociologists have been exploring since more than a century, but with a crucial non-anthropocentric awareness that holds the potential to renew the sociological imagination (Buller, 2013a).

Six desiderata in the study of urban animals

As a programmatic stance, we propose that social research on urban animals could fruitfully build upon the recognition and the unpacking of a number of points that follow from the scholarly literature and the debates evoked above. Empirical studies may still greatly benefit from enlarging their scope so as to include these points more fully. Here follow six such requirements which, while of course not exhaustive, may prove valuable to widen the scope of current research.

(1) Multiplicity of Types of Actors

First, there should be recognition of the multiplicity of types of actors present within the urban ecology. In this Special Issue, for instance, we have sought to include samples across the zoological range. We feature articles on coyotes, microbes, corals, mosquitos, cockatoos, wild cats, bulbuls, horses ... The list is far from exhaustive, yet it gives a sense of the ample biodiversity hosted by cities. Notably, the 'types of actors' under examination do not match necessarily biologically defined species, as the shift of approach entailed by the urban animal perspective directly challenges pre-constituted sociological or biological boundaries. In this sense, for instance, a domestic cat and a feral cat, while biologically the same species, clearly represent distinct types of actors, and embody different types of socio-natural constitutions, with often vital or lethal consequences (Hillier, 2015; Johnston, this issue). The mosquitos living in the London Underground genetically differ between each other depending on the line they live in, and have developed substantially different ways of life from their above-ground relatives (Schilthuizen, 2019). Similarly, there is no essential dog, pigeon, or elephant, as these animals' life-worlds unfold in significantly different ways in different socio-material and historical entanglements (Hovorka, 2017). In other words, the typification of actors is not based upon a-priori classifications, such as the zoological nomenclature, but is an emergent product that is practically shaped by how actors come together in given shared environments and spatial-historical situations. We have to do with an animal becoming that systematically exceeds scientific and normative categorisation, often triggering violent responses as a result. As Lescureux (2018) has shown with respect to dog-wolf hybrids, inter and intra-specific borders are more fluid than those set by law or biology. Urban animals, in this sense, rearticulate the social boundaries with a more fluid, porous and mobile – that is, realistic – quality.

(2) Heterogeneity of Sites

Second, there should be recognition of the emergent complexity of sites produced and inhabited by the coming together of (human and nonhuman) urban animals. On the one hand, a focus on urban animals allows for deconstructing the presupposition of the city as a human-made ecosystem in which animals feature as simply decorative supplements, annoying parasites, unwanted pests, or dangerous predators. As argued above, there is not only multispecies co-existence but also multispecies co-engineering. Overlooking this aspect may have tangible effects, as in Biehler's (2013) account of the way in which so-called pests (e.g. flies, rats) are often treated, selectively and reductively, without grasping the trans-specific and trans-scalar quality of the sites they produce and inhabit. On the

other hand, this focus also allows to undermine any homogeneous understanding of urbanisation, exploring the intermingling of legal and illegal, of formal and informal, of visible and invisible that characterises urban sites. In this sense, Doherty (2019: S323) has described an emergent assemblage of rubbish dumps, illegal scavenging, and marabou storks in Kampala, a 'multispecies workplace' that 'reveals the patchiness of urban infrastructures and economies'. The question of site enables research to focus simultaneously on the spatial and historical contingencies of a given locale in its turbulent interactions with global processes (Barua, 2019; Tsing, 2015).

(3) Significance across Scales

Third, there should be recognition that relevant actors are distributed across a vast scale range, both spatially and temporally. It is biased to believe that only actors placed at similar scale levels as ours are significant. For instance, in ecological terms, it is not justified to believe that mammals are more significant than bacteria. Scales count because they set boundaries of visibility and inter-visibility between actors. Because we do not naturally see bacteria and viruses, and can only access them through a set of mediating technologies, we inevitably relate to them in a different way from how we relate to, say, bats and pangolins. Similarly, the scale at which humans encounter chihuahua dogs can be said to differ from that at which they encounter wolf-dogs: it is not just a matter of size, but precisely, of scale. Anthropomorphism obviously plays a role in organising scalar biases, both directly and indirectly (Arluke & Sanders, 1996). So, the emphasis on presence, vision, and touch plays a key role in shaping environmental and interspecies ethics (Hinchliffe, 2007; Wolfe, 2003). A scale can tentatively be defined as a ratio in the composition of reciprocal perceptions and actions of the engaged actors. A given scale level may prelude to, but is not to be conflated with, an established power ratio. Bigger does not necessarily mean stronger. The role of 'technologies to make visible' becomes key to understand how various scalar shifts may enable – or contrarily, prevent – the development of a number of possible inter-scalar interactions. Concretely, the possibility of making bacteria and viruses visible enables us to act upon them in certain ways which would otherwise be impossible. Put differently, we constantly act and are acted upon a number of other animal actors in ways we do not control (in fact, in most cases we do not see bacteria and viruses). A dramatic example concerns how automated surveillance and algorithmic pattern-recognition in industrial farming skews the precarious ethical relations occurring in this setting (Buller, 2013b; Dawkins, Lee, Waitt, & Roberts, 2009). Aesthetic projects such as for instance *Holobiont Urbanism* hint at the potential of visualising the multi-species complexity of urban life.² This indication does not at all call for flattening scales, as proponents of assemblage urbanism have done (Fariás & Bender, 2010; Smith & Doel, 2011). Quite the contrary, our understanding of multi-scalar relations needs to be deployed, exploring the seismic frictions between the different scales that intersect the surface of interaction (Tsing, 2012).

(4) Degrees of Individuation

Fourth, scales matter also because they connect to the different degrees of individuation with which actors are endowed. Relevant actors are not all placed at the same degree of individuation. We assume, for instance, that mammals have a higher degree of

individuation than viruses, bacteria or worms – they are ‘more individual’. But, one should not fail to notice that wolf packs, feral cat colonies, monkey gangs, raccoon families and so on are treated as having a lower degree of individuation than other domesticated mammals. Individuation should not be confused with a power ratio, whereby ‘more individuated’ would mean ‘more powerful’: the same considerations developed above about scale apply. Whenever individuation is low, crowd formations have the pride of place. In this sense, individuals, packs, crowds and populations are not essences, but different degrees of individuation impacting upon how interaction between actors unfolds according to a given power of action. Holmberg (2015, p. 63) for instance has described how cat colonies form an anomalous collective resistant to law: ‘crowds are not conceivable in legal terms ... animals such as cats are required by law to be owned, and if they are not, they are not allowed to exist’. Whenever certain animal actors are characterised as ‘pests’, their degree of individuation scores low: we deal with pests only as aggregates. The most interesting situations are generated, of course, when changes in individuation occur. Animals are able to reformulate categories, thanks to their uncontrollable mobility and becoming. Thus, a wolf-dog hybrid ‘pollutes’ anthropocentric categories twice, both biologically and normatively (Lescureux, 2018). A bear may surge from anonymity into becoming a controversial press hero (and thus a highly personalised individual, with peculiar character and temper) capable of polarising the public opinion (Brighenti & Pavoni, 2018). Conversely, the contemporary system of animal farming functions by de-individualising the animals, objectifying them into a biological ‘stock’ – a thanatopolitical dispositif that makes it easier for them to be massively produced and exterminated (Buller, 2013b). If the possibility of ‘having a face’ is central in the way human-animal interaction are framed (Derrida, 1999; Jones, 2000), then anonymisation equates to a defacement of the animal, the alienation of its charisma and thus its reduction to bare-life.³

(5) Interaction Formats

Fifth, there should be recognition of a multiplicity of types of relations among actors. In this sense, it is crucial to examine the interaction formats that come to be established between actors, and how they evolve over time. Such formats include, for instance, domesticated, feral and wild interaction. Implicit in interaction formats are issues of imaginations, representations, expectations, and entitlements to act. It is not so much a given animal that is domesticated or not, but interaction that presents itself as either domesticated or wild. For instance, Lévi-Strauss (2016 [1989–2000]), Fudge (2011) and Herzog (2012) have finely excavated some of the ethical and moral complications that derive from the clashes between these formats. This recognition enables researchers to observe how economy, morality, legality and politics all come to be mobilised in issues surrounding urban animals. Elsewhere, we have sought to provide a map for this complex terrain: starting from the ‘domestic’ domain, we observed how this realm bifurcates and prolongs into two different series: the first one proceeds towards the public domain (continuum ‘domestic–communal–public’), whereas the second one proceeds towards wildness (continuum ‘domestic–stray–wild’) (Brighenti & Pavoni, 2018). This suggests that urban space is constitutively located within an inescapable field of tension between domestication and wildness. Boundaries are constantly erected and reshuffled in this field, triggering often unpredictable processes of ‘feral proliferation’

(Tsing, Mathews, & Bubandt, 2019).⁴ Humans are only part of the interactions between animals and, accordingly, do not have a monopoly over interaction formats. In this sense, recent studies in microbiology show the extent to which ‘almost all development may be co-development’ (Gilbert et al., 2010: see also Lorimer, 2017). Who is the parasite to whom? Who is the ecosystem engineer? There is no straightforward answer to these questions, as Tsing (2015) has brilliantly shown in her ethnography of the matsutake mushroom: relations between nematodes, pines, fungi, humans and capitalism form a mutually constructive ‘polyphonic assemblages’ of – albeit partial and precarious – ‘multi-species attunement’.

(6) Interspecific Intensities

Sixth, there should be recognition of the specific intensities generated by each interspecific relation. Affections are essentially trans-individual compositions. They provide ways in which individuals become entangled with each other, so that they can do something together. What they do together is not always necessarily positive, as it may also imply that one actor hunts, infects, kills, or even exterminates another one. However, sometimes intensity is certainly the sign of a strong bond being tied: in this Special Issue, consider for instance the case of Imi, a Cape Town carthorse rider, in his relation to his best horse, Farieda (Rink and Crow, this issue). It is a loving relation, charged with pride, affection, and care. It is important to consider how both working animals and companion animals have since always composed close relations with humans, contradistinguished by intensity. The alienating effects of modernist urbanism, with its obsessional mission of sanitising all spaces, and its mechanical mistreatment of animals, ensue from neglecting this truth. In this sense, the making of urban atmospheres cannot be explained by a narrow focus on political economy, or the framing of animals as mere ecological ‘assets’. In the case of penguins, Van Dooren and Rose (2012, p. 10) have noted that the concept of ‘habitat’ proves insufficient to capture penguin relationship to their places, and have proposed to conceive of places as ‘storied’, produced by the animals’ meaningful engagement. Similarly, Rautio (2017) suggests that the multispecies territoriality of urban pigeons cannot be fully grasped by the notion of habituation; instead, the Deleuzoguattarian notion of ‘refrain’ might prove more congenial to capture the productive sensorial, normative and corporeal coming-together of species. In a sense, exploring urban animals is about finetuning to on-going multispecies ‘attunements’, via a veritable ‘rhythm-ethology of the urban’ attentive to the co-engineering of social intensities.

Overview of the contributions to this special issue

This Special Issue is an invitation to carry out research along these lines. The Issue opens with an essay by Tora Holmberg, who explores the urban waste economy in Sweden with a special emphasis on the role played by rats, worms and microbes. What above we have called ‘significance across scales’ and ‘degrees of individuation’ feature prominently in her research. Holmberg engages with both the socio-cultural and the political-economic dimensions of the waste multispecies assemblage, noting the extent to which this work of urban engineering is constitutive of the urban. Rather than simply parasitical, these

formations are veritable ‘para-sites’ of urbanisation (Doherty, 2019), occurring at their fringes, in its processes of ruination (Tsing, 2015).

Furthering an attention to bugs, in the following essay Andrija Filipović explores the intersection between humans, insects and urbanisation. In the post-socialist decay of Belgrade, the unequal process of neoliberal urbanisation intersects with the heightened multispecies mobility provided by global logistics and the precarious environmental condition of the Anthropocene. This mix produces both a thriving ecosystem and an atmosphere of fear in the city, at the centre of which are mosquitoes, marmorated stink bugs and harlequin ladybirds. These animals seem to form non-individualisable, threatening crowds. In such a contentious context, it is evident the extent to which ‘the multiplicity of historical, economic, urbanistic and other processes and practices, relations and circumstances’ intersect with animals in producing ecologies and mobilising processes that are political, economical, securitarian, and affective.

Changing scale, in the following contribution, Donna Houston focuses on the case of the Black cockatoo in Australia, exploring the entanglement between living beings and urban infrastructures in the context of changes in land use, environmental degradation, deforestation, and uneven development. As cities are simultaneously threatening *and* rescuing animals (30% of threatened species in Australia live in urban intersections), Houston proposes a novel ethical and practical engagement with urban animals, one able to attend animal cultures, stories and temporalities. Black cockatoos have various temporalities and agential life-worlds often ‘out of sync with much contemporary Western urban planning and conservation practices’. With reference to the framework outlined above, her proposal goes in the direction of reinventing the interspecific intensities in a non-colonial way, through a process of attuning to a rich, polyphonic assemblage.

Moving to South-East Asia, Nhi Ha Nguyen contributes a study of a different relation to birds, namely the ornamental birdkeeping of the red-whiskered bulbul, a native species of Vietnam. Nguyen shows the liminal dimension of the relationship between humans and bulbuls, ‘not truly “wild”, yet not quite a family pet to socialise with the rest of the household ... these birds seem more aptly described as an investment – of time, money, and effort in pursuit of socialisation opportunities’. As a site of contradiction and overlapping between domestic and feral, private and public, work and leisure, bulbul-keeping provides a valuable insight into a rapidly urbanising Vietnam, and also contributes to an analysis of human-animal urban interaction formats.

Whereas aesthetic relations were paramount in the previous two essays, the following two move to pressing issues of coexistence, excess, and co-working. Questions of life and death are of course crucial in the treatment of animals when they are framed as either resources for, or as problems to, humans. Jacquelyn Johnston looks at what she calls ‘incongruous killings’ of cats in the context of Trap-Neuter-Return programmes in Miami, FL. She argues that TNR programmes try to implement a biopolitical management that makes cats live and work for a specific governance frame. What the paper highlights is the constant re-categorisation of animals across a spectrum that goes from the domestic to the wild, with impact on their degree of individuation; in particular, Johnston argues, the ambiguous categorisation of ‘free roaming’ opens the way to frame cats as a ‘social problem’ to be tackled.

A different picture appears when we turn to the case of urban animals working with humans. Bradley Rink and Justin Crow bring us to Cape Town, South Africa, looking at the

geography of coexistence between working urban animals and their humans. The joint experience of horse cart drivers and their horses is one of negotiating space, mobility and livelihood in the city. While pivotal for early modern urban mobility, horses have been increasingly marginalised with the advent of automobility, and have increasingly been recast as either hampering or at best folkloristic presences in the urban landscape. Yet, this human/animal assemblage is still common in many contexts around the world, tied as it is to the survival of an informal economy struggling to maintain a place in a general politics of mobility where animals tend to be perceived as 'out of place'. As hinted above, personal attachment to the horses also provides a rich illustration of the issue of interspecies intensity.

Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, in the following essay Irus Braverman brings together a seemingly un-urban context (ocean life) and the city, via the lens of coral hobbyists and aquarists. She explores the growing hobby of coral aquaria in urban homes, tracing the recent history of this phenomenon as well as taking into account the contingent question of the fate of corals in the Anthropocene. Because corals are both animals and clones (in other words, because their degree of individuation remains fuzzy), this peculiar ontology further allows Braverman to question the mainstream regulatory modes of classifying animals, as the corals living in urban aquaria inevitably escape easy classifications between wild and captive, pet and domesticated, one and many, commercial and communal, plant and animal, and even life and death.

The condition of corals is peculiar, yet in some ways, it can only be understood starting from a more classic case of human–animal institutionalised interaction, namely the zoo. Researching the Zurich zoo, Priska Gisler looks at this quintessential disciplinary relation between human and animals in the city. She analyses the historical evolution of the functional aesthetics of the zoo's guide map, which she describes as a technology aimed at creating 'an apparent ecology of proximities between animals and humans, and between the urban and the wild'. Maps are imbued with implicit ideas about the nature of 'the wild', fraught with colonial legacies as well as with notions of spectacle, control, and comfort.

But as we know, wilderness is not always enjoyable. In the final piece of the collection, Shelley Alexander and Dianne Draper explore the awkward human-coyote coexistence in the Foothills Parklands of Alberta, Canada, one of Canada's fastest urbanising landscapes. The interest here is particularly in the *narratives* of human/coyote coexistence. Based on extensive interviews, the authors highlight how ideas of home and transgression, 'natural' and 'unnatural' killing, biodiversity and biosecurity, are all conveyed by our relations to the coyote. The case thus illuminates the tensions and contradictions of the new ecologies of proximities in the urban environment: 'the coyote – the authors contend – is emblematic of how humans engage with other species and ecosystems and therefore may be used to characterise co-existence challenges more broadly'. Ultimately, these questions prelude to some of the largest ethical-political questions of the present: How to treat wild urban animals? How to configure a 'civility towards the wild', which, difficult as it seems, is the only way forward in the rapidly changing hybrid landscapes of the present?

Notes

1. In the rich literature, see for instance the lively debate ongoing between the two fields of urban political ecology and planetary urbanism (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2015; Connolly, 2019; Tzaninis *et al.*, 2020).

2. See <https://chriswoebken.com/Holobiont-Urbanism>
3. The theory of 'bare life' developed by Agamben (1998), drawing from Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, and applied in particular to the Shoah, here finds its natural extension: like the Lager and Gulag human being, the industrial animal is a literal livestock that cannot be sacrificed, but is constantly killed. For his part, Lorimer (2007) has pointed out the extent to which the notion of 'nonhuman charisma' is consistent with a Deleuzian notion of singularity as the 'congealing of a particular mode of individuation'. A wholly other matter is whether the anthropomorphism of the 'face' would be an adequate strategy to counter this thanatopolitics in the first place. Despret (2016) has shown that animals, even in tamed and exploited conditions such as industrial farming or laboratory study, are not simply pawns in the hands of humans, but act by making deliberate choices, and develop relations which are far more complex and unpredictable than normally assumed.
4. See also Van Dooren's (2015) suggestion that ferality can be a valuable 'lens for thinking about the wild, about destruction and control, that works across these domains; and a set of relationships whereby organisms and systems of production tangibly and consequentially shape each others possibilities and consequences.'

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