

Animals in and beyond organisations, post-humanism and anthropocentrism

Supervisors: [Dr Caroline Clarke](#) and [Dr Charles Barthold](#), Department of People and Organisations (DPO)

Project Description:

The organisation of animals is a fascinating and yet under-researched topic in the field of organization studies, but is it merely one of facilitation and neutrality? Despite how they are omnipresent in organisations, until recently very little has been said about animals, whether in relation to their explicitly productive purpose e.g. forming part of the food chain, ‘testing’ potentially harmful products, guiding blind people, or where processes are implicitly productive, for instance in the context of service-oriented organisations e.g. used for entertainment in zoos, circuses, hunting, or as pets in animal shows. As a species, we humans simultaneously profess to care for animals, while also ruthlessly exploiting them for food, pleasure, clothes, companionship, experimentation, transport or so-called sport/entertainment, often without acknowledging any moral contradiction (Wolfe, 2003; Francione, 2004; Cole and Stewart, 2016). Organisations of course, facilitate, encourage, profit from, and arrange for the smooth execution of (bureaucratic) processes that make these specific human-animal relations possible, but can we remain uncritical of their role in rendering animals as taken-for-granted resources?

Critical animal studies, and strands of what is termed ‘posthumanist’ thinking, problematise arrangements where the animal is used as a resource at the disposal of humans, and indeed for their disposal. This is the case because any differentiation between humans and non-humans is always based on anthropocentric (human as the top of the hierarchy) arrangements, and such hierarchies tend to ‘work’ by privileging those who are considered to be elite, while excluding many other types of others. Even though humans are labelled ‘animal’, human-animals disregard this suffix, preferring to refer the other as a non-human living being. These anthropocentric views, legitimise how they are treated as such by organisations on an everyday basis, with Calvo, for example, pointing to systems of social organization that tend to violently ‘privilege’[s] the human’ over the non-human animate world’ (2008, p.34), while Tito (2008), among others, calls for a departure from ‘human chauvinism’, by situating the non-human animal as a subject.

Mass organisational processes that deal with animals include those involved in the food system which deals with millions of animal bodies from farming and slaughter houses to retail, while ‘managing’ animals can be the goal of specific organisational processes such as governmental agencies or NGOs. Different types of organisations of work are related to animals, and a number of professions deal to a large extent with animals such as veterinary surgeons (Clarke and Knights, 2018a; Clarke and Knights, 2018b), who do so according to very specific, yet ambiguous, codes of practice. However, the work of butchers or abattoir workers are regulated differently, and correspond to separate organisational identities, where for instance animals are transformed and relegated to the status of ‘meat’.

There are a number of discussions about animal rights and the question of sentience in political philosophy, and there is some activism in order to consider animals as persons with an improved legal status or more radical demands. This resonates with the fact that animals by and large are not treated ethically or equally by society and organisations (Hamilton and McCabe, 2016), at least in the West. In particular, animals are used in instrumental and unethical ways by organisations linked to the food (Krawczyk and Barthold, 2018), and other industries, for example Volkswagen was recently found guilty of using monkeys covertly to test the tolerance of diesel fumes in relation to their cars.

There is however, an emergent literature on animals in management and organisation studies (Doré and Michalon, 2016; Hannah and Robertson, 2016; Hillier and Byrne, 2016; Labatut et al., 2016, Sage et al., 2016; Sayers, 2016; Skoglund and Redmalm, 2016). The call would welcome applications from students interested in any of the issues mentioned above. More specifically, it would be relevant to analyse how specific organisational processes deal with animals and what this entails in terms of relations of power and/ or in terms of organisational identities. Additionally, we would be interested in applications interrogating organisational ethics and animals. This could include theoretical discussions upon ethics relating to specific organisational contexts (see Coulter, 2016). For instance, it would make sense to analyse how managing unethical operations works and how it is related to specific organisational identities. Furthermore, it would be fruitful to look into resistance to unethical ways to treat animals either inside organisations through employee resistance, whistleblowing or outside organisations through activism or NGOS.

We would be interested as well about analyses of alternative ways to treat animals in organisational context. This would imply to identify ethical organisational practices in relations to animals and analyse them in depth. This could relate to alternative managing in or outside the capitalist market in the Global North or the Global South, for instance through cooperatives.

We would be open to any qualitative methodology. This could entail interviews, ethnography or documentary analysis. Furthermore, we would be open to methodologies drawing on cultural studies, literary criticism or visual analysis (Bell and Davison, 2013). Finally, we would also welcome a robust and novel theoretical contribution as long as it makes a clear connection to organisation studies. The former could be informed by philosophy, critical theory and critical animal studies as well as any other relevant stream of literature.

About the supervisors:

Caroline is currently writing up her research with veterinary surgeons, and has published papers on this topic in relation to anthropocentric practices. Recently, Caroline's views have wandered into the area of critical animal studies, which she finds interesting. Caroline has supervised many doctoral students successfully, on subjects as diverse as identity, gender, surveillance, headteachers, Jungian archetypes and whistleblowers. Charles has worked on poststructuralist theory, neoliberalism and financialisation. More recently, his work has moved towards the animal in organisation studies.

Reference / readings:

- Bell, E. and Davison, J. (2013) 'Visual management studies: empirical and theoretical approaches', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15 (2): 167–184.
- Calvo, E. (2008) "'Most farmers prefer blondes': The dynamics of anthroparchy in animals becoming meat', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 6: 32-45.
- Coulter, K. (2016) *Animals, Work, and the Promise of Interspecies Solidarity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clarke, C. and Knights, D. (2018a) 'Practice makes perfect? Skillful performances in veterinary work', *Human Relations*. Online first.

- Clarke, C. and Knights, D. (2018b) 'Who's a good boy then? Anthropocentric masculinities in veterinary practice', *Gender, Work & Organization*. Online first.
- Cole, M. and Stewart, K. (2016) *Our Children and Other Animals: The Cultural Construction of Human-Animal Relations in Childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Doré, A. and Michalon, J. (2016) 'What makes human-animal relations "organizational"? The description of anthrozootechnical agencements', *Organization*, 24 (6): 761–780.
- Francione, G.L. (2008) 'Animals – Property or Persons?', *Rutgers Law School Faculty Papers*, 2004 (Paper 21).
- Hamilton, L. and McCabe, D. (2016) "'It's just a job": Understanding emotion work, De-Animalization and the compartmentalization of organized animal slaughter,' *Organization*, 23 (3): 330–350.
- Hannah, D.R. and Robertson, K. (2016) 'Human-animal work: a massive, understudied domain of human activity', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 26 (1): 1–3.
- Hillier, J. and Byrne, J. (2016) 'Is extermination to be the legacy of Mary Gilbert's cat?', *Organization*, 23 (3): 387–406.
- Knights, D. and Clarke, C. (2017) 'Pushing the boundaries of amnesia and myopia: a critical review of the literature on identity in management and organization studies,' *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19 (3): 337–356.
- Krawczyk, V.J. and Barthold, C. (2018) 'The affordance of compassion for animals: a filmic exploration of industrial linear rhythms', *Culture and Organization*, 24 (4), 268–284.
- Labatut, J., Munro, I. and Desmond, J. (2016) 'Introduction: animals and organizations,' *Organization*, 23 (3): 315–329.
- Sayers, J. (2016) 'A report to an academy: On carnophallogocentrism, pigs and meat-writing,' *Organization*, 23 (3): 370–386.
- Sage, D., Justesen, L., Dainty, A., Tryggestad, K. and Mouritsen, J. (2016) 'Organizing space and time through relational human–animal boundary work: exclusion, invitation and disturbance,' *Organization*, 23 (3): 434–450.
- Skoglund, A., and D. Redmalm (2017) "'Doggy-biopolitics": governing via the first dog,' *Organization*, 24 (2): 240–266.
- Tito, J. (2008) 'On animal immortality: an argument for the possibility of animal immortality in light of the History of Philosophy', in Castricano, J. (Ed) *An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World. Animal Subjects*. Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 285–300.
- Wolfe, C. (Ed.) (2003) *Zoontologies: the Question of the Animal*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.