



## TABULA RASA ISSUE 31 (JUNE 2019)

### *Zoo anthropologies: the animal question*

Which place do animals occupy in contemporary social theory? In the last few decades, popular culture and the movements for animal rights have provided evidence of the political implications of the status endured by non-human animals. This has in turn shown a gap in social theoretical thinking about the place of animals within human society. In this context, post-humanist approaches in cultural studies, social studies on science, environmental philosophy, and anthropology, raise concerns about the intrinsic anthropocentrism in modern humanism, closely articulated to manifold racial and gender power asymmetries. Once the historic and situational character of human condition has been made evident, it is necessary to underline the constitutive co-becoming of the human species along with other species.

We happen to be what we are by virtue of the relational materialities that make us up, which includes non-human animal species, and in general, the varied eco-systems in Earth. On the other hand, the outcomes of scientific research, from cognitive ethology, geography and animal ecology increasingly blur the limits between human animal and non-human animal cognitive abilities, as long as they both share differentiating features, such as reflection and response abilities.

This issue of *Tabula Rasa* aims to receive contributions addressing the animal issue from humanities and social sciences perspectives. Daily life scenarios, such as species conservation practices, the use of animals in laboratories, polemics around meat industry, conservation approaches at zoos, human animal and non-human animal relationships, as pets, and so on, open the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between natural sciences, social sciences and humanities.

Thus, building on a perspective addressing multi-species assemblages, we suggest the following questions to advance this debate: How do social and cultural practices emerge from the relationships between multiple species? What histories of capital networks have taken animal forms of life to extinction, and to enforce new precariousness scenarios? Which questions are pertinent to carry out social research that takes animal response ability into account? What is the rationale underlying animal abuse and abandonment in human social

settings, where companion animals are used and abused, but are also a target of their cruelty? Lastly, which care practices and forms of obligation (ethical-political) are applicable to a world on the verge of extinction?

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