

Guest Editorial. Introduction: For a Critically Posthumanist Sociology in Precarious Times

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Guest editorial

Introduction: For a Critically Posthumanist Sociology in Precarious Times

Zoos and bios conjoined: Such is the posthuman ethos, which invokes the biological/ecological community of “companion species” that compose our lifeworld, without which we cannot exist. The COVID-19 viral presence, though invasive in our world, changes our self-perception: no longer a single macro-organism, we are in fact an “assemblage” of microorganisms, upon which life depends absolutely (Baumlin, 2020: 3).

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic reached the United Kingdom in late January 2020, thereby ensuring that the final stages of this Special Issue came together at an extraordinary time: a time that could very well signal the end of the world as we knew it. By July 2020, over ten million coronavirus cases had been recorded globally, and the number of related *human* deaths now exceeds half a million. As we write this Editorial, we are painfully aware of the connections between industrial animal agriculture and the emergence of COVID-19. Animal abuse and environmental issues are linked and give rise to major public health issues – live animal trade, eating animals and industrialised agriculture have combined to generate zoonoses, in addition to the usual suspects for environmental pollution (WHO, 2010). There have long been warnings about zoonoses both before and after previous strains of flu viruses, such as SARS and Avian Flu. As humanity has become a predominantly urban species, human settlement, work, transport and a range of social practices make the lives of vulnerable creatures more so, encroaching on and eliminating habitats, and driving wild animals into closer proximity with humans. It remains to be seen whether this pandemic will have any impact on the demand for meat (‘wild’ or farmed), dairy, and other animal-based products. The experiences of SARs, MERs and EBOV (Ebola) were not instructive in this regard. However, predictably, we are already seeing familiar arguments for ‘business as usual’ gain in momentum and visibility, just as the next zoonotic pandemic ‘waits in the wings’ (Lebedev, 2020).

The wet markets of Asian countries have however, been demonised in an attempt to assert that this current zoonotic epidemic is an isolated incident rather than an endemic condition of the networks of commoditisation that turn nonhuman creatures into food. As might be expected, the treatment of farmed animals in some countries has been even grimmer than the everyday routinized mass violence that characterises animal agriculture (see Cudworth, 2015). In the United States between the end of April and mid-September 2020, pigs and chickens were subject to ‘depopulation’ by alternative methods that were deemed acceptable when slaughterhouses are closed but which have been identified as highly unethical in causing prolonged suffering. Two million ‘meat chickens’ and 61,000 ‘laying hens’ have been killed by methods including smothering with foam (such as is used in fire-fighting). Up to 10,069,000 pigs are likely to have been killed by various methods

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3 including ingesting poisoned food, being suffocated by the closing of ventilators and being
4 subject to 'blunt force trauma'; meaning, for example, piglets being thrown to the ground
5 until they are dead (*The Guardian*, 2020). In writing of other creatures who are victims of
6 the economic disruption caused by the current crisis -- 'racing' animals such as horses and
7 greyhounds, animals confined in laboratories, zoos or 'wildlife parks' -- and currently also
8 subject to a culling spree, Paula Arcari remarks that
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11 [...] our uses of animals proceed with no regard for back up plans or contingencies. When things go to
12 shit, animals are on their own, which is what makes their entrapment in capitalist political economies
13 so doubly heartless. That this animal-industrial complex is so directly implicated in the COVID-19
14 pandemic *and* the climate crisis, with myriad animals being substantial victims of both, only
15 emphasises the cycles of violence that result from capitalist commodification. (Arcari, 2020)
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18 The current pandemic both exposes the fragility of current systems of social organisation
19 which exclude, consume and oppress, while also providing a diversion from the way in
20 which those relational systems of oppression routinely operate. In this context, the Black
21 Lives Matter protest surge, awakened by the murder of George Floyd in the United States
22 on 25 May 2020, has provided a beacon of hope and has shown that a return to 'normal' is
23 contested ground. Patrisse Khan-Cullors explains the intersectional nature of the Black Lives
24 Matter movement that challenges the denialism of capitalist normality:
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27 [...] if we weren't aware of it before, now we cannot turn away: we live in a world where hatred is so
28 deep that adults are fine ensuring death sentences for us young people who have done nothing but
29 be in the world who we were born to be (2018: 87)
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32 In this Special Issue, which brings together radical academic voices drawing on the influence
33 of critical animal studies, eco-feminism, anarchist studies and critical theory, contributors
34 explore what normality in the Anthropocene means for humans, other animals and the
35 planet. The normality that the ruling class now crave is the normality of disastrous human
36 generated climatic change and the mass extinction of other species; it is the normality in
37 which capitalism seriously threatens the survival of our planet.
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40 Contributors to this Special Issue do not welcome a return to such normality, instead
41 they dare to envision the posthuman communities that we can build in which social justice
42 for humans, animals and the Earth can thrive. Whilst our contributors draw from a range of
43 influences, the inspiration for this Special Issue comes from the success of several anarchism
44 and animal liberation panels at the Anarchist Studies Network (ASN) conference held
45 biannually at Loughborough University, to which the editors have significantly contributed
46 as organisers and speakers. It is therefore unsurprising to note that anarchist theory and
47 practice has emerged as a common thread linking many of the contributions.
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54 **Posthumanist Sociology in the Anthropocene**

55 The growing interest in the social relations of the more-than-human world has spread apace
56 across the social sciences. This surge of interest has questioned key foundations of Western
57 modernity for the conceptual separation of 'the human' from other creatures and the
58 'natural' world has been foundational for how 'we' understand the world we inhabit. But
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3 what happens when 'nature' is no more? The concept of the Anthropocene, along with
4 other crisis concepts, have mounted a considerable challenge to Western (and other)
5 framings of human exception.
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9 *Anthropocene and its others: terminology for an epoch of crises*
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11 The notion of the Anthropocene has its origin in the Earth sciences and describes a
12 new geological epoch in which humankind has become a major force shaping our geology
13 (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). This word, Crutzen and Stoermer claimed, would capture the
14 ways in which the extent of human activity has meant that we have written ourselves into
15 the geological record on such an unprecedented scale. When Crutzen and Stoermer talk of
16 'human activity', they are talking about all the kinds of things we think of currently as
17 'environmental' problems or threats, such as population growth, the growth of urbanism so
18 that it has become a dominant way of life, consumption of fossil fuels, emission of
19 greenhouse gases, speed of species extinction and so on. Through such activity, a sub-set of
20 humanity has changed the conditions of our own existence, along with that of all other
21 species. As Ruth Panelli puts it, we are forced to become increasingly aware
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26 [...] of the complexity and interconnectivity of life. The never neat divisions between the economic,
27 political, cultural, environmental, and the social have been further exposed as the densely entwined
28 character of contemporary lives becomes more evident via discussions of cosmopolitanism,
29 mobilities, sociospatial relations, interdependence, intersectionality (Panelli, 2010: 79).
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31 This Special Issue considers some of the ways in which some social scientists have
32 responded to the implications of the Anthropocene and the huge questions it raises.
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35 The notion of the Anthropocene is a strong claim and at a huge scale -- a 'geostory'
36 as Bruno Latour describes it (Latour, 2014, see also 2018). As a result, it has captured the
37 imagination of those working across academic disciplines and featured so much in the
38 media. There have been a fair few criticisms, however, with which contributors to this
39 volume have some sympathy. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009) considers that a key problem with
40 the way in which the Anthropocene is conceptualised is that it focuses on an imperilled
41 planet as a result of human lifeways, rather than an imperilled humanity. So, it doesn't
42 really take account of the ways in which we really are 'all in this together' -- to borrow a
43 phrase from the UK's politics of austerity. A threat to the 'ongoingness of the planet' is a
44 threat to many species, particularly mammals like humans. Many have criticised the
45 humancentredness of the term - the anthropos is the centre of attention, yet again. The
46 Anthropocene is a geostory in which humans are responsible for ruining the planet. It
47 suggests anthropogenic destruction is an inevitability given humanity's 'super-natural'
48 nature (Chiew, 2015: ix). We are indeed become death the destroyer of worlds, to steal
49 from Oppenheimer. The Anthropocene is a humancentric concept not just because it gives
50 pre-eminence to humans as environmental changers but also as environmental saviours -
51 the makers of worlds. The Anthropocene suggests humans are to be relied on for
52 transcending such problems through technology. In this sense, the Anthropocene can be
53 understood as a discourse which confirms humanity's pre-eminence; ultimately, it is
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3 wedded to human agency and human exceptionalism while being seen to undermine both.
4 From a critically posthumanist perspective, then, this is a fundamentally humanist concept!
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6 A key difficulty with the Anthropocene for critical scholarship is also that it suggests
7 that 'humanity' is a force of nature that is singular. Rather, as many have pointed out, we
8 might characterise our current condition as one produced by the lifeways of a distinct social
9 and geographically defined group; a subset of humanity – wealthy, white, Western, male,
10 settler, and so on; and it is to try and capture this, that other terms have been proposed.
11 Thus terms such as the Capitalocene (Malm, 2016; Moore, 2015), Oliganthropocene
12 (Gemenne, 2015) and the Plantationocene (Haraway, 2015; Mitman, 2019) have been
13 developed to make clear 'who' and what practices are responsible. 'Capitalocene', coined by
14 Andreas Malm, is becoming ever more widely used. Given that Crutzen dates the origins of
15 the Anthropocene to industrialism, this is surely a befitting term for our current malaise.
16 The history of capitalism with its imperatives to grow, expand and squeeze profit (from
17 cheap land, labour, resources, if we follow Moore, 2015); to extract, to commoditize and
18 commodify things, creatures and relations, has been a ruinous planetary force. Donna
19 Haraway (2015, 2017) has also been a strong advocate for the 'Plantationocene', because
20 the history of the plantation is a crucial element of the history of industrial capitalism. If we
21 consider the plantation system as a global network of imperial relations involving the
22 transportation of people, animals and plants, mono-cropping, land-grabbing, species
23 extinction and population displacement and eradication, and forced labour systems (the
24 slave labour of humans and other animals, or waged labour) then its planetary impact is
25 hugely significant. Plantation mono-cropping is still very much with us if we think of the
26 networks of exploitation, dependency, deforestation, habitat destruction and soil infertility
27 associated with palm oil and soy. The plantationocene is important as it draws attention to
28 the planetary effects of extractive practices, monoculture development, and coercive labour
29 structures that have undergirded the development of naturecultures across the globe. It
30 illuminates the ecological and economic legacies of imperialism including patriarchal and
31 racist hierarchies, and inequities. While the idea of the gynocene has not been developed as
32 a distinct 'cene thesis' there is a huge body of important scholarship from ecofeminist,
33 ecological feminist, indigenous and indigenous influenced feminisms and ecologisms which
34 locates anthropogenic violence as coextensive with patriarchal domination; linking ecocide
35 and femicide. The contributors to this collection, draw inspiration from, and are embedded
36 in, the generation of ideas working out our current malaise and tracking the trails of how we
37 got here, taking account of how intra human exploitation, inequality and violence is bound
38 up with human relations with other creatures and the planet.
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50 As has been demonstrated during the coronavirus pandemic, the short-term policy
51 frames of capitalist governments are undone by unexpected events in an increasingly
52 unpredictable world. These policy frames are inadequate when we need think not only
53 about responsibilities to the next generation of humans in a particular place, but about the
54 complex vulnerabilities we may cause for generations yet to come, and in different parts of
55 the globe, alongside our situation in webs of relations with multifarious non-human species.
56 The 'old normal' was, in reality, an era in which mass human poverty and inequality
57 abounds, where catastrophic climatic change threatens life on the planet, and in which
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3 other species are already experiencing an extinction crisis. The term 'Chthulucene', is a way
4 of thinking forward from this. Developed by Donna Haraway (2016a; 2016b), it focuses on
5 the ways in which the entangled, intra-dependent, multi-species assemblages which inhabit
6 the planet are going to be working out how to 'survive on a damaged planet' (see Tsing,
7 2017); and come to terms with the 'dreadful' powers of the earth which climate chaos
8 unleashes. We consider it vital to think beyond, to consider future possibilities and whether
9 in these times of destruction and precarity, (some) humans might find ways of forming
10 alliances and promoting partial healing on a damaged planet. Futures thinking is hard and
11 has been robustly criticised in social science and beyond for being 'speculative' and thereby
12 'unscientific'. Yet it is more necessary now, perhaps than ever, to be thinking about and
13 making a different future.

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19 The papers in this Special Issue evolved from a call by the editors which raised some
20 troubling questions for life in the Anthropocene/Capitalocene/Plantationocene: Will
21 humans join other Great Apes already on the critically endangered list? What does it mean
22 to appreciate that we live in a multi-species world of co-dependencies in which other beings
23 and things may have a point of view? (see Fox, 2006, Cudworth, 2017; Cudworth and
24 Hobden, 2018; Sorenson and Johnson, 2016). What does this demand of human beings in
25 responding to the lives and needs of other creatures and the worlds on which they depend?
26 How might we respond to key questions for our time, surmised rather brutally by Haraway
27 (2016a) as who lives? and who dies? and so what? When it comes to the treatment of some
28 domesticate animals, we are also compelled to consider not only how non-human creatures
29 and plant worlds are killed and destroyed but also how life is *made* to live and *let* die and
30 the fast and slow violence associated with these systemic practices (Nixon, 2011; Wolfe,
31 2012). Posthumanism, to which we will now turn, has both generated these questions and
32 been an important scholarly move in supplying both some partial answers and an increasing
33 array of questions needing urgent attention.

34 35 36 37 38 39 40 *Posthumanisms and posthumanist sociology*

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42 The 'posthumanist turn' in the social sciences demands that we no longer see
43 ourselves, humans, as anything other than multi-species beings co-constituted with a
44 myriad of other beings and things and dependent upon them (see Bingham, 2006). Yet
45 posthumanism is a contested concept (Braun, 2004). The term posthumanism has been
46 understood in a variety of different ways (Wolfe, 2010: xi); but it does have a coherence. A
47 clear common thread running through posthumanist scholarship is that it represents a
48 reaction against the view of human exceptionalism. This view understands humanity to be
49 marked off from the huge diversity of non-human animal life due to apparently exceptional
50 characteristics, such as the possession of syntactical language or of 'free will'.

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55 Erika Cudworth and Steve Hobden (2018) consider that the term 'posthuman' has
56 been used in three principle ways: in the sense of a world after humanity, as a project of
57 human uplift through technology, and as a world comprised of the more than human. Along
58 with others, they have argued that the projects of 'transhumanism' are not 'posthumanist',
59 but rather, ethically and politically questionable approaches advocating human 'uplift' from
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3 the frailties of the body through the use of technology (Cudworth and Hobden, 2011; see
4 also Thomas, this volume; and for an example, Bostrum, 2016). Others have a more
5 inclusive approach to posthumanism, and a useful mapping of approaches, in particular in
6 relation to the human/technology interface can be found in Firth and Robinsons'
7 contribution to this volume. Some of the ways the posthuman has featured in popular
8 culture and literature has been apocalyptic, taking the 'post' to literally mean 'after' and
9 suggesting future worlds will be characterised by fewer humans leading highly challenged
10 existences, or even by the absence of the human (Rees, 2004; Weisman, 2008; see also
11 Haraway 2016b, for her experiments with Sci-Fi influenced futures thinking). Finally,
12 Cudworth and Hobden suggest that posthuman has been applied to a range of ways of
13 thinking, across disciplines, which understand the world as comprised of more than human
14 beings and things, and which problematizes human centred scholarship, political and social
15 life. These ways of thinking can be understood to be *posthumanist*.

21 Posthumanist critique raises vital questions for human being in the world and
22 demands qualitative and quantitative shifts "in our thinking about what exactly is the basic
23 unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other
24 inhabitants of this planet" (Braidotti, 2013: 2). However, it needs to be acknowledged that
25 both the analyses emerging within posthumanism and the political projects these positions
26 imply or endorse cover a range of political positions. Within posthumanist thinking there are
27 a range of scholars and positions. As is ever the case, individual scholars, ideas, concepts
28 and theories, slip over the boundaries taxonomies create (Cudworth, 2005). It is perhaps
29 best to consider different positions on different scales of criticality on a number of issues. A
30 few examples might help illustrate this point.

35 One strand of new materialism/posthumanism might be referred to as 'new
36 vitalism'. The latter has been particularly associated with the influence of Gilles Deleuze
37 (Coole and Frost, 2010: 9). In political work, this position is well illustrated by the
38 'enchanted' or 'vital' materialism of Jane Bennett (2010) who argues that inorganic matter
39 such as kerbside litter (trash) or an electricity grid, all exhibit force and vitality rendering
40 them active, productive and self-creating. A second approach, which Cudworth and Hobden
41 (2015, 2018) refer to as 'hybridization', can be illustrated by the contributions of Bruno
42 Latour, for whom the social world is an assembly of material entities and processes which is
43 constituted through the interactions of all kinds of matter (human and non-human, animate
44 and not) in the form of networks. In both hybridity and vitalism, there is a tendency to
45 horizontalism – relations are not understood to exist in a context of hierarchies of power.
46 The flat, non-hierarchical networks of hybridity approaches and the lively character of
47 matter in vital materialism are instructive and useful approaches to thinking about more-
48 than-human social worlds. However, they are not sufficient. A key characteristic of the
49 enterprise of sociology has been to examine the qualities of relationships, and for critical
50 sociology, this has meant understanding the constitution and practice of power. In our view,
51 a third approach, critical posthumanism is required. While there are differences of emphasis
52 and focus, what these have in common is that they draw upon aspects of critical theory
53 broadly defined and including Marxism, anarchisms, feminisms, ecologisms, alter-
54 colonialism and more. In doing so, they are attentive to the nature of power, its hierarchical

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3 orderings, exclusions, expulsions and its intersected and complex forms. It is this more
4 critical perspective which informs the contributions to this Special Issue.
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6 Sociology has been particularly resistant – compared, for example, to other social
7 sciences such as geography, or to the humanities such as cultural studies or philosophy, to
8 the study of the non-human. The humancentrism of sociology has been challenged on a
9 number of fronts, however. Despite a silence on global warming in the disciplinary
10 mainstream (Lever-Tracy, 2008), we have seen the emergence of environmental sociology
11 since the 1980s, albeit that this remains a relatively small and discreet area (see Dunlap,
12 2010). Concern with environmental crisis has coalesced around the recently emergent
13 sociology of climate change to which key figures have contributed in terms of the sociology
14 of catastrophe and risk, public policy, and the idea of a ‘post-carbon’ sociology (Beck, 2009,
15 2010; Giddens, 2009; Urry, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). A second challenge comes from the
16 interventions of scholars in the sociology of science and technology, now a distinct and
17 productive sub-field of the discipline (Callon, 1986; Latour 1993, for an overview see Law,
18 2008). Finally, the development of interdisciplinary human-animal studies has prompted
19 sociologists to reflect on sociology’s neglect of animals (Alger, 2003; Benton, 1993) and to
20 argue that just as sociology has been willing to consider a widening array of forms of social
21 exclusion and oppression and the links between them, it must now consider non-human
22 animals (Peggs, 2013). In addition, sociological animal studies has reflected on the
23 difference including nonhuman creatures makes for methods (for example, Hamilton and
24 Taylor 2017; Sutton in this volume), concepts and theories (for example, Cudworth, 2011;
25 Peggs, 2014) and undertake empirical research in an attempt to take account of nonhuman
26 animals in key areas of sociological concern such as work and labour (Coulter, 2016), family
27 and kinship (Charles, 2016), personhood and the self (Irvine, 2004), community (Cudworth,
28 2017), the body (Peggs, 2018), food and diet (Twine, 2014), socialisation and childhood
29 (Cole and Stewart, 2016). Bob Carter and Nickie Charles (2018) argue that in order for
30 sociology to take non-human animals seriously, the foundational concepts and vocabulary
31 of the discipline need revision. We consider that critical approaches in animal studies have
32 been and will be crucial to such an endeavour. The future of the discipline will be contested,
33 but critically posthumanist sociology which understands ‘humanity’ as one element of ‘the
34 social’, and as embedded in networks of relations of dependency with the non-human
35 lifeworld, will be crucial. Theories and concepts, methods and research practices,
36 substantive areas of concern in our social world need opening up to the presence and
37 significance of more-than-human beings and things to emphasise and reflect the fragility of
38 embodied life.
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51 Critically posthumanist sociology also recognises the importance of an intersectional
52 approach rooted in diverse forms of political challenge and direct action. The sociology of
53 human/non-human relations is not confined to academia, and space has been given in this
54 special issue to reflect activist experiences and issues. Black Lives Matter activists, in a time
55 of pandemic, have engaged in daring and creative forms of direct action. In the UK this
56 includes dismantling a statue in Bristol honouring Edward Colston – an English merchant and
57 later Member of Parliament for the Tories (precursor of the modern Conservative Party)
58 who made his fortune primarily from the Atlantic slave trade (Parkes, 2020). Such forms of
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3 direct action create situations that disrupt what was once regarded as 'normal'. In
4 challenging the disastrous normality of the Anthropocene animal activists and
5 environmental campaigners disrupt the old normal as we begin to construct another world
6 in which posthuman communities can flourish. We need scholarship that responds to the
7 need for different ways of thinking, doing and living; that engages with the imperative to
8 change our world.
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11 12 13 14 **Critically Posthumanist Sociology: thinking, doing, living and changing**

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16 The special issue comprises seventeen papers, organised by four thematic sections. For the
17 first theme, *thinking posthumanist sociology*, contributors were invited to explore issues
18 relating to neoliberal capitalism and the Anthropocene and asked what posthuman social
19 justice might look like. In this section we encouraged contributors to develop critical
20 posthuman sociology by exploring issues of intersectionality and entanglement. The second
21 theme, *doing posthumanist sociology*, offered space for contributors to explore ideas of
22 activism and resistance, to discuss posthuman politics and policy and consider posthuman
23 research practice, ethics, and data. The third theme, *living in posthuman social worlds*,
24 encouraged contributors to explore actually existing posthumanism. This could include living
25 with companion species, violence and non-violence in inter-species relations and the
26 extinction crisis. We also asked contributors to reflect on the role of the animal-industrial
27 complex and state surveillance. In posing these questions we recognised the way that states
28 and police forces have disrupted and brutalised the lives of animal rights activists, for
29 instance in the UK, undercover police have waged a decades long campaign of sexual and
30 psychological abuse against animal rights and environmental justice campaigners (Police
31 Spies Out Of Lives). The final theme, *towards posthumanist social life*, asked contributors to
32 envision intersectional, posthuman communities and intra-species commons. In this theme
33 we wanted to encourage contributions that explored counter cultures, creative practices,
34 veganism, and direct action.
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44 **Thinking Posthumanism**

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46 The Special Issue begins with thinking posthumanism. Matthew Adams' contribution
47 to this, 'Indigenizing the Anthropocene? Specifying and situating multi-species encounters'
48 is a response to the numerous recent calls to 'decolonize' and 'indigenize' the Anthropocene
49 in the social sciences and humanities. In the paper, Adams develops a radical material and
50 relational ontology by drawing on an Indigenous knowledge framework to challenge and
51 extend dominant conceptualisations of the Anthropocene within a posthuman and more-
52 than-human context. Adams draws on the work of Indigenous feminist scholar Zoe Todd to
53 develop an Anthropocene social imaginary: accounting for one's own location; engaging
54 with specific ontologies and locally informed responses to in situ challenges; and reading
55 and citing Indigenous scholarship. Adams also considers Posthuman and Māori approaches
56 to manifold multi-species entanglements shaped by anthropogenic impacts. In particular,
57 the whale and the kāuri tree are considered as enactments of a radically extended relational
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3 ontology. Adams offers a conceptual framework for the Anthropocene that articulates
4 surprising multi-species connections between humans, trees and whales. Adams argues that
5 in approaching the specific and situated application of Indigenous ontologies in some of
6 their grounded everyday social complexity, there is the potential to open up the
7 Anthropocene imaginary to a more radical and ethical relational ontology.
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10 In 'Mapping utopian perspectives on new industrial technology' Rhiannon Firth and
11 Andrew Robinson seek to construct a six-item typology of clusters of perspectives on
12 robotics and related technologies, along two axes. The first axis assesses the expectations of
13 technology and is divided into optimists or pessimists. Optimists invest new technologies
14 with miraculous, utopian, or revolutionary potential whereas pessimists believe the general
15 trend in current technologies is towards greater control, alienation, ecocide, and other
16 unwanted outcomes. The second axis divides authors between humanist and assemblage
17 theories. This distinction comes down to the ontological primacy attached to humans and
18 other actors. 'Humanist' encompasses a variety of positions, from belief in an essential
19 human nature, to belief in an especially important type of human creative power.
20 Assemblage theories see humans as necessarily embedded in, if not effects of, wider
21 assemblages containing nonhuman components such as machines. Firth and Robinson argue
22 that bringing the six perspectives into conversation is a vital task, because these different
23 approaches often ignore or speak past one another, leading to fragmentation, polarisation
24 and a lack of inter-perspectival learning. Firth and Robinson show that bringing the different
25 approaches into contact, and mapping their differences in ways which make them more
26 comparable, can help to identify the points of disagreement and the grounds for these. The
27 authors believe that such work will allow the identification of criteria to choose among, or
28 syncretise, the approaches.
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36 In 'Becoming with in a compost society – Haraway beyond posthumanism', Federica
37 Timeto considers the role of nonhuman animals in the thought of Donna Haraway, moving
38 from her critique of the animal as model or mirror for the evolution of the human body
39 politic to her proposal for a "compost" society. The paper demonstrates Haraway's changing
40 positions in relation to the social role of animals and the deepening of her critique of
41 intersectional relations that subordinate nonhuman animals and animalized people. The
42 paper intertwines a loosely historical approach with a thematic one, focusing on key issues
43 of sociological theory, such as work, agency and kinship, and the way these relate to the
44 animal question in Haraway's writings. Haraway's texts are discussed both broadly and in-
45 depth, and her positionality in terms of both feminism and antispeciesism is foregrounded.
46 Timeto provides us with a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the social role of animals
47 in Haraway's thought and the deepening antispeciesism of her feminist approach that sheds
48 a different light on her positionality in relation to ecofeminism.
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54 In moving us away from earthy entanglements, Alex Thomas takes us back to
55 technological imaginaries in 'On progress and reason: stories of gods, animals and humans'.
56 He suggests that while transhumanists and posthumanists understand the human condition
57 as mutable, for transhumanists, this represents the possibility for enhancement, opening up
58 a teleological narrative of evolution toward. For posthumanists, it represents a fracturing of
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3 the liberal human subject, undermining its hegemonic principles. The former advocates the
4 potentiality of instrumental rationality, while the latter engages with values, demanding
5 ethical consideration of the implications of the unmooring. This paper aims to conceive of a
6 way to underpin posthumanist thought to enable to serve a more effective critique of
7 transhumanist aims. It thereby provides a partially reconstructed enlightenment humanist
8 framework to bolster the effectiveness of posthumanism as a critique of transhumanist
9 thought. The paper recognizes Theodor Adorno's conception that the central contradiction
10 inherent to enlightenment thinking is the entanglement of knowledge and power. Hence,
11 the metanarrative of progress as historical fact is fundamentally imbued with an imperial,
12 colonizing force. For reason to achieve its promise as the organ of progress, it must become
13 self-aware of its own limitations and its own potential destructiveness. Humility is, thus,
14 vital in the task of preventing instrumental reason leading to inhuman ends. Whilst
15 developments such as "metahumanism" attempt to bring "posthumanism" and
16 "transhumanism" into direct conversation, from the perspective of uniting their positions,
17 Thomas considers their antithetical nature and in particular whether posthumanism can
18 provide an effective critique of transhumanism. Drawing on Adorno and Feenberg in
19 particular, Thomas combines elements of posthumanist critique with a partially
20 reconstructed enlightenment humanism to bolster a critique of transhumanism.
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30 **Doing Posthumanism**

31 Markus Longstrum's paper, 'Pippi's Posthuman Power' uses the story of Pippi
32 Longstocking to explore the ambiguity of posthuman heroism. Longstrum begins his paper
33 by asking 'How do we save the planet?' The answer, he argues, invites an examination of an
34 (im)possible posthuman heroism as a means of 'doing' posthumanism, searching for a non-
35 anthropocentric living in a more-than-human world. Longstrum argues that a suitable realm
36 for such an examination is superhero fiction; and, in order to sidestep the superhero
37 imagery of masculinized violence associated with figures such as Batman, Longstrum
38 explains that children's literature produces much more amendable hero-figures. The paper
39 probes the ambiguity of a posthuman heroism by using the story of Pippi Longstocking.
40 Longstrum argues that Pippi Longstocking should be interpreted as a *posthuman figuration*.
41 Longstrum's analysis concerns the Pippi residing in collective imaginations, which stem from
42 the various books, television shows and film versions of the Pippi story. Through this
43 analysis, Longstrum considers how abandoning an anthropocentric saviour-complex –
44 accepting that the human 'we' will never save the planet – has theoretical implications.
45 Longstrum then considers different conceptualisations of power; in particular the
46 differences between power-to and power-over and how, in a capitalist society, power-to
47 becomes power-over. In relation to the Pippi stories, Longstrum argues that this
48 understanding of power in capitalist societies is indicative for exploring the ambiguity of
49 posthuman heroism.
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57 Melissa Laing considers the question of posthumanist doing of the social with an
58 examination of the challenges for social workers when encountering and working with,
59 multispecies households. In 'On being posthuman in human spaces: critical posthumanist
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3 social work with interspecies families', Laing proposes a critical posthumanist orientation to
4 social work as an approach to address the impediments to care experienced by interspecies
5 families. Second, she challenges the anthropocentric assumptions that underpin this
6 exclusion of nonhuman family members in human services disciplines such as social work.
7 Companion animal-inclusive practice with interspecies families in social work is an under
8 researched area, and there is little empirical data available on the nature of this work. In
9 addressing this paucity, the article presents data from a qualitative study into social work
10 and other human services practice in the family violence and homelessness sectors in the
11 state of Victoria, Australia, centring social workers' own accounts of practice. The paper
12 finds that social workers undertook companion animal-inclusive practice to counter
13 vulnerability to interspecies families caused by gender- and species-based violence, and by
14 homelessness. Gender- and species-based violence was exacerbated by a lack of refuge
15 options, and contributed to women considering their companion animals to be their
16 children. The vulnerability that homelessness brought upon interspecies families was
17 amplified by stigma within and external to social work and related professions, and the
18 impediment that experiences of homelessness had on being able to provide care for their
19 nonhuman family members. These factors shaped social work practice with interspecies
20 families. The research findings can be used to inform policy change that includes
21 consideration of nonhuman family members. In addition, this article suggests an urgent
22 need for critical posthuman program design in social work education, with the potential to
23 empower students to challenge assumptions about social work being solely focused on
24 human-centred concerns.
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33 Zoei Sutton's paper 'Researching towards a critically posthumanist future: on the
34 political "doing" of critical research for companion animal liberation' focuses on the
35 complexity of companion animal's positioning in an anthropocentric world. Sutton is
36 concerned with role of research – both the act and the products of – in working towards
37 emancipatory futures. Research methods both shape and are shaped by the social world
38 from which they arise and therefore, Sutton suggests, different research methods have the
39 potential to contribute to a radical rethinking by visibilising realities that perpetuate or
40 challenge dominant, human-centric, problematic ideas and highlighting new ways of being
41 in the world with 'other' animals. Sutton's paper relies on data concerning the lived
42 experiences of negotiating human-pet relationships. In constructing and conducting species-
43 inclusive research with human owners and 'their' animal companions, Sutton found that
44 methods were central to visibilising animals' lived experiences and challenging human-
45 centric narratives of the relationships. Sutton's paper makes an important contribution to
46 emancipatory scholarship by explicitly challenging oppressive entanglements and actively
47 encouraging participants, scholars, and the broader community to engage in less human-
48 centric ways of thinking about animals. Sutton concludes with a call for animal scholars to
49 commit to a critical posthumanist future that explicitly rejects oppressive multi-species
50 relations, and shape their scholarship in ways that reflects this.
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57 'Critical Creatures: Children and Pioneers of Posthuman Pedagogies' by Karin Dinker,
58 draws on rich empirical findings from critical human-animal fieldwork undertaken in three
59 Swedish primary schools (2012- 2017). Dinker's paper pays particular attention to exploring
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3 more fully how children negotiate their own space in the face of adultism, and how this
4 connects this – or their – acts of resistance to broader inter-species struggles concerning
5 nonhuman animals. Here the focus of attention considers how anthropocentric forms of
6 education reinforce and normalise human-animal binaries, in powerful ways. To illustrate
7 this the paper offers a number of persuasive insights. These include reflections on how
8 stories of hunting, domestication and farming are told in ways that ‘bind together and
9 separate the category of children animals’. Reinforcing these divisive stories Dinker notes
10 how (ethical) questions of animal abuse and violence – when the farmed animals are
11 slaughtered – are avoided in the classroom (and when school visits are arranged to a ‘family
12 farm’), or narrated in such a way to reassure the ‘emotional’ child. The second half of the
13 paper focuses on presenting alternative and imagining new futures, foregrounding
14 children’s agency, and help support them to enquire and act ‘according to their moral
15 compass’. In this context an appeal to critical animal geographies and the importance of
16 engaging more nuanced readings of space and place is made.
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23 The final paper in the second section is Nick Prendergrast’s paper, ‘The vegan shift in
24 the Australian animal movement’, which explores two examples of the vegan turn within
25 the animal advocacy movement in Australia. Prendergrast focuses on Animal Liberation
26 Victoria (ALV) and Animals Australia, two organisations that have responded to the ‘vegan
27 turn’ in different ways. The two organisations provide examples of various ways in which
28 veganism has been promoted at the levels of grassroots advocacy and by larger
29 organisations. Prendergrast draws on the campaigning materials of the organisations, a
30 wide range of academic literature and interviews carried out by the author. Prendergrast
31 analyses the vegan shifts in ALV and Animals Australia. ALV provides an example of an
32 organisation shifting to animal rights vegan activism and operating in a grassroots, volunteer
33 run manner. Animals Australia is an example of a larger organisation that has not embraced
34 animal rights vegan activism but has nevertheless moved in a vegan direction in their
35 advocacy. Prendergrast draws on the theory of resource mobilisation, which emphasises the
36 role of resources, particularly financial, in social movements, in order to shed light on
37 different organisational forms and the way in which the size and wealth of an organisation
38 can affect the manner in which veganism is promoted.
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46 **Towards Posthumanist Social Life**

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48 In thinking about living in posthumanist social worlds, Erika Cudworth, David
49 Redmalm, Delia Langstone and Emma Barnes invite us to consider what might be learned
50 from companion species encounters. Focusing on everyday lives and relationships within
51 the household, Erika Cudworth suggests that the quality of ‘home’ is altered by the
52 presence of animal companions in ‘Muddied Living: making home with dog companions’.
53 Little has been written of ‘home’ within sociology, despite ‘home’ capturing a range of social
54 practice. Sociologists examining human-animal companion relations have not considered
55 how relations play out in home space. This paper investigates home as a shared space of
56 multispecies interaction, making the case for a posthuman sociology of home. Conceptions
57 of home as a haven have been critiqued on grounds of the elision of power relations, yet
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3 home has also been understood as a place of resistance to, and refuge from, an exploitative
4 and exclusionary public world. Acknowledging differentiated relations of power and
5 understanding homemaking as a process, Cudworth investigates the playing out of species
6 relations within home space. The paper draws on empirical material from a study of
7 companion species in households and public spaces, deploying ethnographic material
8 gained through extended observation and semi-structured and often mobile interviews with
9 dog 'owners' in urban and rural contexts in the UK. Cudworth argues that dogs transform
10 domestic space through muddying human lives. This process is twofold. First, life in
11 posthumanist households problematizes boundaries between humans and other creatures
12 in terms of relationships, behaviour and use of space. Second, muddied living involves
13 breaching and maintaining domestic order. Muddied living is characterised by tension,
14 power and compromise. Homes are posthuman not just by including non-human animals,
15 but through elements of dog agency in how home is made.
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21 In 'Discipline and puppies: the powers of pet keeping', David Redmalm deploys
22 Foucauldian theory to discuss pet keeping. Empirical studies of pet keeping that rely on this
23 theoretical framework are scarce, and Redmalm's intervention is to adopt Foucault's
24 notion of a bipolar technology of disciplinary power and regulatory biopower to address the
25 tension between discipline and freedom in domestic relationships between human and
26 nonhuman animals commonly referred to as 'pets'. In doing so, the article examines the
27 promises and pitfalls of thinking through pet keeping as a form of lived, posthumanist
28 critique. The paper draws on an interview study with 20 pet owners—most of the interviews
29 being conducted in their homes together with their pets—to conceptualize how they
30 organize their lives in relation to their pets. Redmalm argues that the boundaries of the
31 home, the play of power between bodies, and the "conditions of an unconditional love" are
32 central to producing the pet relationship as inherently meaningful and as an indispensable
33 part of the lives of both pet keepers and pets. A balance between discipline and freedom
34 enables the construction of both human and other identities: pet owners produce their
35 pets' subjectivity by speaking of them as autonomous persons, while pets' presence in the
36 home also enables their owners' subjectivity. While the article argues that pet keeping can
37 challenge anthropocentrism and unsustainable consumption lifestyles, it cautions that it
38 may also reinforce prevailing biopolitical logics, if it remains maintained within a secluded
39 domestic or cultural sphere.
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47 In 'No shit Sherlock"! Canine DNA and policing public space' Delia Langstone draws
48 attention to how nonhuman animals have been largely overlooked in the theorising of
49 surveillance, and make a persuasive argument as to how this ongoing exclusion and neglect
50 of other animals is intensely problematic. In this context Langstone draws on empirical
51 research focused on a pioneering initiative in London (PooPrints), which involves the
52 collection of canine DNA. This research illustrates both how animals are already entangled
53 in elements within 'surveillant assemblages', and also how they extend the research of the
54 surveillant assemblage in important ways. One of these is the way in which DNA surveillance
55 is susceptible to 'function creep', where the act of surveillance goes beyond its stated
56 purpose, and (potentially) leads to a range of disproportionate and highly problematical
57 ethical consequences. In this way, through drawing critical attention to the posthuman
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3 communities of humans and dogs walking in public space, the paper serves as a broader
4 warning the danger of surveillance technology being used not to identify and crack down on
5 environmental nuisances (e.g. dog 'owners' not cleaning up their dog's excrement), but to
6 gather evidence to pursue more serious criminal investigations.
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9 Drawing this section to a close, in 'Cuddle, kill, conserve: a posthuman analysis of the
10 African lion within the South African wildlife security assemblage' Emma Barnes explores
11 the life cycle of a captive bred lion in South Africa. She examines the way lions are produced
12 in captive breeding facilities across the country to provide cubs and juvenile lions for
13 ecotourism, and following this, hunting "trophies." A distinction is made between the "wild"
14 and "captive" lion, a categorization that legitimizes violent and unethical treatment toward
15 those bred specifically to be cuddled and killed. This analysis explores how the lion is
16 remade or modified from wild to commodity and the repercussions this has had throughout
17 the wildlife security assemblage. The paper draws on extensive ethnographic research
18 carried out in South Africa during 2016 that involved conducting informal and semi-
19 structured interviews with activists, breeders, wildlife security personnel and
20 conservationists drawing out the interspecies relations that influenced the encounters
21 between humans and wildlife. Barnes contends that dominant conservation narratives
22 continue to understand and interpret wildlife solely as a commodity or profitable resource.
23 This has led to the normalization of unethical and cruel practices that implicate wildlife in
24 their own security and sustenance through their role in ecotourism, hunting and more
25 recently, the lion bone trade. Captive bred lions are treated as products that undergo a
26 series of translations through which they are exposed to violence and exploitation
27 operationalized through practices linked to conservation and ecotourism.
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37 **Changing Humancentric Worlds**

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39 The opening paper to our fourth and final theme comes in the form of Hannah
40 Gunderman and Richard White's rallying cry for a 'Critical posthumanism for all: a call to
41 reject insect speciesism'. In this paper, the authors look toward future ways of being in the
42 world, articulating a posthuman politics of hope to better capture the richly embodied
43 personal experiences and web of relationalities that are formed through repeated
44 encounters with insects. By showing how insect decline has been impacted by colonialism
45 and white supremacy, they offer an important illustration as to how insect speciesism has
46 flourished alongside the exploitation of other human and nonhuman creatures. Elsewhere,
47 the authors draw our attention toward the use of everyday language and framing of insects
48 that serve to 'other' them, and trivialize and demonize their existence. Importantly, insect
49 speciesism employs similar rhetoric that can be seen to reinforce the discrimination
50 patterns of other nonhuman animals and humans. The paper draws on a range of everyday
51 geographies to help illustrate and contextualise these inter-species encounters. These
52 include a focus on everyday domestic spaces, such as an office desk, through to the
53 multispecies site of 'the allotment'. In conclusion, they advance two possible posthuman
54 futures: one where insect speciesism is entrenched and unrepentant; the second a
55 decolonized society where we aspire to live a more compassionate and non-violent
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3 existence amidst these remarkable and brilliant creatures. One of the most profound
4 lessons of the crisis-driven epoch of the Anthropocene is this: our existence on Earth is
5 intimately bound with the flourishing of all forms of life. This includes complex multispecies
6 encounters between humans and insects, an area of enquiry widely neglected across the
7 social sciences. Faced with imminent catastrophic decline and extinction of insect and
8 invertebrate populations, Gunderman and White insist that human relationships with these
9 fellow Earthlings are deserving of further attention.
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13 In 'Promoting an emotional connection to nature and other animals via Forest
14 School: Disrupting the spaces of neoliberal performativity', Dave Cudworth begins with a
15 powerful critique of the last 30 years of neoliberal governance over education in the UK.
16 One of the consequences of this has been the dramatic decline in young people having the
17 opportunity to directly experience and regularly engage with nature, and the natural world.
18 Against this background, and through drawing on data from qualitative observation and
19 interviewing, the paper draws our attention to the ways some schools have attending to
20 reconnect children with nature through developing Forest Schools. The main contribution of
21 this paper is to argue – persuasively – that Forest School provision “could have the potential
22 to also disrupt the ‘spatialities’ of the neoliberal classroom setting”. Such an intervention
23 could lead, Cudworth argues, to doing things radically differently. One of these would be to
24 harness alternative futures through learning environments, ones where children can explore
25 nurturing and caring forms of human-animal relationships further, and be further educated
26 in meaningful post-human discourses through the school and their wider learning
27 environments.
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33 Michelle Westerlaken's paper 'What is the opposite of speciesism? On relational
34 care ethics and illustrating multi-species-isms' articulates a counter-concept to the notion of
35 speciesism. This paper aims to encourage thinking beyond critique and towards imagining
36 what non-speciesist worlds can look like. By using the concept of “multi-species-isms” (or
37 “multispecies”), and linking it to feminist and relational ethics of “care”, the paper seeks to
38 unite perspectives from Critical Animal Studies with feminist, posthumanist theories.
39 Already existing traces of multi-species-isms that exemplify different forms of multispecies
40 care are visualised through annotated illustrations that accompany the text. These traces
41 offer a cue for negotiating multispecies worlds without attempting to define their content in
42 all too definite forms. Rather than focusing on critiquing oppressive structures, the paper
43 contributes narratives of multispecies worlds that inspire further imagination towards the
44 positive ingredients of such worlds and show more concretely how multispecies care is
45 practised in everyday life. These insights frame a starting point for a repertoire that shows
46 the numerous ways in which multispecies relationships between humans and other animals
47 are already given form. By articulating the actual ingredients of multi-species-isms, rather
48 than focusing on what they are not, the paper seeks to advance a move towards adding
49 multispecies possibilities that can be especially helpful for those researchers, designers and
50 activists concerned with imagining alternative futures.
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58 In the final paper in this collection, 'Insurrection Training for Post-Human Politics',
59 Christian Nold sets out to identify the tensions around the way post-humanist politics has
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3 been framed and seeks to find a new way of identifying linkages between post-human
4 theory and specific ways of intervening in the world. Nold's paper offers a challenge to
5 those who say that post-humanism has a problem in translating its theory into supporting
6 social movements and creating political impacts. In the paper, Nold maps out an anarchist-
7 influenced post-humanism as proposed in Critical Animal Studies and Cudworth and
8 Hobden's ideas about emancipatory post-human politics. Nold's contribution is to show how
9 the notion of 'multiple ontologies' and 'insurgent posthumanism' can be used to create a
10 form of insurrection training for researchers to acquire an 'ontological imagination' that can
11 support them in creating interventions in the world. Nold uses the example of the 'Seeds of
12 Hope East Timor Ploughshares action' as an illustrative case study. This involved a group of
13 ten women breaking into a UK airbase in 1996 and disarming a Hawk fighter-jet that was
14 being sold to the Indonesian regime for use against civilians in East Timor. Nold identifies
15 two key components of post-human politics from this example: specificity of intervention
16 and reflexive practices. Nold proposes that post-humanist researchers can apply
17 insurrection training in their daily lives to experience ontological difference, de-trivialise the
18 everyday, connect to social movements, make post-human politics 'doable' and offer
19 'direct' change.
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32 Wolfe, C. (2012) *Before the Law: Humans and Animals in a Biopolitical Frame*. Chicago, IL:
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