

INTERPRETIVE POLICY ANALYSIS CONFERENCE 2021

Panel Title:

P16 - Co-shaping space: the methodological challenges of investigating human - non-human interactions and opening up cross-disciplinary dialogues

Panel Convenors:

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In this panel we discuss how policy scholars *do* research with non-humans (e.g. wild animals, domestic animals, husbandry, plants, crops, seas, rivers, etc) and we intend to explore how non-humans shape the practices of politics, policy and research. Conventionally, scholars in policy analysis have been trained to investigate what non-humans, such as animals, mean to humans. As a result, the emphasis remained on the ways in which humans experience the world, rather than accounting and including the presence of animals more fully in social science literature and in practices such as urban planning. However, the initiation of the ‘animal turn’ in related fields to policy analysis, e.g. human geography, anthropology and science and technology studies, suggests that the focus of research should shift to trying to understand how humans and (wild) animals co-create meaning in interaction. Based on fieldwork experiences we have been questioning the human exceptionalism in most research and research methodology. Ultimately, we suggest that conflicts between humans and animals can be understood as an evolving social relationship between two different entities, of which one happens to be human. We increasingly realise that animals have equal agency and intersubjectivity to human actors. Therefore we argue that by ignoring these considerations about agency in qualitative, interpretive research practice, we will continue placing animals (and non-humans in general) at the margins of research practices thereby inevitably becoming complicit in silencing them and making them invisible in research accounts. In this panel we propose the opposite.

Including non-humans as co-participants in practices of politics, policy and research has (inherently) political, ethical, anthropocentric and methodological implications. Yet, we argue, cross-disciplinary (and even trans-disciplinary) dialogues need to be opened up to understand and deal with non-humans. Including non-humans as co-participants in finding ways to co-exist implies a shift in thinking about space (how is space co-shaped between human and non-human), about knowledge (what kind of knowledge is needed), about negotiation in terms of policy-making (how to include non-human voices in policy-making practices), and about *doing* – interpretive –research (how to include non-humans in your research methodologically).

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In this session we invite papers that discuss the political, ethical, anthropocentric, and methodological implications of including and deliberate with non-humans in the broader context of intersubjective meaning-making. We invite contributions that explore the meanings and practices of 'living with' non-humans from a decentralized and symmetrical perspective. We are also interested in contributions that use technology in understanding human – non-human relationships. Could technology (the material) help to give a voice to non-humans and how to include that in the practices of politics, policy and research?