

## **Title: Political Animals and Animal Politics**

### **Summary**

Despite 20 years of environmental politics scholarship, the place of animals and the non-human realm in environmental politics has remained unclear. It has been addressed only in the margin of 'environmental' (=resource management) research questions, or by authors who were usually more interested in the ethical than the political status of the nonhuman. This workshop should begin to fill this void with contributions ranging from theoretical arguments about non-human nature to policy initiatives regarding animal welfare and rights. It aims at a systematic, *interdisciplinary* understanding of the politics of animals and their environments, by addressing a series of research questions consistently from three perspectives: normative political theory; the qualitative analysis of the discourses and ideology of policy makers, political parties and social movements; and more classic political analysis of public policy and party politics. The workshop will deal with the following, intrinsically related questions:

1. What do some of the recent normative approaches to animal/nonhuman politics add to our political approach to nature?
2. How have environmental and animal rights groups and parties framed their recent arguments for the protection of non-humans? What discourses have been most popular and appealing to movements and groups?
3. Which normative approaches and/or movement discourses have been successful, and which not, as frames for public policy initiatives? How can we analyze the policy processes that have led to successes and failures of animal politics initiatives? Contributors can address a variety of animal politics campaigns from single-state, regional, and comparative perspective.

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## Workshop Description and Goals

This workshop will focus on an issue of growing importance in the social and political realm that has been discussed little by academics in political science. Despite twenty years of scholarship, the place of animals and the non-human realm in environmental politics has remained unclear. While animals have been discussed from time to time, from various perspectives and in various sub-disciplines, it is usually either in the margin of ‘environmental’ (i.e., resource management) research questions, or by authors who were usually more interested in ethical questions than in the political status of animals. The politics of animals has never been the primary focus of a political science or political theory research group, nor has it ever been systematically been investigated in an interdisciplinary setting. We hope to begin to fill this void with a workshop that ranges from theoretical arguments about non-humans to policy initiatives regarding animal welfare and rights.

The politics of animals is both a valid and germane area of research, and the topic has seen a resurgence in both academic and political realms. It is a relevant topic because it *is* politics: it is about the attribution of the (dis)advantages of social cooperation, the exercise of power in the shaping of society, the treatment of the most vulnerable and marginalized. It concerns the in- or exclusion in the political arena of animals as species and individuals, the attribution of shares, rights and obligations for and in relation to animals, and the evaluation of competing claims and claimants. (Cf. Garner 2003, 2004 (for the 19<sup>th</sup> Century); Morris 2006, 2009; Ilea 2008; Cowan 2003; Smith 2008; O’Sullivan 2007; Environmental Values, special issue on animal relations 2009/18/1).

The politics of animals is also of great social and political importance. Over the past decade, European countries witnessed the birth and successful first steps of animal parties, even in parliament (eg Netherlands, Switzerland), parties with a truly unique and historically novel agenda: the identification and representation of the interests of non-humans, creatures even theoretically incapable of participating in human society. Over an even longer period of time, animal interest movements have “diversified” further and further: on the one hand, from species protection in the context of conservationism (eg WWF) and ‘anthropocentric’ environmentalism (activists for biodiversity) to the protection of *individual* animals and their quality of life (from RSPCA to ALF). While there has been a popularization of the issue of the treatment of animals – especially those used for food – there has also been a continuing radicalization of the ‘individualist’ branch, with ALF and the similar groups terrorizing lab techs in the UK, and the murder of Fortuyn in the Netherlands. One major reason to be surprised at the endurance and (in many ways) success of the animal interest movements and parties is that they unite theoretically incompatible perspectives on the interests of animals: animal welfare and animal rights. A further important puzzle is the paradox of justice for animals. Generally dismissed by political theorists as inapplicable to animals, given their moral inequality with human beings, lack of ability to form conceptions of the good life, or a variety of other reasons, a recent wave of justice theorists, starting with Martha Nussbaum, has revitalized the discussion. The growing interest in animal politics has manifested itself in a range of new public policies, moving from more classic preservation

strategies in to animal-specific regulations on, for example, the way hens and other food animals are penned and slaughtered, animal testing for various products, and the treatment of zoo and circus animals. As a result of this growth in attention, theoretical framing, and policies, animal politics will inevitably lead to conflicts among various interests – not only humans vs. animals, but communities vs. ecosystems, and even animal vs. animal. For example, in the policy realm, while parties and public generally rate human interests over those of animals, and while collective funds are insufficient to fully satisfy even the most urgent human needs (e.g. health care: some still die because treatment is too expensive), money still goes to animal protection, policing and so on. In the European context, this is often done without necessarily causing general uproar, though the US right provides another interesting extremist position in its opposition to virtually any policy that benefits animals or the environment.

In the academic realm, animals have never fitted in too well in mainstream green political thought on the one hand, nor could they be easily included in the discourses of environmental politics and policy on the other (cf. e.g. Hargrove 1993; cf. the almost complete absence of animals in key journals such as *Global Environmental Politics & Environmental Politics*). In the classic environmentalist frame of mind, animals are by definition resources. Considering them as both resources *and* consuming subjects with agency and interests highly complicates the logic and calculus of e.g. sustainability, food politics, or climate change (adaptation & mitigation) policies. There is, then, reason to examine the variety of theories, frames, and discourses of addressing non-human nature – not only with the ‘usual suspects’ in classical philosophy (rights/deontology, welfarism/consequentialism, virtue ethics/duties, justice/capabilities), but also more directly ‘political’ and policy frames such as security, resilience and sustainability. While animal studies have grown into a field of their own (see, for example, the Minding Animals International network, and their recent conference), very little of this interest or focus has been directly applied to the political realm.

What’s needed here is a systematic attempt to get a broadly political, yet *interdisciplinary* understanding of the politics of animals, by addressing a series of research questions consistently from three perspectives: normative political theory; the qualitative analysis of the discourses and ideology of policy makers, political parties and social movements; and more classic political analysis of public policy and party politics.

The workshop will deal with the following, intrinsically related questions, which get at the question of animal politics from three broad perspectives:

1. What do some of the recent normative approaches to animal/nonhuman politics add to our political approach to nature?

Questions that fit under this heading include the how and why of human representation of animals and the measures used (welfare, rights, capabilities, etc.) For example, we would include discussion of a capabilities-based approach to animal justice first introduced by Nussbaum (2004, 2007) and further discussed by Schlosberg (2007), Holland (2008), Cripps (2010), Wissenburg (2011) and Hailwood (2011), as well as recent extensions of ethical and rights based approaches (Sunstein 2004). The representation of

animals and non-human nature in human collective decision-making has also been increasingly addressed (Eckersley 2009, Whiteside, Gardner 2010). Human resilience (Adger 2011) and security (Barnett 2011) arguments also address the broader environment, including food resources, human beings need to preserve or adapt to in an era of climate change.

2. How have animal rights groups and parties framed their recent arguments for animal protection? What discourses of animal politics have been most popular and appealing to movements and groups?

Here we will examine the animal rights approach of influential groups such as the Great Ape Project, which has seen some policy successes in Europe, as well as those groups specifically focused on animal welfare issues such as the testing, housing, and slaughter of various animals (cf. also Heo & Neo (2010); Peggs 2009).

3. Which normative approaches and/or movement discourses have been successful, and which not, as frames for public policy initiatives? How can we analyze the policy processes that have led to successes and failures of animal politics initiatives?

Contributors here will address a variety of animal politics campaigns from single-state, regional, and comparative perspective. Specifically, we plan to address and compare some of the major campaigns around food animals, as well as climate campaigns that focus on either human or non-human impacts (cf. Holloway et al. 2009; Morris 2009; Damodaran 2007, Bradley and MacRea 2011, Vanhonacker et al. 2011). In addition, we want to investigate why (discourses of) animal politics are flourishing in some areas (W-Europe, N-America) while withering elsewhere.

These questions will help a workshop to frame a broad approach to recent developments in animal politics. There are three goals here. First, and most clearly, we want to include the most recent approaches to the politics of animals and non-human nature from three different parts of political science and studies. Doing so will encompass papers ranging from theory to discourse analysis to policy analysis; we also seek specific case studies of both individual initiatives and comparative study. Second, the workshop is designed to have scholars in disparate parts of the discipline engage one another across subfields and specialties, in order to develop a broad understanding of the evolving politics of animals, from normative considerations through mobilization and into policy. Finally, and not coincidentally, this structure would also be a wonderful way to frame an edited volume on animal politics, which is one planned goal of the workshop.