

Titel des Themas

It's complicated: exploring One Health approaches for the Anthropocene through human-animal-relationships

Schlagworte

Anthrozoology; global health; sustainability; social ecology

Kurzfassung des Themas

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to rethink assumptions and practices in several disciplines, including One Health, which urges us to “recognize the essential link between human, domestic animal and wildlife health and the threat disease poses to people, their food supplies and economies” (Wildlife Conservation Society, 2004). However, a key aspect of One Health research remains overlooked: the relationships between humans and other animals, which shape our approaches to environmental action and disease prevention/mitigation strategies. The multidisciplinary understanding of this relationship is in its early stages and lacks the attention given to environmental or health research. Yet human-animal relationships shape our attitudes towards global health (e.g. the proximity with several species of companion animals, including exotic pets; stray animal populations and zoonosis), food safety and security (e.g. wildlife consumption as a food source, agricultural practices), and environmental protection (wildlife conservation and trade, human-animal conflicts, conservation efforts). This topic may effectively bridge disciplines, providing lenses through which research and policy can effectively tackle global health challenges in the Anthropocene, which recognizes humans as a geological force that are changing the Earth system since the ‘Great Acceleration’ of socio-economic and Earth system trends, starting in 1950 (Steffen et al. 2015; Zalasiewicz et al. 2017).

a) Inwiefern stellt das Thema eine globale Herausforderung von hoher aktueller und zukünftiger gesellschaftlicher Relevanz dar?

Non-human animals are everywhere in our lives, in and out of our conscious spaces. They are in our homes as pets and perceived pests, they are on our plates, in our urban spaces and in the wild, they fight our wars and aid our police; they provide labour for agricultural activities, for the disabled and for those in animal-assisted therapy. Therefore, it's unsurprising that zoonotic diseases comprise the majority of established and emerging infectious diseases (US-Centers for Disease control and Prevention). Our perceptions of these beings influence our relationships and thus the disease dynamics between our populations and theirs (Hooper, Aiello and Hill). They shape which animals we eat, cuddle, or kill – and why. In conservation, endangered animals perceived as more “attractive” gather more public support (Gunnthorsdottir, 2015). This also impacts our joint evolutive history and public health measures, as highlighted in moments of public health crisis in which we stigmatize certain non-human animals to the detriment of more effective measures. Instances include the black plague (domestic rodents), HIV and yellow fever (non-human primates), COVID-19 (bats, minks, pangolins) and the still-to-be-renamed “mokeypox”. Given that our attitudes and relationships affect prevention, mitigation and research, it is

crucial that we explore the many societal roles and contributions of non-human animals in order to understand and tackle health challenges in the Anthropocene.

b) Welches wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisinteresse wird aufgegriffen und ist anschlussfähig für exzellente, internationale Forschung?

This is a subject that can only be tackled through collaborative approaches, requiring qualitative and quantitative methods. It requires dialogue among the biomedical, animal and social sciences, which must be established to broaden our understanding of One Health, as well as meet the health and environmental crisis that converge in the Anthropocene. These channels can be established in several fronts: partnerships with social, religious and political sciences may investigate our collective attitudes and actions towards animals, and how this bilateral relationship influences health outcomes across cultures. Meanwhile, urbanism may explore how these attitudes frame our use of private and public spaces. Education, arts and history may provide pathways to an Anthropocene curriculum for the Biomedical Sciences, for schools and for the general public. These are all perspectives with relevance worldwide, transcending Health studies and expanding into other disciplines and cultural boundaries. Additionally, both the frameworks of One Health and the Anthropocene are relatively recent and forward-looking approaches to our understanding of the Natural and Social sciences.

c) Inwieweit ist das Thema durch die Expertise der Berliner Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft inter- und transdisziplinär bearbeitbar und/oder lösbar?

In decolonial and inclusive fashion, these collaborations ought to invite stakeholders to the table, including NGOs, animal and human rights advocates, industries and policymakers. In this context, the Berlin-Brandenburg area offers an amalgamation of these stakeholders as well as academic expertise as follows*: 1. Veterinary medicine, wildlife specialists (FUB) 2. Public Health, Health policy, epidemiology (Charité) 3. Agriculture and food production (HUB) 4. Environmental sciences (TUB) 5. Urbanism (HUB) 6. Economics (all) 7. Sociology, cultural studies, political sciences (all) 8. Philosophy, post-colonial thought (HUB, FUB) 9. Communication, education, pedagogy (all) 10. Disease ecology (all)

Welche weiteren, bislang noch nicht genannten, Argumente sprechen für Ihr Thema?

The combination One Health research with forward-thinking concepts from the Anthropocene provides a blueprint for truly transdisciplinary research, providing a venue to bridge the gap between the Natural Sciences and the Humanities. Both these emerging disciplines require holistic and novel approaches to current problems in ways that are ethically, socially and culturally responsive. For example, exploring potential avenues for non-human voices has been gaining momentum as civil society representatives and even academics in political science have started to think about raising the voices of non-human animals in institutions such as the UN by demanding voting rights for species groups, which would be expressed by their civil society representatives (Burke et al. 2016, p.515-516).