

2019

[Review] Jacob Bull, Tora Holmberg and Cecilia Åsberg, editors, *Animal Places: Lively Cartographies of Human-Animal Relations*. Routledge, 2018. 276pp

Zoei Sutton
Flinders University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/asj>

Part of the [Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons](#), [Art and Design Commons](#), [Art Practice Commons](#), [Australian Studies Commons](#), [Communication Commons](#), [Creative Writing Commons](#), [Digital Humanities Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Legal Studies Commons](#), [Linguistics Commons](#), [Philosophy Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), [Public Health Commons](#), [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#), [Sociology Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sutton, Zoei, [Review] Jacob Bull, Tora Holmberg and Cecilia Åsberg, editors, *Animal Places: Lively Cartographies of Human-Animal Relations*. Routledge, 2018. 276pp, *Animal Studies Journal*, 8(1), 2019, 231-233.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/asj/vol8/iss1/15>

[Review] Jacob Bull, Tora Holmberg and Cecilia Åsberg, editors, *Animal Places: Lively Cartographies of Human-Animal Relations*. Routledge, 2018. 276pp

Abstract

It's 2016 and rats are 'taking over' in Malmö, Sweden. Forced out of the sewers by flooding, the sight of usually-hidden rats now visible on streets and playgrounds (not to mention their dead bodies in the river) has humans calling for sanitation through eradication to 'restore' social order. In daring to exist 'out of place' in their search for food the rats 'turn from tolerated, illegitimate, but invisible waste-workers, to 'trash animals' (1). This dramatic scene which opens *Animal Places* 'shows how space, place and human-animal relations intersect, thereby producing diversity of effect, boundary work and political action' (1). Building on Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel's *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity* (1995), and Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert's *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human Animal Relations* (2000), this edited collection offers an important contribution to scholarship that meaningfully considers animals' relations to place and space. At its core, *Animal Places* argues for zoo-sensitive, lively cartographies that can better map human-animal relations and animal geographies; moving beyond a human centric focus to 'include animals in ways that permit us to "story place differently" (van Dooren and Rose 2012)' (9).

[Review] Jacob Bull, Tora Holmberg and Cecilia Åsberg, editors,
Animal Places: Lively Cartographies of Human–Animal Relations.
 Routledge, 2018. 276pp

Zoei Sutton

Flinders University

It's 2016 and rats are 'taking over' in Malmö, Sweden. Forced out of the sewers by flooding, the sight of usually-hidden rats now visible on streets and playgrounds (not to mention their dead bodies in the river) has humans calling for sanitation through eradication to 'restore' social order. In daring to exist 'out of place' in their search for food the rats 'turn from tolerated, illegitimate, but invisible waste-workers, to 'trash animals' (1). This dramatic scene which opens *Animal Places* 'shows how space, place and human-animal relations intersect, thereby producing diversity of effect, boundary work and political action' (1). Building on Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel's *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity* (1995), and Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert's *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human Animal Relations* (2000), this edited collection offers an important contribution to scholarship that meaningfully considers animals' relations to place and space. At its core, *Animal Places* argues for zoo-sensitive, lively cartographies that can better map human-animal relations and animal geographies; moving beyond a human centric focus to 'include animals in ways that permit us to "story place differently" (van Dooren and Rose 2012)' (9).

Contributing authors are diverse in their disciplinary backgrounds, offering a variety of perspectives from the humanities and social sciences. However, they are united in their position that 'space and place are useful tools with which to better understand the role of animals in more-than-human social worlds' (8). There is some variation in the critical stance adopted by authors, and unlike Gillespie and Collard's *Critical Animal Geographies: Politics, Intersections and*

Hierarchies in a Multispecies World (2014), this collection doesn't make an explicit commitment to critical vegan praxis. But that is not to say it is devoid of critique, far from it – all of the contributing authors highlight, to varying degrees, the exploitative relations between humans and other animals and it speaks to the value of 'lively cartographies' that oppressions are clearly highlighted simply by making animals visible in research.

The book consists of twelve chapters (not including the introduction penned by Bull and Holmberg), organised into three parts which each consider a different theme. Part I, *Humanimal Place Making: Cartographies of Convivial Life*, considers the connection of particular 'domesticated' animals to places, and the shaping of animals and human by and through space and place. Philip Armstrong depicts both the connection of 'placer' sheep to particular sites, and the significance of spatial relations that facilitate these ways of relating (in particular a style and scale of farming that allows orphaned sheep to go unnoticed for extremely long periods of time). Tora Holmberg presents an account of street dog feeders in Kolkata, which proves sometimes dangerous for the humans involved. Donelle Gadenne and Annie Potts provide an exploration of post-earthquake feline experiences, highlighting the strong connection cats have to places and as such, arguing that caring for cats in place (rather than displacing them with their humans) is sometimes a preferable, more animal-centric approach (where practicable). Finally, Rebekah Fox highlights the spatial practices of companion animals who often resist human ideas of what should happen in space. She concludes with an argument that echoes through all of the chapters in this section – that we humans need to establish more cooperative constructions of shared space that allow for animals' 'beastly places'.

Part II, *Mapping (Sym)biographies of Humanimal Relations*, departs from living domesticates to consider a range of spaces where animals (both lively and non-living/dead) feature prominently as producers and product of space. David Redmalm highlights companion animal condolence cards as a fruitful space for considering beastly topologies, while Mieke Roscher explores the (re)development of zoos following the rise of Nazi power in relation to creation of national identities. Anna Samuelsson argues that the choreographing of bodies in natural history museums produces particular meanings and understandings of those displayed and Tara

Mehbrabi and Cecilia Åsberg put forth a fascinating chapter about the modification and genetic mapping of fruit flies in the lab. In particular, Mehbrabi and Åsberg raise thought-provoking questions around where the body as a place ends – particularly when the fruit fly in the lab is not just an autonomous being, but also constructed in relation to various tests, stimuli, emissions and apparatus.

Part III, *Unsettling Spaces of Humanimal Cohabitation*, focuses on examples of particular forms of humanisms being disrupted. Jamie Lorimer considers the human body as a ‘relational and multi-species achievement’ (186) given the significant proportion that consists of microbiome. Jacob Bull explores the geographies of ticks, arguing that they are likely unpopular because they ‘challenge the ways humans like to place themselves in ecologies’ (216) and remind us that we are implicated in, not exempt from, particular ecologies. Lönngren and McHugh bring a literary lens to lively cartographies. Lönngren raises a complex issue regarding how we might engage in animal-centric readings that take animals characters seriously, rather than as symbols for attributes of human characters. McHugh uses a post-colonial framework to demonstrate how human-animal relations are shaped by colonial violence.

The chapters in this book are well researched and employ zoo-sensitive cartographies to highlight a variety of socio-spatial constructions of human-animal relations. In particular, those that focus on the creation of, and politics around, animals’ ‘beastly places’ seem to offer a particularly fruitful contribution to those working towards storying places differently, in less human-centric ways. Human contributions to animal harm are not shied away from, however in some chapters this could be more explicitly critiqued if the aim is to create research *for* animals rather than simply about them. Overall, *Animal Places* is a well-edited book that will appeal to anyone interested in the intersections of place, space and human-animal relations.