Beyond Law's Anthropocentrism:
A Sociolegal Reflection on Animal Law and the More-Than-Human Turn

Marie Leth-Espensen* and Måns Svensson**

1 Introduction

In recent decades, modern (Western) law's anthropocentric nature has been increasingly questioned from at least two contemporary scholarly fields:[1] 'science and technology' and 'nature and animal rights'. In this paper, we intend to explore the potential for the discipline of sociology of law to contribute to the ongoing discussion in animal-focused legal scholarship on the need for a more-than-human perspective on law. At first glance, there is no evidence that such a potential exists. However, Irus Braverman, professor of law at the University at Buffalo, argues that there is indeed a need for more-than-human legalities, and that sociolegal scholarship could greatly benefit from a serious consideration of nonhumans (Braverman, 2018b). The challenge of such a shift should not be underestimated. Traditionally, the discipline of sociology has been as human-centred as the discipline of law (Peggs, 2012). A commonly used definition of sociology as a scientific discipline is that it represents the study of human behaviour and societies. Thus, taking a turn towards a non-anthropocentric approach to law would be somewhat of a paradigm shift, including for the sociology of law.

In this explorative paper, we examine the emerging body of scholarship that has recently started incorporating more-than-human perspectives in the nexus of law, society, and animals. While 'more-than-human' refers to a plurality of theoretical positions, for our purpose we take these positions to reflect the attempt to move away from human exceptionalism in favour of a multispecies account of the world, which reflects the social, political, and ethical significance of nonhuman animals. Our objectives as we investigate the potential of more-than-human law are threefold: (a) to review recent developments in legal and sociolegal research that adopt a more-than-human framework, (b) to bring this strand of more-than-human studies into conversation with animal law scholarship, and (c) to explore how sociology of law's empirical tradition can contribute to such conversations.

This paper addresses the tensions between more-than-human scholarship and animal law as two distinct strands of scientific inquiry of significance to the study of human-animal interactions. In this regard, we argue that empirical, sociolegal analysis can help facilitate further exchange by means of integrating and combining internal and external approaches to the study of law. By extension, we find that the sociology of law can help advance research that explores the complex, ambiguous relationships that define the current situation of nonhuman animals without losing sight of law as an important site of cultural production (Delaney, 2001). Following Braverman's call for *more-than-human legalities* (2018b), we underscore three critical, intersecting

* Marie Leth-Espensen, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology of Law, Lund University. Email: marie.leth-espensen@soclaw.lu.se.

** Måns Svensson, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology of Law and Dean of School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Halmstad University. Email: mans.svensson@hh.se.

themes that mark the past and future contributions of sociolegal and interdisciplinary inquiry to the study of animals and law: 1) the exploration of the co-constitutive relations between law, space, and human-animal relations; 2) the politics of caring for animals (biopolitics and asymmetrical power relations); and 3) pluralistic, anomalous, and multispecies notions of law.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate the relevance of sociolegal research for studying how contemporary law might serve as a preserving structure for dominant human-animal relations. Throughout the paper, we argue that it must be a fundamental challenge for empirical, sociolegal research to explore and understand the complex social, political, and ethical context of current legal animal protection, the limitations of anthropocentric law, which – by extension – draw attention to the very meaning of caring for animals.

The paper is organised as follows: We start by reviewing some recent attempts to incorporate more-than-human perspectives into previous legal studies and research. Emphasising the contribution and significance of this growing body of scholarship, we reflect on its links and tensions (present and potential) vis-à-vis animal law, in the following defined as an academic field of research concerned with improving the legal protection of nonhuman animals (Frasch, 2019). Acknowledging the contributions of both fields of research, we then discuss how empirical, sociolegal research might complement the existing literature by integrating internal and external knowledge about the law. Based on this observation, we present and discuss the three themes, as suggested above. Finally, we conclude with a brief reflection on the need for additional sociolegal and empirical research to critically engage with the subject of law and legal animal protection within the broader context of the global ecological crisis.

A brief note on the terminology. In the subsequent sections, we use 'more-than-human' as a common notion to capture the multiple attempts to include nonhuman animals into legal analysis, as proposed by Braverman (2018b). In doing this, we follow geographer Sarah Whatmore's (2002, 2006) suggestion to replace the posthuman concept with the more all-embracing notion of the more-than-human, thereby emphasising the material and relational implications of how nonhumans come to matter.

2 Law, Animals, and the More-Than-Human

Within the humanities and social sciences, there has been a growth in research that recognizes the multitude of lively agents that make our shared world. In particular, relational approaches such as Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (2005), Donna Haraway's theory of companion species (2008), and Sarah Whatmore's hybrid geographies (2002), together with the posthumanist writings of Cary Wolfe (2003), for example, have been crucial for placing the nonhuman within the social realm. Despite their respective critical edges, these scholars share a commitment to challenge exclusive human-centred views in

order to recognise the significance of nonhuman beings and entities. Also, in animal-focused legal research, a growing body of scholarship has begun to incorporate some of these perspectives, thereby producing a significant collection of novel engagements with anthropocentrism and law's reliance on humanist discourse and deep-rooted notions of animality (Deckha, 2013; Grear, 2015; Otomo, 2011). In this regard, there are two key publications worth mentioning. *Law and the Question of the Animal* (2013), edited by Yoriko Otomo and Edward Mussawir, includes a wide range of themes and subjects engaging critical and cultural theory, which problematise how nonhuman animals are commonly perceived, conceptualised, and represented in the discourse and practices of law. In a later edited volume, *Animals, Biopolitics, Law: Lively Legalities* (Braverman, 2016), the authors respond to 'the question of the animal' by focusing on the modes and practices of governing human and nonhuman life. With a significant number of the contributors situated within or drawing on the discipline of geography and related fields, the volume proposes a more empirical and interdisciplinary direction for this field of research (for example, see the chapters by Delaney, 2016; Gillespie, 2016; Philippopoulos-Mihalopolous, 2016).

A common denominator for this line of research is how it positions itself against another strand of animal-focused legal scholarship, namely, animal law, which it characterises as an advocacy-orientated and reformist academic field, based on a narrow ideological starting point situated in liberalism (Braverman, 2018b; Otomo & Mussawir, 2013). One of the key figures in animal law, professor and founder of the Center for Animal Law Studies at Lewis & Clark Law School, Pamela D. Frasch, has defined animal law as: "that field of study, scholarship, practice, and advocacy in which serving the best interests of nonhuman animal through the legal system is the primary goal" (2019:1), a definition that reflects how animal law scholars tend to work from within the legal system to create social change for animals (cf. Favre, 2010; Wise, 2000). When defining the field in these terms, it becomes clear how animal law – due to its normative commitment to improve the legal system from within – differs from more-than-human scholarship in terms of the latter's critical engagement with the law, as well as its theory-driven aims.

According to professor of law, Maneesha Deckha (2012), animal law scholars' lack of engagement with significant critical traditions such as feminism and poststructuralism leave law's liberal and reformist underpinnings unchallenged. Thus, drawing on such theories, she confronts two key pillars of much animal law scholarship: the reliance on reason and autonomy as core values for defining the legal subject, and the strong emphasis on sameness in the argument for extending legal rights and protection to animals (Deckha, 2012). When criticising existing animal law (and hence the scholarly tradition of animal law), more-than-human scholars depart from their ambition to understand two complex relationships. Firstly, they problematise the relationship between humans and other animals. Secondly, they also include the evasive relationship between law and society in their analysis (Braverman,

2016; Otomo & Mussawir, 2013). Braverman, for example, underscores how "more-than-human legalities extend the advocacy-oriented scholarship to highlight how both animality and humanness are deeply embedded in the construction of law, and reciprocally, how law is acutely relevant for constituting the animal" (Braverman, 2018b:128). In our view, this criticism of traditional liberal-reformist animal law has produced valuable insights and has served as a tool for underlining the significant differences in theoretical, ontological and epistemological positions. However, the strong focus on criticising traditional reformist approaches to animal law simultaneously runs the risk of creating unnecessary antagonism, which obstructs the facilitation of potentially fruitful exchanges between the two perspectives.

3 An Integrative Approach to the Study of Law

As described, the emergence of more-than-human legal scholarship represents a critical edge vis-à-vis the field of animal law – with the former being prompted by theoretical questions and the latter serving a much more practice-orientated goal of providing legal solutions to issues of animal mistreatment and abuse (Frasch, 2019). This well-known distinction between critical and liberal approaches is indeed meaningful and demonstrates two different perspectives on law and jurisprudence. However, in this paper, we suggest that the above-mentioned scholarly debate between more-than-human and animal law could benefit from being informed by the sociolegal distinction between internal and external studies of law.

The sociology of law is primarily based on two academic traditions: the social sciences and the discipline of law. While the social sciences are firmly rooted in empirical and inductive methods, the legal discipline provides specific methods for deductively analysing law's normative statements. It is widely accepted that it is impossible to gain in-depth knowledge of the role of law in society without understanding the inner orders of the legal system. At the same time, the opposite is also true: without the social sciences, we cannot produce knowledge of law in society. However, since the inception of the sociology of law as an academic discipline, scholars have realised that law resists knowledge about itself that is produced within the social sciences (or generated by any other external science, for that matter). One of the founding scholars of the sociology of law, Eugene Ehrlich, explained that, sociologically, there is no real ontological difference between law and other norms, but that this is also a fact that is difficult for legal scholars to digest: "For reasons readily understood, the prevailing school of juristic science does not stress this fact, but, for practical reasons, emphasises the antithesis between law and other norms" (Ehrlich, 2017:39). Since Ehrlich's time, sociologists of law have often debated the disciplinary boundaries that refer to the relationship between internal and external perspectives on law. Also proposed as the insider/outsider view, these debates have helped clarify the role of the sociology of law as a discipline situated between two incompatible scientific paradigms, namely,

law, with its commitment to producing ad hoc knowledge, and sociology, and the attempt to reveal sites of power (Banakar, 1998).

One of the essential problems identified in adopting a purely internal approach to the law is that it remains fixed to an instrumental purpose. At the same time, an entirely external view fails to take into account the particularities of law, confining it to "the social consequences of legal action and regulation, ignoring the internal mechanism of the legal system" (Banakar, 1998:7). By extension, external studies of law that omit "the legal *mode* of decision making and argumentation" from the analysis will be "forced to treat a large part of the activities constituting the legal field as politically neutral" (Banakar, 1998:7). Consequently, for the sociology of law, the ability to integrate internal and external knowledge about the law has been fundamental to its development (cf. Banakar, 1998; Cotterrell, 1998; Hydén, 1999; Nelken, 1990). Thus, when we draw on the distinction between internal and external, we keep in mind one of the foundational debates within the sociology of law. However, in the context of this paper, we refer to the distinction as a tool for critically reflecting and assessing what can be gained from each of the two approaches and debate their respective limitations.

Although the discussion within the sociology of law does not translate directly into the tension between animal law and more-than-human scholarship, we believe that the alleged incongruity between the internal and external view on law and the accompanying debates can inform scholars from different disciplines who share an interest in the legal status of animals. In our opinion, the best-case scenario is that learning from the internal/external debate can bring various strands of animal-focused scholarship closer, thereby promoting interdisciplinary knowledge development. However, it is important to stress that we believe the attempt to integrate internal and external understandings of the law is not limited to the 'question of the gap', as suggested by the distinction between "law in books" and "law in action" (Pound, 1910). That is, the current situation of animals is not merely a reflection of a tension between 'law as intended' and 'law in reality' that should be resolved through the provision of legal solutions. Instead, we wish to emphasise how cross- and interdisciplinary approaches – such as those represented by the sociology of law – can advance our understanding of law by integrating understandings from within and outside the law. For research that aims to produce knowledge about law and animals within the context of a shared multispecies world, we argue that moving beyond the internal/external view represents an important dual commitment to taking law seriously, that is, to place particular focus on the fabric of law (the internal perspective), without failing to recognise the deep-rooted anthropocentric failures of the current legal framework (the external perspective).

We thus agree with Braverman, who states that the call for *more-than-human legalities* implies a movement towards "multidimensional and more pluralistic laws," which recognises "that we live in a mixed and messy multispecies

society" (Braverman, 2018b:141). As the subsequent section will demonstrate, important contributions have already been proposed, although under different rubrics such as *Zoopolitical Law* (Srinivasan, 2018), *Lively Legalities* (Braverman, 2016), and *Animal Legal Geography* (Ojalammi & Blomley, 2015). We consider all these positions to share the empirical and methodological commitment to investigate and engage with the subject of animals and the law.

4 Three Critical Themes for Sociolegal Inquiry

In the following, we examine previous attempts to incorporate more-than-human frameworks into the empirical study of law and animals in complex settings and at multiple sites. We have divided these studies into three different though overlapping research themes. The first theme reflects the previous exchange between animal and legal geographies, which illustrates the significance of empirical studies in the nexus of law, society, and animal scholarship (Braverman, 2018b). The second theme addresses the complex and ambiguous practices and modes of caring for nonhuman animals, which constitute human-animal relations in general and legal animal protection in particular. In previous research, such undertakings have often been approached using a biopolitical framework. The third theme underscores the endeavour to outline and define pluralistic approaches to the law within the context of multidimensional human-animal relations. In essence, this last theme reflects one of the core tenets of the sociology of law: the attempt to define and conceptualise law beyond law's internal perspective (Ehrlich, 2017).

As previously mentioned, the more-than-human turn denotes a plurality of different theoretical perspectives. In the subsequent sections, we have chosen to focus on research dealing with legal animal protection to underscore the many common themes and potential convergences between more-than-human and animal law scholarship. However in doing so, we have been forced to exclude many other relevant contributions, not least, environmental law and green criminology scholarship, which have long asserted that nature is a bearer of binding prerequisites (or system conditions) to be included in law (see, for example, Beirne, 1999; Ellefsen, 2016; Hydén, 1999; Sollund, 2019).

4.1 The Co-constitution of Law and the Socio-spatial: Nonhuman Mobility and Animals "Out of Place"

Since Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel's landmark publication *Animal Geographies* (1998), animal geographers have been pioneers in the investigation of the economic, social, and material implications of human-animal interactions and the lived experiences of other animals (Lorimer & Srinivasan, 2015). This emphasis on nonhuman animals' geographical significance subsequently found its way to another closely associated

discipline, legal geography – even if such efforts have remained few (Ojalammi & Blomley, 2015). Legal geographers – including geographers in general – are interested in space as a foundational dimension of the social realm, investigating how space is implicated in shaping law and, in turn, how law shapes our physical conditions (Bennett & Layard, 2015).

The ways that geographical space informs, activates, and intersects with law and human-animal relationships is something that is particularly evident in Braverman's writings. Her work on subjects such as zoo animals (2012), wildlife conservation (2015), and corals (2018a) underlines how the physical settings of human-animal encounters are fundamental for shaping the laws that govern interspecies relationships. For example, she draws on the distinction between in situ and ex situ to explore differences in the practices and legal frameworks of conservation and breeding programs for nonhuman animals in captivity as opposed to animals living in their natural habitats (Braverman, 2012, 2015). Similarly, Srinivasan (2013) addresses the interplay between law, space, and human-animal relations. One striking example in the area of animal protection is provided in her study of street dogs situated in India and the UK. The specific circumstances of British colonial rule and its impact on Indian law[2] provide the background to a comparative exploration of how the authorities view and handle street dogs (Srinivasan, 2013). Within this context, Srinivasan discusses the very different experiences of streets dogs, despite some commonalities in the countries' legal frameworks. Regarding the UK, Srinivasan observes how the practice of care is intertwined with the property status of animals to the extent that official policies require that any dog that is found "where it should not be" and "which appears to be without its owner or under control of the owner" "may be seized and detained as a stray dog by an appropriate person" (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' *Guidance on Stray Dogs*, as quoted in Srinivasan, 2013:109). However, contrary to the view of the British authorities, the "independent status" of ownerless street dogs is recognised in India. As Srinivasan observes, the distinction between the notion of "stray" (UK) and "street" dogs (India) already marks the difference between how dogs in the UK are considered "out of place," while their existence on the streets of India is – at least in principal – considered legitimate and thus not restricted to "the pre-determined roles of human pets or working animals" (ibid., 110).

Drawing on legal geography, these studies display the co-constitutive relations between law and space (Bennett & Layard, 2015). However, what they add are the material, symbolic, and discursive effects these relations might have on the lived experiences, wellbeing, and deaths of nonhuman animals. In this way, legal geography – as a set of perspectives and approaches – demonstrates how

[2] The first animal welfare law in India was introduced under the British Raj (1858–1947), and the subsequent legal protection of animals has been modelled on British legislation. Historically, the promotion of animal protection reform has been entwined with attempts to reinstate the British empire and rule (Srinivasan, 2013).

specific places of interspecies interactions are interrelated with the legal regulation and protection that animals may or may not enjoy. However, these situated human-animal encounters are not only set, defined, and constructed by human actions and legal discourse, they are also shaped by the presence of nonhuman animals. Such insights are provided, for example, by Ojalammi and Blomley (2015:51) in a study of "the everyday spaces of encounter (real or imagined) between wolf and human" in rural southwest Finland. Within the context of the recent (re-)appearance of wolves in the Nordic countries – a subject that has caused much controversy – the study displays the "contradictory legal imperatives of biodiversity and biosecurity" that come to define whether wolves may live or die. Based on two sets of "territorial configurations" (from remote sites to areas close to humans), their study depicts wolves as geographers, "enacting space through forms of mobility and territoriality" (ibid.:56). As they assert, "by virtue of their space-making, the wolf contributes to law-making. Rather than a passive object of regulation, its spatial entanglements resist and push back against law, forcing recalibration" (ibid.:57). This observation leads the authors to suggest legal territory as an assemblage of multiple actants consisting of both humans and nonhumans. Evidently, such novel and multispecies perspectives will only become more imperative in future research as traditional dualisms such as domestic/wild, subject/object, property/person are increasingly questioned (Braverman, 2018b). Among conservation biologists, for example, the current rate of animal extinction and displacement means that distinctions such as native vs. alien species, which have traditionally guided conservational initiatives, are being challenged (Hill & Hadly, 2018).

For animal-focused scholarship, these studies provide an alternative pathway to existing research on law and human-animal relationships. For the legal discipline and the sociology of law - disciplines traditionally interwoven with human discourse - the more-than-human turn poses a particularly difficult challenge. Moving beyond human exceptionalism requires a debate on the disciplinary boundaries and the continuous reliance on anthropocentric epistemologies. In this regard, much inspiration can be drawn from emerging research fields such as multispecies ethnology (Gillespie, 2019; Hamilton & Taylor, 2017; Ogden et al., 2013) and animal geography (Hodgetts & Lorimer, 2015; Srinivasan, 2016) in the attempt to develop more-than-human methodologies.

4.2 The Politics of Caring for Animals: Biopolitics and Asymmetrical Power Relations

As previously mentioned, a key theme proposed by the more-than-human turn is about investigating complex, ambiguous human-animal interactions that, in the context of legal and sociolegal scholarship, pave the way for studying the multiplicity of legal modes of regulating nonhuman animals. These could be practices related to diverse areas such as laboratory work, research, breeding,

slaughter, transport, trade, wildlife management, and the conservation of habitats – all subjects reflecting distinct modes of governing and regulating nonhuman life that involve and implicate law in various ways (Delaney, 2004).

Much research into the contemporary modes of governing animals and nature considers the biopolitical framework as providing a useful lens (Shukin, 2009; Wolfe, 2012). For example, returning to Srinivasan's study of street dogs in the UK and India, her findings display how dog control involves a particular biopolitics that reveal how life and death are embedded in relations of power and truth in a Foucauldian sense. It is a politics of "make live" and "make die," in which the intention of providing care and preventing harm is intimately interrelated with practices of breeding, neutering, and euthanising (Srinivasan, 2013). In a later study on conservation efforts for Olive Ridley turtles in Odisha's state in India, Srinivasan (2017) further explores the practical implications of current conservation biopolitics and "the sustainability episteme." In this study, the entanglement of care and harm now finds expression in conservation discourses and the compromised attempt to restore turtle habitats without jeopardising the livelihood of the local fishing community. However, as the author observes, over time, such weighing of competing interests is viewed as "altogether natural, self-evident and indispensable," thus sustaining the principle of sustainable harvesting of turtle eggs and meat, best captured by the notion of "harming to protect" (Srinivasan, 2017:1470; Srinivasan, 2018:244).

The focus on practices such as domination, control, and neutering and euthanising practices, which is the focus of many critical works in animal-focused research, can be at odds with other strands of theories that inform the more-than-human turn (Giraud, 2019; Pedersen, 2011). For example, critical animal studies and similar research perspectives have been criticised for performing a sort of totalising critique not "permitting ethical decisions to be made at the levels of the individual or particular relationships" (Lorimer & Srinivasan, 2013:335). For example, theories and ontologies bound up with the language of entanglements and "becoming with" tend to refrain from fixed hierarchies and social categories to emphasise that relations are always complex and multi-layered (Ogden et al., 2013). Explicitly rejecting the kind of essentialism that can be located in critical positions associated with animal rights, Donna Haraway (2008), for example, turns to the entanglements to support an ethics of relationality. While such endeavours have unquestionably contributed to enrichening our ability to recognise how human and nonhuman life are intertwined in each other, the focus on entanglements and "becoming with" might not be best suited to foreground questions concerning the political, social, and ethical implications of the practices, which intimately shape current interspecies relationships (Giraud, 2019). This might particularly be the case for research that investigates law and policy. As Srinivasan (2013:107) observes, attempts to confront human exceptionalism need to be followed up by approaches that attend to how "the lives of animals in the contemporary world can be fundamentally affected by purely human constructs and decision-

making," as human discourse is decisive in settling the law and ethics that come to define, guide, and construe the treatment and control of other animals. Indeed, studies that seek to account for the latter have contributed to underlining how the more-than-human turn is not only an epistemological matter but is interlinked with ethico-political dimensions of current practices that involve other animals (Wolfe, 2012).

4.3 Pluralistic, Anomalous, and Multispecies Law

Within legal academia, 'the question of animal' has mainly been articulated in conjunction with major paradigms such as rights, personhood, and property (see, for example, the works of Favre, 2010; Francione, 1995; Regan, 1983; Wise, 2000). Contrary to such legal discussions, sociolegal inquiry does not aim to produce solutions to legal problems. Foundational paradigms in the sociology of law such as the concept of "living law" (Ehrlich, 2017), legal pluralism, and the closely associated tradition of legal anthropology seek to take into account how the experience of law not only amounts to "law in the books," but to a plurality of social phenomena shaped by norms and institutionalised practices. Similarly, more-than-human sociolegal approaches might investigate, expose, and clarify questions and matters pertaining to how law and policy are interrelated with specific ideas, attitudes, and practices external to the legal system and framework. Such investigations of law in a multispecies perspective usually abstain from regarding law as being singular and hegemonic, but rather attempt to conceptualise law in multiplicity, that is, to view law beyond how the law defines itself.

Moreover, an interdisciplinary or sociolegal approach might contribute to investigating how legal regulations of human-animal relationships not only engage many areas of law (from animal welfare, environmental, and property law to the penal code), but are also entwined with industry guidelines, professional codes of ethics, such as illustrated by Braverman's (2011) research on American zoos. In this study, Braverman demonstrates how zoo animals' hybrid status gives rise to a peculiar extra-legal state of modern zoos. According to the author, what characterises this "anomalous state of zoo law" is a legal landscape comprising a variety of official laws (although none which particularly address zoo animals) and where the industry's self-regulating standards play a crucial role (ibid.:1694). As we have discussed in this paper, such a focus for legal analysis helps explore the human-centred foundation of modern, Western animal protection laws. Additionally, as we have seen, the commitment to challenge anthropocentrism might even amount to research that includes nonhuman animals as relevant actors in the production of law (Ojalammi and Blomley, 2015).

For the purpose of this paper, we have focused on empirical studies that investigate the legal regulation of nonhuman animals at specific sites. However, more-than-human approaches can be applied equally to legal cases,

text, and discourse. Deckha (2013), for example, identifies some non-anthropocentric features in a dissenting judgment by the Alberta Court of Appeal in Reece v. Edmonton (City of). Contrary to animals' current legal status, the judgment stressed animal interests and recognised animals as sentient and vulnerable beings (Deckha, 2013). Additionally, a view on non-traditional justice approaches is present in Deckha's (2020) discussion about current reconciliation efforts in Canada, in which she discusses how non-anthropocentric Indigenous legal orders could potentially "alter the material conditions of lives of many animals," were these to be effectively implemented (ibid.:77). Such research demonstrates how law's internal perspective might aid in exploring, locating, and imagining the more-than-human potentials of law. Rather than assuming that 'more law' equals 'better protection,' more-than-human approaches might ask what it even means to care for animals in an age of mass consumption, extinction, extermination, and displacement of nonhuman life. In questioning the taken-for-granted, this research confronts the utilitarian underpinnings that characterise common understandings of human responsibility and limit the current legal protection of animals (Ridler, 2013). These matters call for local and situated analysis to explore the specific meanings, practices, and modes of governing nature and animals placed in their specific socio-historical, economic, and political context.

5 Concluding Reflection

In this paper, we set out to explore the potential of the sociology of law to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the recent more-than-human turn and the corresponding challenge to anthropocentric law. In engaging with such recent efforts, we find that this literature represents a significant dual commitment to 1) account for the shared multispecies world and 2) study law without making recourse to 'the law.'

At the beginning of the paper, we juxtaposed the emerging body of literature on more-than-human law with research associated with the tradition of animal law, with the latter frequently being criticised for its reformist starting point and human-centred notions and legal underpinnings (Deckha, 2013; Otomo & Mussawir, 2013). However, in acknowledging the tensions between these two fields, this explorative paper has intended to investigate the potential for stimulating further scientific exchange. Drawing on the sociolegal distinction between internal and external perspectives on law, we have thus underlined the potential benefits of integrating knowledge on the inner orders of law with non-anthropocentric research methodologies.

Furthermore, we have underscored three essential themes that reflect important parallel developments in related fields of research such as animal studies and legal geography in order to highlight some potentially productive dimensions and critical edges relevant to studies in the nexus of law, society, and animal scholarship. We have particularly emphasised research dealing with law and

policy and have stressed that attention must be directed towards the asymmetrical power relations that shape the conditions for our shared multispecies world. Moreover, we have reflected on the methodological challenges presented by the more-than-human turn for a field of research, which is traditionally based on law as a written source. Given these issues, our primary purpose has been to display the contribution of empirically grounded legal analysis in the broader context of more-than-human research. With important exceptions (Deckha, 2020; Ojalammi & Blomley, 2015; Srinivasan, 2013), there are remarkably few studies that treat such problems seriously (Braverman, 2018b).

Finally, we have underscored the significance of adopting a more-than-human framework to investigate the implications of anthropocentric law and the politics of caring for nonhuman animals. Evidently, such research will only become more urgent in the years to come. The current rate of anthropogenic problems such as mass extinction, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation pose fundamental challenges to the dominant ways humans relate to other animals. However, despite the significant amount of debate on climate change and the notion of the Anthropocene, there is a long way to go toward recognising the interconnectedness of human-animal relations and the broader ecological and environmental devastation. Therefore, we will end the paper by emphasising the potential of sociolegal analysis to advance such perspectives, thus pointing to the critical need for multispecies law.

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