

## **For the love of animals: emotions toward animals and their consequences**

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As societies move from an industrial into a post-industrial stage, culturally transmitted patterns of values change from a focus on material values (e.g. security, welfare) to a focus on post-material values (e.g. belonging, well-being) (Inglehart, 1990). This shift extends into human relationships with animals (Manfredo, 2008). Pet ownership, wildlife tourism, and concerns about agricultural animals have drastically increased over the last decades in the western world. In general, a dominance orientation toward animals (i.e. animals exist for humans to use) gradually transforms into a mutualistic orientation (i.e. animals deserve care and rights). Consequently, emotional bonds with animals and with 'animal-places' (i.e. places that are associated with animals) come to the fore.

Yet, emotions toward animals can be negative as well. As both wildlife populations and human populations increase in many western countries, negative human-animal interactions are likely to increase as well. For example, problems such as car accidents with wildlife or wildlife destroying agricultural crops are often reported. These types of interactions often evoke strong emotions, toward the animals, toward animal places, or toward people within debates about policy and management regarding animals.

Emotions toward animals are a social scientific topic in various ways. Specific emotional dispositions toward specific species are not systematically studied yet (only fear toward snakes and carnivores is relatively well examined). Also, the way these emotional dispositions vary across places and cultures and hence their geographical heterogeneity is a question yet to be addressed. Furthermore, the way these emotions are constituted is an area for research. Many emotions are probably constituted as mixtures of biological, cultural and individual factors (Jacobs, 2009). For example, fear for snakes is most likely partly innate, as this fear is a mental adaptation that promotes survival and well-being. Yet, culture enhances this innate disposition as many myths depict snakes as symbols of evil. Finally, the consequences of emotional dispositions are manifold and merit closer examination. These emotions drive wildlife tourism, zoo visitation, pet ownership, animal welfare action groups, conservation, etc. The geographical implications are often far-reaching. For example, the parks that are founded to protect animals (e.g. panda reserves in China, Oostvaardersplassen in The Netherlands) guide the behaviours of humans, and wildlife often serves as a flagship symbol for these parks. Wildlife viewing and hunting tourism are growing much faster than almost any other form of tourism, and drastically affect entire regions.

This session seeks to discuss emotions toward animals and toward animal places as such (e.g. what emotions are felt toward which animals, how do those emotions vary across individuals, communities, types of human-animals interactions?), as *explanandum* (phenomenon to be explained) (e.g. how can emotions toward animals and animal places be explained, which innate and or cultural dispositions play a role, to what extent do cognitions influence emotions) and as *explanans* (phenomenon that explains) (e.g. can emotions explain behaviours, do emotions influence debates and opinions) from an interdisciplinary social science perspective.

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jacobs, M. H. (2009). Why do we like or dislike animals? *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 14(1), 1-10.

Manfredo, M. J. (2008). *Who cares about wildlife?* New York: Springer.