

Ethics with More-than-Human Participants

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‘Reading a novel in summer heat, looking out onto a deep Mediterranean blue bay, hornets and butterflies licking honey from the wooden terrace floor, changes my reading. The book hasn’t changed, but my experience of it genuinely has. The cavities my thought is able to slide into, change’ (Tamás, 2020, p.46).

Have you ever...

...walked into a room and 'sensed' the atmosphere?

...been affected in your teaching or research practice by smell, temperature, colour, sound, light?

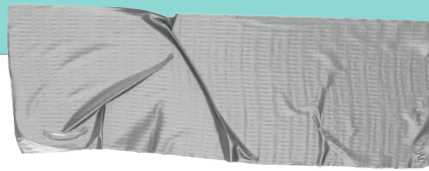
...been interrupted by more-than-human others in your researcherly undertakings?



Affect

Affect shifts the focus in a dialogic situation from the linguistic or cognitive to the embodied; it is a 'visceral prompt which precedes conscious thought' (Massumi, 2002). An affective researcher will pay attention to, and take notice of such moments which disrupt data collection as-usual and interfere with clock time; connecting with ideas of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009) and 'knowledge encounters' (Colebrook, in Parr, 2010, p.3) in which 'relations, potentials and powers not our own' come together to enact events.





Some provocations...

1. What are the implications of posthumanism and new materialism for ethics in research practice?
2. What does it mean to make a material turn?
3. Adventure in the Yorkshire Dales
4. Towards a new ethics



MOVING BEYOND THE HUMAN

“Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that...”

(Braidotti, 2013)

Post-anthropocentrism

‘The basic ontological supposition of educators that we continue for focus on a ‘world-for-us’ needs a serious rethinking.’ (jagodinksi, 2018)

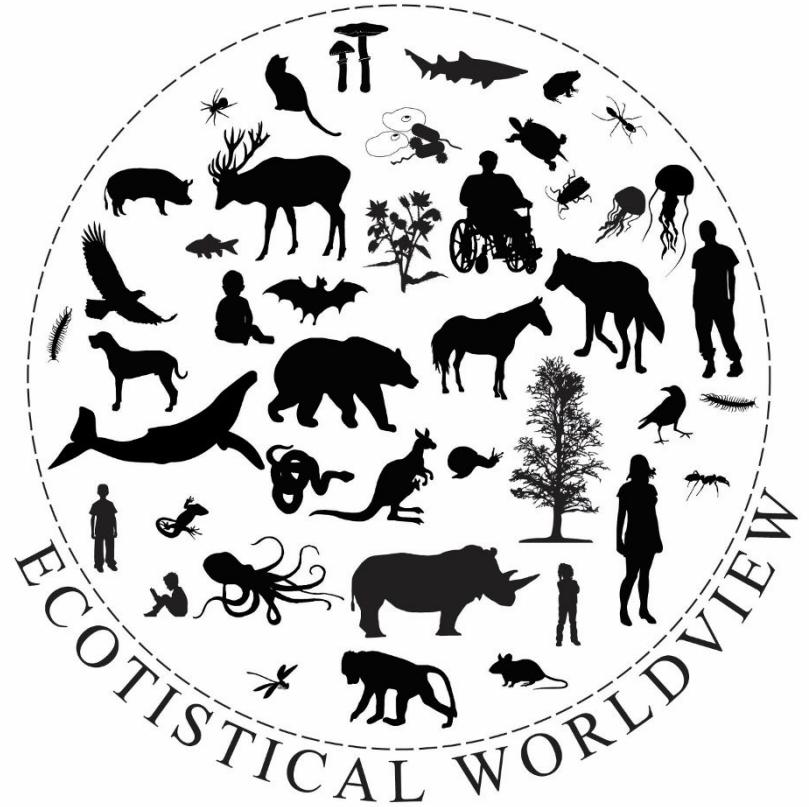
We need to see life ‘...not as an act of autopoiesis but instead as sympoiesis, decentering the human and bearing witness to our interrelations and intra-actions, at an intimate but also global scale.’ (Ablitt, 2019)



De-centering the human

“In human-centric thinking, all non-human beings are inferior to humans. Most commonly, we know this as the value-hierarchy of living things—humans, primates, mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, trees, plants, fungi, etc. Neoliberalism relies on the acceptance that anything Other than Human is less than and therefore excluded from the center; consequently, any reduction to a commodity is rationalized based on this hierarchy.”

(Lupinacci and Happel, 2015, p. 278)



Ecotistical Worldview adapted from "Differing Worldviews" (Martusewicz et al., 2015, p. 11).

Implications for Research Practice

'Methodologically, more-than-human thought engages the other-than-human, both biotic and abiotic, as active participants in everyday life and the research process and environment. In so doing, more-than-human thinking points to the importance of the sensory, affective and embodied as sources of information, and foregrounds the other-than-human as an active collaborator in the research process, rather than inert matter acted upon and understood by the researcher' (van den Berg and Rezvani, 2022, p.22).





Indigenous Knowledges

Relationality

Relationality is the concept that we are all related to each other, to the natural environment, and to the spiritual world, and these relationships bring about interdependencies.

Dish with One Spoon

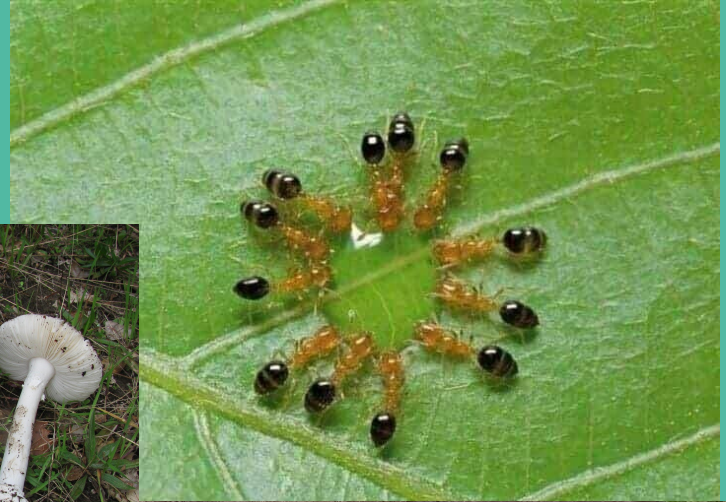
"When times are easy and there's plenty to go around, individual species can go it alone. But when conditions are harsh and life is tenuous, it takes a team sworn to reciprocity to keep life going forward. In a world of scarcity, interconnection and mutual aid become critical for survival. So say the lichens."

Gifting

"For much of humans' time on the planet, before the great delusion, we lived in cultures that understood the covenant of reciprocity—that for the Earth to stay in balance, for the gifts to continue to flow, we must give back in equal measure for what we are given." Robin Wall Kimmerer.

From belonging to kinship...

‘And so we (try to) learn together to listen to the many wise voices we often do not hear, and certainly do not consider as our teachers, while sharing stories and engaging in critically examining our assumptions and the lessons we are learning’ (Strom and Lupinacci, 2019, p.117).



'...it's left me with - oh look! That tree's uprooted...and there's fungus there!'

- Problematizing what counts as research
- Acknowledging the 'liberal frameworks that many participatory research approaches draw on (e.g. justice, rights and inclusion being predicated on individual autonomy, agency and shared rational dialogue) (Bastian, 2017, p.19).
- ...and using these questions to challenge other biases/move to queer/feminist practices
- Expanding ethics to include naturalised others. What does it mean to consent, or have the right to withdraw?
- Slow ontology (Ulmer, 2017)



'Such a methodological shift requires a rethinking of the interview as not only a verbal exchange between two human subjects, but an event in which spoken, material, and affective expressions by human and non-human agents gather in a process of "doing" something together' (Brinkmann, 2011, p. 63).

More-Than-Human Research...

Emphasises themes of relationality, collectivity, reciprocity, and entanglement

Challenges human exceptionalism in the stories we tell about the world... and the way we assemble new knowledges

Works in an interdisciplinary and diffractive way...with art as a central tool for reimaginings

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