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Welcome to Issue 2 of the AnNex Newsletter

We were delighted with the response to the Issue 1 and are pleased to be able to welcome a number of new subscribers since that went out in March. If you didn't get a chance to read Issue 1, it is available here on the [website](#)



Regulation

The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act A(SP)A has regulated animal research in the UK for over 30 years. A(SP)A's development, interpretation, and implementation are key themes within the Animal Research Nexus. For example, some of our recent work has focused on what counts as an animal or an invasive procedure under A(SP)A, and how animal use statistics collected by the Home Office are used and interpreted.

Research News in this Edition

When does a fish become a fish?

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The Vet in the Lab

Lesley A Sharp - Keynote Lecture

Harm v Benefit

Pint of Science

Would you like to collaborate?



When does a fish become a fish?

Reuben Message considers when an animal becomes legal

Read the Blog

Article Society and Space

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space
0014-1801
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10.1080/17447021.2018.1511111
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SAGE

Attuning to laboratory animals and telling stories: Learning animal geography research skills from animal technologists

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Abstract
Posthumanism has challenged the social sciences and humanities to rethink anthropocentrism within the cultures and societies they study and to take account of more-than-human agendas and perspectives. This poses key methodological challenges, including a tendency for animal geographies to focus very much on the human side of human-animal relations and to fail to acknowledge animals as embodied, lively, articulated political subjects. In this paper, we draw on recent ethnographic work, observing and participating in the care of research animals and interviewing the animal technologists, to contribute to the understandings of life within the animal house. In so doing, the paper makes three key arguments. Firstly, that studying how animal technologists perform everyday care and make sense of their relationships with animals offers useful insights into the specific skills, expertise and relationships required in order to study human-animal relations. Secondly, that animal technologists are keenly aware of the contested moralities which emerge in animal research environments and can offer an important position from which to understand this. Thirdly, that storytelling (exemplified by the stories told by animal technologists) is a useful resource for animal geographers to engage with complexity in human-animal relations.

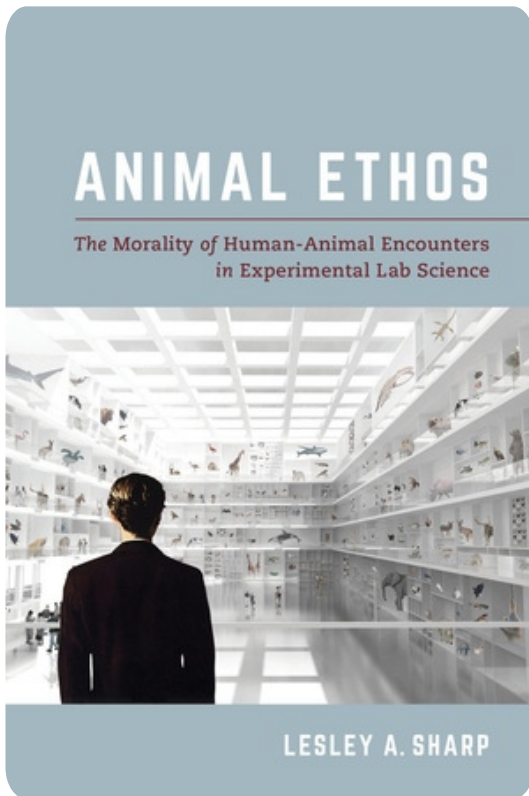
Keywords
Animal geographies, animal research, attunement, ethics, ethnography, storytelling

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Telling Stories

Read Beth Greenhough and Emma Roe's recent special edition paper in EPD: Space and Society

Read the Paper



The University of Exeter's Centre for the Study of Life Sciences will be hosting a keynote lecture by Lesley A Sharp (Barnard College, Columbia University) on *Animal Research Unbound: The Messiness of the Moral* on Monday 15 July at 1930 in the XFI Henderson Lecture Theatre.

[Read More](#)



A Question of Culture

Gail Davies digs deeper into the arguments around comparison, culture and care in animal use stats.

[Find out More](#)



The Vet in the Lab

Vanessa Ashall and Pru Hobson-West recently published a conference paper exploring the position of animal professionals in non-therapeutic roles

[Read the Paper](#)

correspondence

Harm-Benefit Analysis: opportunities for enhancing ethical review in animal research

To the Editor — The UK's Animals in Science Committee (ASC) recently completed its review of the process of harm-benefit analysis (HBA) carried out under the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) (see Supplementary material). The ASC report focuses on the UK, where ASPA requires the HBA of a programme of work to assess whether the harm that would be caused to protected animals — in terms of suffering, pain, distress, and lasting harm, can be justified by the expected outcome, taking into account ethical considerations and the respect for human beings, animals, or the environment. ASPA additionally demands consideration of 'important animal welfare or ethical concerns, novel or contentious issues, or societal concerns'. Given these complex requirements, processes of HBA need regular review to operate in a way that is responsive to scientific and societal developments.

The 2017 ASC report concludes that HBA remains a legitimate ethical framework for evaluating the use of animals in research and makes 27 recommendations for improving the HBA Supplementary material. This report then contributes to evolving processes for the development of HBA¹ and international advice on the implementation of HBA in Europe under the Directive 2010/63/EU², the Office International des Epiphytes (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code³ and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences and the International Council for Laboratory Animal Science⁴. Some ASC report recommendations are targeted to the regulation of animal research in the UK, but the principles underpinning this report have relevance for other processes of HBA.

The long history and recent growth of HBA processes demonstrate that this ethical framework is both durable and flexible. However, as the ASC report outlines, HBA represents an ethical dilemma that cannot be fully resolved. Furthermore, the report suggests that the processes of HBA are not only important when making a prospective evaluation of the likely harm and potential benefits; they should also be applied to reduce harm and maximize benefit throughout the life of a project and to inform retrospective review. This report thus builds on the shift from understanding

HBA as a one-off assessment to an open-ended and iterative process, which requires ongoing communication to help deliver robust and effective ethical review.

Debating harm-benefit analysis
Harm-benefit analysis has recently come under scrutiny from several different perspectives, raising questions about the nature of this ethical framework. In theory, HBA is a form of decision-making that uses moral reasoning based on utilitarianism and aims to maximize the balance of benefits over harms for all affected. In practice, HBA often operates within a wider set of interlocking social, ethical, and regulatory frameworks. In the UK, under ASPA, there are limits to experimentation on animals, which involve the requirement of some intrinsic animal rights. HBA is also implemented in a regulatory context that considers the importance of a culture of care, requires diligence from everyone involved to operate effectively, and engages a range of wider societal concerns. This relationship between different ethical frameworks may be one reason that HBA has proved enduringly adaptable over time. However, it also gives rise to complexities and ambiguities, in different kinds of ethical reasoning and societal concerns are mobilised for making judgments and shaping expectations about whether harms should be avoided.

Some critiques of HBA have focused on the internal characteristics of this ethical decision: arguing that decisions should be further quantified, or that review processes be made more systematic. Other critiques focus on the wider context to HBA, asking questions around transparency and inclusion: "for whom, for what, and by whom should a cost-benefit calculation be made?" There are, thus, different expectations about what HBA should look like as an ethical framework. Those who expect an objective scientific justification seek precise figures for aggregate harm and overall benefits, which can be used to calculate the outcome. Those who have been critical of the capacity of numbers to capture the different states around animal research will have different questions which elements are being counted, whose perspectives are being included, and how are different values being weighed?

The ASC report outlines that an effective HBA should be a systematic process, based on best available data on the harms experienced by individual animals and specific project related benefits, but also that each decision should be recognized as partial and provisional. This partially reflects the different opinions and expectations of those who have a role in influencing, regulating, and implementing HBA, whether as scientific researchers, animal technologists, veterinarians, ethical review bodies, research funders, regulators, or as lay committee members. The provisional nature of each HBA signals the ongoing changes in the recognition of the causes of animal suffering and developments in the assessment of benefits. Judgments are likely to change as new knowledge about animal behaviour and welfare becomes available, and as new ways of thinking and working evolve.

Opening up harm-benefit analysis
The intention of the ASC report is to open up these processes of appraisal and to identify opportunities to deliver an ongoing and dynamic HBA, which is responsive to the developments across regulatory, scientific, societal and animal welfare domains. The report seeks to move beyond debates over the pros and cons of HBA as principle, to see how existing processes of HBA can integrate new data on the assessment of harms and benefits and be informed by the emerging opportunities from retrospective review. The report asserts that improvements to ethical review will be supported by using the inevitable uncertainties involved in HBA as prompts to generate further data on harms and benefits and wider discussions of their relative importance.

The first part of this opening up is recognizing that interventions of harms and benefits are not fixed in time. There are novel scientific frameworks to recognize and mitigate harms, especially around cumulative severity and the assessment of 'worse severity', which are explored in detail in the report. There are new mechanisms for evaluating research design and research impact, which can be used to assess and improve the likelihood of benefits. The report also suggests that there are more opportunities for making explicit the criteria used to identify 'societal concerns';

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Pint of Science

Pru Hobson West and Renelle McGlacken pose a big question to the people of Nottingham

Read the Blog

Harm v Benefit

Gail Davies explains the principles behind the Animals in Science Committee's recent review

Read the Article



Voluntary Participation

Ally Palmer considers whether animals can volunteer

Find Out More

Would you like to collaborate?

We are currently reviewing our collaborations with a view to formalising and publicising some of our relationships. If you currently work with the AnNex team, or would like to be included on our website, please contact animalresearchnexus@exeter.ac.uk or [Gail Davies](#) for further information.



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