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**Polyphony as experimental journalism to access other animals’ voices**

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None of the prominent sustainability frameworks prioritize the lifeways of non-human animals and the impacts they face from ecological degradation (Torpman and Röcklinsberg 2021; Drury et al 2023). Sustainability goals, while offering a framework of planetary protection, are quite human-centered, and scholars call for alternate frameworks (Huntjens, 2021) and an 18th goal that addresses non-human animals (Visseren-Hamakers, 2020). This oversight is mirrored in media coverage of the various metacrises, such as climate and extinction, leaving animal voices out, obscuring their needs and interests. Environmental Humanities offers multispecies approaches to research that equalize species in more-than-human geography and ethnography, yet these approaches remain largely in the academy. This paper presents an example of accessing non-human voices in media through a literary medium called polyphony or polyphonic voices, developed by investigative journalist and Nobel Laureate Svetlana Alexievich (2005; 2023) in a human context. This genre applied to non-human animals accesses non-human animal’s subjectivities, lifeways, needs and interests and relational styles through interviews with humans who share landscapes with these animals, spending significant periods of time near/with them.

Achieving an authentic sustainability requires a paradigm shift in worldview, in which humans are one among many subjects who access the earth’s bounties. This expanded perception of subjectivity and personhood (Oriel 2014) is one that the media can help to cultivate, through different literary forms. Polyphonic voice that uses interviews with humans who live closely with other animals and are witnesses to their lives, elicits knowledge of animal lifeways, preferences, intraspecies social relations and more. As a reader, one is situated on-the-ground with non-human others, engaging empathy and connection (Eden and Michael 2021). Experimental forms are required to expand the borders of personhood and justice, owing to the rapidity of ecological breakdown and to the perceptual changes required to enact changes towards sustainability for all.

Situated in the trans-disciplinary Environmental Humanities, this conceptual paper proposes an experimental polyphonic journalistic approach for accessing animal voices and lives as a way forward into a multispecies ethos, ethics, and politics. Polyphonic voice emerges from Mikhail Bakhtin’s (2014) dialogism and polyphony in literary studies, in which diverse points of view coexist. This is a literary or textual corollary to the concept of the pluriverse, coming from the Zapatistas in Mexico, in which many worlds fit into one (Escobar 2018). Geographer Kathryn Gillespie (2022) speaks of colonial and capitalist agriculture as sites of ruin, and engages with multispecies flourishing as a different politics of sharing landscapes. Media can contribute to generating a pluriversal ethic through this polyphonic voice approach, in which different informant’s words are placed one after another, presenting divergent but related perspectives. In this talk, I present this genre as a journalistic mode of response to the metacrisis, offering an example from Alexievich’s work and one of my own examples that accesses subjectivities of Asian elephants in Sri Lanka.

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