

HEC MONTRÉAL
École affiliée à l'Université de Montréal

L'organisation des relations multispèces au temps de l'Anthropocène
Une approche compositionniste

par
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Cette thèse intitulée :

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Une approche compositionniste

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Résumé

Bien que ces enjeux particuliers tendent à être négligés dans la littérature en gestion, les organisations sont régulièrement confrontées à des situations où leurs efforts pour organiser, diriger et coordonner le collectif se complexifient en raison de l'implication d'autres espèces, notamment animales. Cela est d'autant plus vrai dans le contexte actuel : d'une part, l'intrusion de la nature suscite de multiples problèmes de gestion et, d'autre part, la façon dont les organisations structurent leurs relations avec la nature est pointée du doigt pour sa contribution aux crises écologiques croissantes. Comme les cadres conceptuels en théories des organisations sont généralement anthropocentriques, ils permettent mal d'appréhender et de rendre compte de ces situations où s'enchevêtrent de multiples espèces, et sont donc limités dans leurs capacités à offrir des prises pour aider les gestionnaires à composer avec les problèmes rencontrés. Dans cette thèse, constituée de deux articles, je m'appuie en particulier sur les travaux des philosophes Donna Haraway et Vinciane Despret pour formuler une approche de recherche qui permette de mieux rendre compte de la présence et de la participation des autres espèces, et en particulier des espèces animales, dans les processus organisationnels. En considérant les organisations comme des communautés multiespèces où des modes d'existence plus-qu'humains s'enchevêtrent, cette perspective se décentre des seuls humains, et permet de penser l'organisation, la direction et la coordination du collectif d'une façon moins anthropocentrique. Dans un premier article, je mobilise cette approche, que j'ai appelée «compositionniste», pour proposer une perspective alternative des *grand challenges*. En reconceptualisant ces derniers comme des processus concrets d'arbitrage entre des modes d'existence plus-qu'humains, je mets de l'avant de nouvelles pratiques par lesquelles les organisations peuvent se saisir des situations problématiques pour contribuer à (mieux) (re)construire les communautés multiespèces. Dans un second article, je m'appuie sur l'analyse d'une controverse portant sur la gestion d'un parc urbain pour explorer le travail politique qui survient quand les efforts humains pour organiser l'espace interfèrent avec la façon dont d'autres espèces occupent et organisent ce même espace. Je mets plus particulièrement en évidence deux principes d'organisation mobilisés par les acteurs de

la controverse afin de définir les modalités d'inclusion et d'exclusion des différentes espèces.

Mots clés : posthumanisme; anthropocentrisme ; Anthropocène; *Grand challenges*; controverses; communautés multiespèces; animaux; Donna Haraway; Vinciane Despret; ontologie relationnelle; nouveau matérialisme féministe; études organisationnelles multiespèces; pragmatisme

Méthodes de recherche : Méthodologie qualitative; Analyse de controverse; Enquête post-qualitative

Abstract

Although such issues tend to be overlooked in management literature, organizations are regularly faced with situations where their efforts to organize, direct and coordinate the collective become more complex due to the involvement of other species, and notably animal species. This is becoming increasingly evident in the contemporary context: on the one hand, the intrusion of nature raises multiple management problems and, on the other hand, the way organizations structure their relationships with nature is criticized for its contribution to the growing ecological crises. As conceptual frameworks in organization studies are generally anthropocentric, they are unable to fully grasp and account for these situations where multiple species are entangled. These frameworks thus fall short in providing managers with novel ways to take hold and intervene in such situations. In this dissertation, consisting of two articles, I rely on the work of philosophers Donna Haraway and Vinciane Despret to formulate a research approach that better accounts for the presence and participation of other species, particularly animal species, in organizational processes. By considering organizations as multispecies communities where more-than-human modes of existence are entangled, this perspective decenters itself from humans and their doings, and lays the groundwork for considering the organization, direction, and coordination of the collective in a less anthropocentric way. In a first article, I use this approach, which I have termed “compositionist”, to propose an alternative perspective on *grand challenges*. By reconceptualizing *grand challenges* as concrete processes of arbitration between more-than-human modes of existence, I put forward new practices by which organizations can take hold of problematic situations to contribute to (re)constructing (better) multispecies communities. In a second article, I rely on the analysis of a controversy over the management of an urban park to explore the political work that occurs when human efforts to organize space interfere with the way other species occupy and organize the same space. I specifically identify and describe two organizational principles used by the actors of the controversy to define the modalities of inclusion and exclusion of different species.

Keywords : posthumanism; anthropocentrism ; Anthropocene; *Grand challenges*; controversies; multispecies communities; animals; Donna Haraway; Vinciane Despret; relational ontology; new feminist materialism; multispecies organization studies; pragmatism.

Research methods : Qualitative methodology; Controversy analysis; Postqualitative inquiry

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Enfin, cette thèse, qui a en son cœur les animaux, n'aurait certainement pas pu être réfléchi ou accomplie sans tous ceux que j'ai eu le bonheur de côtoyer depuis mon enfance. Je repense en particulier à cette anecdote, que relatait Vinciane Despret, d'un éleveur qui, lorsque sa fille avait quitté la maison familiale pour poursuivre ses études, lui avait remis une photographie des vaches Salers dont il faisait l'élevage en lui disant « c'est pour te rappeler premièrement d'où tu viens et, deuxièmement, que si tu es là, c'est aussi grâce à elles » (Despret & Porcher, 2007, p. 83). Elles sont donc nombreuses, les vaches, les brebis, les chevaux, les chiens, et tous les autres, envers qui je me sens redevable pour être parvenue jusqu'ici. J'espère que cette thèse, par les idées qui y sont avancées, pourra contribuer, même modestement, à payer la dette que j'ai envers eux.

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Avant-propos

Lorsque j'ai amorcé la rédaction de ma thèse, la question des animaux en contexte organisationnel s'est imposée d'elle-même comme thématique de recherche. Tant mes expériences personnelles que professionnelles en organisation avaient jusqu'alors été peuplées d'animaux, et avaient impliquées des relations de travail bien particulières, qui brouillaient les supposées frontières entre espèces. Je m'intéressais donc au travail interespèces, c'est-à-dire aux relations de collaboration entre humains et animaux en contexte organisationnel. Il m'apparaissait alors évident que les animaux étaient présents et actifs dans un grand nombre d'organisations, sans pour autant que leur présence ne se reflète dans la littérature.

En effet, à ce moment, il n'y avait qu'une poignée d'articles épars, publiés pour la plupart dans des revues en périphérie de la discipline, qui abordaient la question des animaux en études du management et des organisations (voir par exemple Connolly & Cullen, 2018, pour une analyse bibliométrique des articles portant sur les relations humains-animaux dans la littérature de gestion). Il n'y avait donc pas, à proprement parler, de corpus dans lequel ancrer mes travaux. Un premier élan venait toutefois d'être donné à cette question par la publication d'un numéro spécial dans la revue *Organization* (Labatut et al., 2016). Ce dernier reconnaissait que, loin d'être exclus des sociétés « modernes », les animaux sont inextricablement mêlés aux technologies et processus organisationnels du capitalisme industriel (Labatut et al., 2016, p. 317).

Depuis ces premières réflexions, le contexte plus large dans lequel s'inscrit ma thèse a subi des bouleversements considérables, qui ont transformé la teneur de ma thèse par rapport à ses objectifs initiaux. En effet, au-delà de ses effets logistiques sur mon projet de collecte de données, la pandémie de Covid-19 m'a amenée sur de nouvelles pistes. Elle a notamment fait apparaître avec une prégnance particulière notre vulnérabilité aux « Autres » non-humains, et a également mis en évidence les dynamiques plus larges dans lesquelles s'inscrivent nos relations managériales et organisationnelles avec les autres espèces. Il m'est ainsi apparu clair que bien au-delà du déficit d'animaux en études du management et des organisations, nos façons foncièrement anthropocentriques de

réfléchir l'organisation et la gestion limitaient notre capacité à contribuer aux réflexions concernant une multitude de situations similaires qui impliquent nos relations aux autres espèces. Par exemple, nos façons de « vivre ensemble » avec certaines espèces (qu'elles soient sauvages ou sous élevage humain) et d'organiser ces relations à travers des processus organisationnels peuvent certainement être pointées du doigt quant à l'émergence de maladies zoonotiques. Dans ce contexte, mes préoccupations de recherche ont ainsi glissé du travail interespèces vers, d'une part, les approches de recherche posthumanistes qui permettraient de mieux rendre compte de ces situations multiespèces et, d'autre part, la question de l'organisation politique des relations multiespèces en contexte organisationnel.

Entre-temps, des changements substantiels sont également survenus dans le champ des études du management et des organisations. Le tournant « animalier » y est désormais bien amorcé. Deux autres numéros spéciaux — l'un dans *Culture and Organization* (Lennerfors & Sköld, 2018) et l'autre dans *Gender, Work and Organization* (Sayers et al., 2019) — se sont ainsi joints au premier numéro spécial publié dans *Organization*, en plus d'autres articles publiés de façon indépendante (par exemple : Cunha et al., 2019; Doré & Michalon, 2017; Huopalaïnen, 2020; Jammaers, 2023; Jammaers & Huopalaïnen, 2023; Sayers et al., 2022) et d'un écosystème grandissant de pensée posthumaniste (par exemple : Gherardi, 2019; Gherardi & Laasch, 2021). Un premier ouvrage édité portant sur les *Animal Organization Studies* a par ailleurs récemment été compilé par Linda Tallberg et Lindsay Hamilton (2022b). Dans les conférences scientifiques internationales auxquelles j'ai eu l'occasion de participer dans les dernières années, la communauté des *animal organization studies* commence également à se singulariser et à s'organiser. De contributions disparates, on passe progressivement à certaines « conversations » qui adoptent des approches similaires, partagent certaines préoccupations, ou étudient des questions convergentes.

En somme, ma thèse a été développée, d'une part, dans un contexte particulier pour les organisations, soit un contexte caractérisé par une vulnérabilité accrue aux « Autres » non-humains (Tsing, 2015). Elle est également survenue en même temps que d'autres développements similaires, très récents, et encore embryonnaires à plusieurs égards, en

études du management et des organisations. Ceux-ci s'intéressent aux animaux non pas simplement comme des objets d'études, mais également comme une approche singulière permettant de mieux rendre compte de nos relations et interdépendances multiespèces.

Démarche de la thèse

Très tôt dans ma recherche, j'ai embrassé l'idée qu'on ne peut pas penser un monde multiespèces à partir de théories et méthodologies qui reconduisent l'anthropocentrisme (Sayers, 2016). La démarche de cette thèse repose donc tout d'abord sur la découverte de philosophes qui proposent des approches qu'on pourrait qualifier de posthumanistes¹. La première escale de cette démarche a été l'ouvrage « *When Species Meet* » de Donna Haraway (2008), lu dans le cadre de mon examen de synthèse doctoral, et, de là, j'ai fait la découverte d'une panoplie d'autrices et leurs ouvrages, et en particulier Vinciane Despret. Malgré la singularité de leurs approches respectives, la présence d'une communauté d'esprit entre ces autrices m'est apparue évidente. Tout aussi évidente était la pertinence de leurs idées pour mieux comprendre les situations multiespèces qui m'intéressaient. En effet, elles s'attardent à la fois aux pratiques de recherche et aux situations multiespèces elles-mêmes.

Loin d'être d'une appropriation aisée, ces autrices m'ont mise au travail pour tenter de comprendre comment leur façon de réfléchir les situations et la pratique de la recherche pouvaient être mises en œuvre dans le cadre de ma thèse. À quelques exceptions près (et relativement récentes), elles demeurent en effet relativement peu mobilisées en gestion, en dehors de quelques allusions ou la mobilisation de concepts précis.

Cet effort de lecture s'est traduit par deux démarches en apparence opposées. D'une part, je me suis astreinte à répertorier, décrire et expliquer les principaux présupposés philosophiques présents dans leur œuvre, et qui pourraient être mis en œuvre de façon judicieuse pour étudier les situations organisationnelles multiespèces. Il s'agissait alors d'un travail quasi mécanique d'extraction et de classification dans les catégories classiques de présupposés philosophiques (ontologie, épistémologie, conception de la

¹ Bien qu'elles rejettent parfois ouvertement l'épithète, comme c'est le cas pour Haraway, qui lui préfère notamment le terme « compostiste »

nature humaine, méthodologie). Comme le lecteur s'en rendra bien compte, ces catégories sont particulièrement mal adaptées aux perspectives posthumanistes. Néanmoins, cet exercice m'a forcé à aller au-delà d'une poignée de concepts pour chercher à comprendre de façon plus holistique ce qu'implique de penser et faire de la recherche « à la manière de » Haraway, Despret, etc.

En parallèle, une démarche bien différente s'était toutefois mise en branle de façon plus ou moins délibérée. En effet, la lecture et la fréquentation assidue de ces autrices m'a amenée à expérimenter avec leurs idées dans les nombreuses situations multiespèces rencontrées tout au long de mon parcours. Par exemple, ayant adopté au cours de l'écriture de ma thèse une chienne avec certaines particularités comportementales, j'ai eu à me familiariser avec toute une écologie de pratiques d'entraînement canin. Au fil de ces découvertes, je me suis mise à interpréter ces connaissances en « diffraction » (Barad, 2007) avec mes lectures posthumanistes, et à pratiquer l'entraînement avec ma chienne en résonance avec certaines de leurs idées. En d'autres termes, sans nécessairement en avoir conscience à ce moment, ces approches sont devenues non seulement des cadres théoriques à appliquer sur une situation, mais une pratique, une forme de « devenir » que j'ai graduellement incorporée.

Une des situations multiespèces qui a particulièrement résonné avec ces deux démarches d'exploration est celle d'une controverse locale impliquant la gestion des cerfs de Virginie dans un parc urbain de la région métropolitaine de Montréal — controverse qui perdure désormais depuis plus de deux ans. Dès ses premiers élans, cette situation problématique a pour moi mis en évidence les inadéquations des cadres anthropocentriques en études du management et des organisations. Les solutions évoquées par les modèles traditionnels de résolution de problème m'apparaissaient particulièrement déconnectées de ce qui se jouait là. Par contraste, les autrices avec lesquelles je travaillais permettaient de penser de façon bien différente cette situation, et ouvraient sur des pistes d'action qui, selon moi, se distinguaient avantageusement de celles documentées jusqu'alors dans la littérature. C'est donc à travers l'exploration de cette controverse que j'ai mené la partie empirique de ma thèse.

Composantes de la thèse

En plus de son chapitre introductif et de la discussion générale, cette thèse se décline en un chapitre et deux articles, dont je suis l'autrice principale.

Le premier chapitre, portant sur l'approche posthumaniste mobilisée dans cette thèse, est intitulé « *A Compositionist Approach to multispecies organizational research* ». Ce chapitre ayant initialement pris la forme d'un article, il a été rédigé en anglais plutôt qu'en français.

Le premier article, intitulé « *Collective Action for a Multispecies World: A compositionist approach to grand challenges* » a quant à lui été écrit en collaboration avec la professeure Chantale Mailhot (HEC Montréal). La conceptualisation de l'article et les réflexions générales qu'il comporte résultent de nos nombreux échanges à partir de mes travaux de thèse. J'ai en particulier été responsable de la conception et de la rédaction du manuscrit, de même que de la recherche documentaire sur le cas qui y est décrit. Cet article a été soumis le 9 juillet 2022 à la revue *M@n@gement*, et l'article a été accepté pour publication le 12 mai 2023. L'article tel que présenté ici n'a pas subi de modifications significatives par rapport à la version acceptée pour publication.

Le second article, dont je suis la seule autrice, est intitulé « *Deer in the Limelight: When Multispecies Organizing Goes Messy* ». Il n'a pas encore été soumis pour publication, mais une version préliminaire a été présentée lors du 39^e colloque EGOS tenu du 6 au 8 juillet 2023 à Cagliari, Italie.

Introduction

We – all of us on Terra – live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response. (Haraway, 2016, p.1)

Il est indéniable que nous vivons dans une période trouble, marquée par la prolifération d'incertitudes. Les phénomènes qui alimentent ces incertitudes sont nombreux : épuisement des ressources naturelles, pollution, accroissement des inégalités, fréquence des événements climatiques extrêmes, polarisation des débats publics et changements technologiques rapides, pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns. Déjà en 1986, Beck évoquait la multiplication des risques et des incertitudes, qui ne peuvent plus être simplement planifiés, calculés, gérés ou contrôlés (Beck, 2001). Nous sommes ainsi témoins à la fois de la transformation des forces existantes et de l'émergence de nouvelles forces économiques, politiques, technologiques, sociales, environnementales, etc. qui échappent à notre contrôle. Entre la volonté de maintenir un certain « *business as usual* » et l'inéluctabilité des bouleversements en cours et à venir, les défis sont nombreux.

Ces incertitudes ne sont pas des abstractions qui seraient confinées à l'échelle globale, et prennent au contraire forme dans des situations locales, concrètes, y compris dans les situations que rencontrent les organisations. Celles-ci doivent apprendre à formuler de nouvelles façons d'aller de l'avant afin de parvenir à agir malgré l'incertitude.

Bon nombre de ces situations ont en commun de mettre en scène le rapport qu'entretiennent les humains et certaines formes d'action organisée avec la nature, et notamment avec les autres espèces. Comme le souligne Haraway (2016b), « *what used to be called nature has erupted into ordinary human affairs, and vice versa, in such a way and with such permanence as to change fundamentally means and prospects for going on, including going on at all* (p. 40) ». Ainsi, pour Tsing (2015), la précarité, qu'elle décrit comme la vulnérabilité aux autres, et en particulier aux autres espèces, constitue la caractéristique distinctive de notre époque (p. 20). C'est donc à ces situations

organisationnelles particulières, caractérisées par l'incertitude et qui impliquent des espèces non-humaines, que s'intéresse cette thèse.

Il est à noter que bien que le point de départ de ma recherche ait été les espèces animales, force a été de constater qu'on ne peut pas si aisément séparer les agencements complexes d'animaux, de végétaux, de champignons, de bactéries, etc. Pour cette raison, si les animaux demeurent le centre d'attention, il sera plus généralement question des « autres espèces » pour désigner les espèces non-humaines qui pourraient potentiellement être considérées dans une situation donnée. Ce biais envers les animaux ne témoigne donc pas d'une importance accrue qu'auraient ceux-ci par rapport aux espèces non-animales ; il s'agit simplement d'un choix (somme toute assez arbitraire) de les adopter comme point d'entrée quant à la question plus large de la politique multiespèces.

Contexte empirique

Un simple survol des actualités des dernières années permet de prendre la mesure des situations incertaines et problématiques impliquant des espèces non-humaines dans les organisations québécoises. Ainsi, les organisations qui reposent sur l'exploitation ou la gestion de « ressources » animales ou végétales sont particulièrement vulnérables face à divers bouleversements écologiques. Par exemple, la détection d'un cas de maladie débilante chronique des cervidés en 2008 a forcé l'abattage de près de 3000 cerfs d'élevage, a entraîné la fermeture d'un abattoir ainsi que la disparition de la prestigieuse marque « Cerf de Boileau », en plus de déstabiliser l'industrie du cerf rouge au Québec (Brillant, 2020). Plus récemment, en 2022, la grippe aviaire a décimé des élevages de volaille québécois. L'entreprise Canards du Lac-Brome a notamment dû abattre 150 000 volailles, et mettre à pied près de 300 employés (La Presse Canadienne, 2022). L'herbe n'est guère plus verte du côté des végétaux, alors que les forêts québécoises sont dévastées depuis 2008 par l'agrile du frêne, entraînant de nombreux maux pour les municipalités québécoises (Sirois, 2017). Entre 2012 et 2019, la Ville de Montréal a ainsi dépensé 19 millions dans sa lutte contre l'insecte envahissant (Corriveau, 2019), sans compter les impacts liés à la perte de canopée dans les rues et parcs de la métropole. Les entreprises acéricoles ont quant à elle à gérer des espèces envahissantes comme le

nerprun, qui empêche la régénération naturelle des érables en étouffant la végétation (Ménard, 2021).

On observe par ailleurs de nombreuses situations où des individus ou des groupes se positionnent comme porte-paroles de la nature, exerçant ainsi des pressions sur les organisations concernant le traitement des animaux. Par exemple, des activistes antispécistes organisent périodiquement des manifestations et coups d'éclat dans des abattoirs et des sites d'élevage (Groleau, 2020). En 2018, les médias québécois rapportaient aussi le vandalisme d'une poignée de boucheries par des militants antispécistes (Lepage, 2018). Le festival western de Saint-Tite, un événement qui attire chaque année près de 600 000 visiteurs, est également dans la mire des militants pour les droits des animaux. En effet, en 2022, un groupe a entamé des démarches juridiques visant à interdire l'utilisation de veaux et de bouvillons lors des rodéos (Radio-Canada, 2022). Par ailleurs, à la suite de plusieurs incidents, dont la mort d'un cheval en 2018, et face à des contestations croissantes, les calèches du Vieux-Montréal ont été interdites en 2020, alors qu'une cinquantaine de chevaux sillonnaient jusqu'alors les rues du quartier historique (Lowrie, 2019).

Ces pressions publiques se traduisent parfois dans des resserrements législatifs et réglementaires, de même que dans des changements aux politiques des organismes responsables de dicter les meilleures pratiques. Ainsi, des pratiques organisationnelles qui auparavant étaient jugées banales peuvent, en l'espace de quelques années, devenir inacceptables, et être traitées comme tel par les autorités. Un signal clair à cet égard est l'adoption en 2015 par le gouvernement du Québec de la Loi sur le bien-être et la sécurité animale. Cette loi reconnaît pour la première fois que les animaux sont des êtres doués de sensibilité. C'est notamment en vertu de cette loi qu'en mai 2019, le Zoo St-Édouard, situé en Mauricie, fait la manchette, alors que son propriétaire est arrêté pour cruauté animale, et que ses animaux sont saisis par la Société pour la prévention de la cruauté envers les animaux (SPCA) (La Presse Canadienne, 2019). Bien que les éleveurs québécois ne soient pas soumis à certains éléments clés de cette loi, ils ont à mettre en œuvre les codes de pratique émis par le Conseil national pour les soins aux animaux d'élevage (CNSAE). L'organisme établit certaines exigences et recommande certaines

pratiques afin de refléter les connaissances scientifiques de même que les attentes sociétales (CNSAE, 2011). C'est par le biais de ces codes de pratique, par exemple, que les éleveurs de porcs doivent depuis 2014 s'assurer que les truies sont logées dans des cages leur permettant d'être en position debout ou couchée, sans toucher ni dépasser les barreaux de leur cage (Lachance, 2014).

La responsabilité des organisations est également engagée dans de nombreux dossiers de gestion de la faune. En effet, les animaux sauvages sont considérés comme une ressource qui appartient à l'État, et dont celui-ci a la responsabilité d'effectuer la gestion. Cette gestion s'effectue parfois de façon litigieuse, alors que la mission de protéger certaines espèces — et notamment des espèces animales menacées — entre en conflit avec d'autres missions supportées par les gouvernements, telles que le développement économique. Ainsi, alors que le caribou forestier est une espèce considérée « vulnérable » — et donc faisant l'objet de mesures particulières de gestion et de protection — des représentants de l'industrie forestière accusent le gouvernement d'abandonner l'industrie, menaçant ainsi des milliers d'emplois (Tremblay, 2023). Le dossier crée ainsi de nombreuses frictions entre les différents paliers de gouvernement, les scientifiques, les écologistes, les syndicats, les Premières Nations et l'industrie forestière. Un autre exemple notoire est celui de la rainette faux-grillon. Les mesures de protection de cette espèce vulnérable sont régulièrement contestées et bafouées dans le cadre de divers projets de construction qui nécessitent un remblayage ou un drainage des milieux humides où habitent ces petites grenouilles (Champagne, 2022b).

La présence d'autres espèces, et en particulier d'animaux, dans les organisations et dans les situations de gestion est évidemment loin d'être récente. Toutefois, comme le révèlent ces différents exemples, plusieurs éléments nouveaux viennent désormais problématiser les nombreuses pratiques organisationnelles qui impliquent, bon gré mal gré, d'autres espèces. Les situations ainsi créées mettent en évidence le fait que nos mondes organisationnels sont partagés et que, crucialement, ces mondes ne sont pas qu'humains. Comme le soulève Latour (2011), ces mondes communs, loin de pouvoir s'asseoir sur des formes universelles et transcendantes d'accord pour s'organiser, doivent au contraire faire l'objet d'une composition perpétuelle : « il n'y a pas de monde commun : il faut le

composer (p. 39) ». Les situations problématiques énoncées plus haut exigent un (ré)agencement des pratiques, c'est-à-dire la composition de nouvelles façons de faire monde commun ensemble ; un « ensemble » qui inclut de multiples espèces. Les organisations sont ainsi appelées à (re)négocier la façon de faire monde commun avec d'autres espèces, dans un monde qui résiste visiblement de plus en plus à la possibilité de traiter ces êtres comme de simples ressources passives dont on peut disposer. Pour le dire succinctement, les organisations concernées ont donc à façonner une forme de politique (et donc d'éthique) multiespèces.

C'est à cette problématique que s'attarde cette thèse. Plus particulièrement, je m'intéresse à **1) comment s'organise la politique multiespèces lorsque des organisations sont confrontées à des situations problématiques qui requièrent un réagencement?** En effet, si on tient pour acquis que le monde commun, auquel participent les organisations, n'est pas « donné » et qu'il doit faire l'objet d'une « composition », et que ce monde commun implique également de nombreuses espèces non-humaines, la question de l'organisation des relations multiespèces devient un enjeu politique et éthique crucial.

Afin de répondre à cette question, il apparaît cependant essentiel de s'attarder d'abord aux pratiques de recherche — y compris les théories et les méthodologies — à mettre en œuvre pour étudier ces situations.

En effet, force est de constater que l'anthropocentrisme est largement dominant en études du management et des organisations (Sayers, 2016), où les conceptions de la façon dont l'organisation se produit ont tendance à exclure, marginaliser et négliger la présence et la participation d'autres espèces, et notamment les animaux (Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022a). Il ne suffit toutefois pas d'inclure les autres espèces pour soudainement se défaire de l'anthropocentrisme. En effet, plus qu'une force abstraite, l'anthropocentrisme prend forme à travers un ensemble de présupposés philosophiques et de choix méthodologiques effectués par les chercheurs : le choix des objets empiriques pertinents, certes, mais également la manière dont les voix des non-humains sont produites et exprimées, les systèmes d'explication construits autour de ces voix, les explications considérées comme plausibles, etc. Les présupposés anthropocentriques ont ainsi tendance à s'appuyer sur des

dualismes hiérarchiques et interdépendants pour définir l'humain en opposition à la nature, rapportant ainsi l'humain à ce qui est « en contrôle », par opposition à une nature qui serait passive, et donc contrôlable et exploitable (Sayers et al., 2022, p. 599). On considérera par exemple les espèces non-humaines comme des ressources ou, dans le meilleur des cas, comme des objets d'intérêt éthique, sans toutefois s'attarder à la façon dont celles-ci contribuent activement au devenir du monde. Les approches fondées sur ces présupposés anthropocentriques supposent donc la centralité des êtres humains, tout en ignorant la toile dynamique d'interconnexions et de contaminations hybrides dont ils font partie, et qui contribuent à les constituer en tant qu'humains (Braidotti, 2006, p. 199).

Il va sans dire que la persistance de ces présupposés anthropocentriques en études du management et des organisations est particulièrement problématique lorsqu'il est question de s'intéresser aux processus politiques multiespèces mis en œuvre dans les organisations. D'une part, les habitudes de pensée anthropocentriques tiennent difficilement la route face aux nombreuses situations, telles que celles décrites précédemment, où les êtres sont enchevêtrés, où leurs façons d'être dans le monde s'affectent mutuellement, et où de multiples mondes et modes d'existence sont en jeu. Comme le souligne Haraway (2016b) : « *bounded individualism in its many flavors in science, politics, and philosophy has finally become unavailable to think with, truly no longer thinkable, technically or any other way* (p. 5) ».

D'autre part, loin d'être innocents, les présupposés philosophiques tranchent ce qui est visible ou invisible, ce qui est important ou insignifiant, ce qui est digne ou pas d'être étudié, etc. En perpétuant par exemple la séparation ontologique entre humains et non-humains et la priorisation des premiers sur les seconds, nos façons de comprendre la composition du monde commun et d'y intervenir ne peuvent que reconduire cette idée. Difficile alors de dénouer des problèmes tels que plusieurs de ceux décrits précédemment, qui ont précisément en leur cœur notre rapport à la nature. Haraway (2016) soulève à cet égard : « *It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories* (p. 35) ».

La question dépasse donc la simple prise de conscience du fait que les pratiques de savoir anthropocentriques sont devenues de plus en plus inadaptées pour comprendre les situations contemporaines. Pour Latour (1991), les théories scientifiques héritées de la modernité — qui opèrent la séparation ontologique entre les humains et les non-humains — rendent possibles la prolifération de situations qui emmêlent nature et social précisément car elles refusent de les penser comme telles. Les théories, dispositifs méthodologiques, énoncés scientifiques, etc., ne sont pas innocents ou simplement descriptifs : ils participent activement à la constitution de la réalité qu'ils décrivent (Callon, 2007, p. 318). Si les travaux scientifiques continuent inlassablement à réaffirmer la séparation entre les mondes naturel et social, ils risquent alors de perpétuer des situations dont l'un des mécanismes clés est justement cette séparation. En d'autres termes, enrichir le répertoire théorique non-anthropocentrique en études du management et des organisations apparaît essentiel à la fois à comprendre bon nombre de situations contemporaines qui emmêlent différentes espèces, et à intervenir dans ces situations d'une façon qui ne reproduise pas les relations problématiques.

Alors que les chercheurs en études du management et des organisations sont appelés de façon croissante à réfléchir et intervenir pour tenter de résoudre les grands enjeux de notre ère, la persistance des approches anthropocentriques apparaît pernicieuse. En effet, les approches classiques de résolution de problème relèvent typiquement d'approches rationnelles, techniques ou managériales (Benschop, 2021 ; Ergene et al., 2021 ; Ferraro et al., 2015), qui sont caractérisées par un anthropocentrisme particulièrement vigoureux (Latour, 2015; Plumwood, 2002). De telles ornières méthodologiques limitent notre capacité, en tant que discipline, à formuler des formes de réponse qui, d'une part, soient appropriées aux situations rencontrées et qui, d'autre part, ne contribuent pas à perpétuer ou à amplifier les crises.

Ces réflexions font ainsi émerger deux autres préoccupations, qui seront également discutées dans cette thèse : **2) quelles pourraient être des pratiques de savoir et d'enquête qui permettraient d'étudier les situations multispèces d'une façon qui rende mieux justice à tous ses participants, et notamment les espèces animales ? 3) De quelles façons ces pratiques de savoir et d'enquête permettraient-elles de**

s'engager différemment dans la composition de réponses aux grands enjeux contemporains ? Quelles pistes de réponse évoquent-elles ?

En somme, ma thèse s'intéresse aux pratiques politiques multiespèces dans les situations d'incertitude associées aux grands enjeux contemporains, telles que rencontrées localement par les organisations. Elle prend pour point de départ l'idée que les organisations sont constituées de mondes partagés, et que ces mondes sont notamment partagés avec de multiples espèces. Dans ces mondes, un ensemble d'activités et de pratiques, dont l'origine n'est pas qu'humaine, sont construits, instaurés, négociés, mis en œuvre et s'intersectent. Cette conception de la politique, inspirée de celles de Latour (1999b) et Stengers (2022a), s'intéresse donc à la composition collective du monde commun, qui s'accomplit par des formes d'enchevêtrement de multiples êtres et modes d'existence.

Contexte théorique

Sur le plan théorique, cette thèse s'inscrit dans le contexte des approches posthumanistes en études du management et des organisations. Prises de façon très large, ces approches ont notamment pour effet de décentrer le regard des seules activités et subjectivités humaines, que celles-ci soient considérées de façon individuelle ou collectives (Gherardi, 2019b; Gherardi & Laasch, 2021). Elles permettent ainsi de prendre davantage en considération la participation des non-humains – y compris les espèces animales – aux pratiques organisationnelles.

Une des approches dominantes en études organisationnelles pour aborder la question de la participation des non-humains aux processus politiques est la théorie de l'acteur-réseau (Latour, 2005b; Law & Hassard, 1999). À partir d'une ontologie relationnelle, la théorie de l'acteur-réseau cherche à décrire comment la réalité sociale est construite et négociée par différents acteurs, en mettant l'accent sur les réseaux de relations complexes entre humains et non-humains. Comme le reconnaît lui-même Latour (1999a), plusieurs critiques ont toutefois été adressées à cette approche au fil du temps. Sans élaborer sur l'ensemble de ces critiques, dont plusieurs ont déjà été discutées ailleurs (par exemple : Alcadipani & Hassard, 2010; Law & Hassard, 1999; McLean & Hassard, 2004), je reviens

ici sur deux d'entre elles qui m'apparaissent importantes au regard des objectifs de cette thèse.

En effet, bien que la théorie de l'acteur-réseau ait ouvert la voie à considérer davantage le rôle des non-humains dans l'accomplissement du social, elle comporte des limites lorsque certains de ces non-humains sont des animaux. Comme le mentionnent Doré et Michalon (2017) ainsi que Dale et Latham (2015), l'opposition ontologique entre humains et non-humains qui est opérée dans la théorie de l'acteur-réseau tend à reléguer les animaux au monde des objets. Cette critique a également été exprimée dans d'autres disciplines comme la géographie, où Jones (2003) souligne que les analyses inspirées par cette approche peuvent aplanir les différences entre les animaux et les autres non-humains, se gardant ainsi de les traiter comme des sujets dignes de distinction épistémologique, politique et éthique (p. 293). Si les différences entre les modes d'existence humains, et animaliers sont probablement moins grandes qu'il n'est généralement admis, il n'en demeure pas moins que certaines distinctions apparaissent importantes. Comme le décrit bien Despret (2004, 2013a, 2013b), les modes selon lesquels humains et animaux se rencontrent et se transforment mutuellement sont riches et complexes, témoignant d'une capacité mutuelle à affecter et à induire, de par leurs corps réceptifs, sensibles et sentients. Ces nuances importantes sont à risque d'être perdues dans l'analyse dès lors que les animaux se voient reléguer au règne des objets (Dashper, 2020).

Un second reproche ayant été adressé à la théorie de l'acteur-réseau est la distance analytique qu'il maintient avec les situations étudiées. Cette critique, émise en particulier par certaines philosophes féministes, en rassemble en fait plusieurs : son manque de puissance critique, son manque de considération pour la façon dont les relations de pouvoir peuvent influencer les agencements et réagencements sociotechniques, une forme de considération éthique appauvrie, etc. (Haraway, 2018; Haraway & Gane, 2006; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011; Star, 1990). Haraway voit ainsi dans les premières oeuvres de Latour une variante de la «vision de nul part» qu'elle dénonce elle-même dans ses écrits: «*a Zeus of critical distance, enacting a god's-eye view, uninvolved and untouched by the wars it describes*» (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011, p. 102). Elle décrit ainsi une certaine indifférence au sort des choses, voire un relent de désengagement éthique. Si Latour, dans

ses écrits plus récents, témoigne de l'importance des situations politiques en jeu (Latour, 2004), l'appareillage analytique de la théorie de l'acteur-réseau reconduit néanmoins souvent cette impression de distance et d'objectification dans les comptes-rendus qui en sont tirés. Ce faisant, il rend ainsi invisible la signification éthique et politique de certaines pratiques sociomatérielles (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011). Or, comme l'écrit Despret:

To 'de-passion' knowledge does not give us a more objective world, it just gives us a world 'without us'; and therefore, without 'them' [...] And as long as this world appears as a world 'we don't care for', it also becomes an impoverished world, a world of minds without bodies, of bodies without minds, bodies without hearts, expectations, interests, a world of enthusiastic automata observing strange and mute creatures; in other words, a poorly articulated (and poorly articulating) world. (Despret, 2004, p. 131)

Lorsqu'il est question de politique et d'éthique multiespèces, ce qui est en jeu, *in fine*, est la possibilité de certains êtres (et certains modes de vie) de s'épanouir, alors que d'autres êtres (et modes de vie) vont au contraire être contraints à dépérir ou disparaître. Il s'agit d'arbitrage concrets, qui ont des impacts perceptibles sur une multitude d'êtres – qui bien souvent n'ont pas été consultés. Par exemple, discuter des mesures à prendre pour faire face à l'influenza aviaire dans les élevages ne revient pas seulement à trancher des faits : cela implique de se demander notamment quels êtres vont mourir, comment vont-ils mourir, lesquels vont être protégés, et dans quelles conditions. Certaines des philosophes féministes qui ont commenté la théorie de l'acteur-réseau insistent donc sur le rapport affectif à ce qui est discuté, et donc au rôle génératif que peut jouer l'attachement au sort des choses (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011).

Le désengagement affectif attribué à la théorie de l'acteur-réseau s'accompagne également d'une certaine candeur quant à la possibilité pour tous de participer sur un pied d'égalité au «parlement des choses²» proposé par Latour. On peut par exemple contraster cette posture avec celle de Stengers (2022a), qui souligne bien comment certaines formes

² Sans être une institution concrète, le «parlement des choses» représente une proposition politique par laquelle les non-humains seraient pris en considération dans les processus décisionnels, notamment par le biais de représentants divers (Latour, 1991).

de connaissances peuvent facilement être écrasées par d'autres jugées plus « légitimes ». Elle constate également que de nombreux êtres n'ont pas la chance d'avoir de porte-parole qui pourrait les représenter et les défendre, que ce soit parce qu'ils ne peuvent ou ne veulent pas faire partie du « parlement des choses » (Stengers, 2017). Stengers signale ainsi l'importance de dispositifs permettant de rendre présentes les victimes des décisions, afin de s'assurer qu'aucune décision ne sera prise en l'absence de ceux qui sont concernés par celle-ci.

En somme, même si la théorie de l'acteur-réseau est connexe avec l'objet de ma recherche, elle comporte certaines limites dans le contexte qui m'intéresse. Ces caractéristiques m'ont amené à chercher des appuis philosophiques autres que ceux de la théorie de l'acteur-réseau, en dépit de l'implantation solide de cette approche en études du management et des organisations.

Bien que la théorie de l'acteur-réseau soit probablement la plus connue en études du management et des organisations, elle n'est pas la seule approche adoptant une posture posthumaniste. D'autres approches dites « sociomatérielles » ont notamment pris de l'ampleur pour étudier la nature interconnectée et inséparable du social et du matériel les pratiques organisationnelles (Carlile et al., 2014; Leonardi, 2011; Leonardi & Barley, 2010; Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). Ces approches, bien qu'influentes en étude du management et des organisations, demeurent toutefois généralement centrées sur les objets et les technologies plutôt que sur les êtres vivants.

Un autre courant posthumaniste a également émergé récemment des approches des pratiques, en particulier par le biais des travaux de Gherardi (Gherardi, 2019b, 2019a; Gherardi & Laasch, 2021). L'approche posthumaniste de celle-ci est fortement influencée par la théorie de l'acteur-réseau, de même que le nouveau matérialisme féministe (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 2008). En plus d'étendre l'agentivité au-delà des seuls sujets humains en mobilisant le concept d'agencement (Gherardi, 2016), Gherardi met ainsi l'accent en particulier sur une éthique incorporée, où l'étude des conséquences des pratiques organisationnelles ne peut être séparée de l'étude des pratiques organisationnelles elles-mêmes. Bien que cette approche n'ait pas encore été appliquée

spécifiquement à la question des animaux, elle constitue à cet égard une avenue prometteuse.

Il convient également de souligner l'amorce d'un tournant vers l'étude des animaux en contexte organisationnel, qui s'est entamé dans les dernières années. Ce «tournant animalier» a notamment pris forme par le biais d'une poignée de numéros spéciaux publiés dans *Organization* (2016), *Culture and Organization* (2018) et *Gender, Work & Organization* (2019). En 2023, un premier manuel portant sur la question des études organisationnelles animalières (*Animal Organization Studies*) a également été publié (Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022b). Les publications associées à ce courant ont en commun de mettre de l'avant les relations multispèces, et en particulier les animaux qui croisent nos vies et les affectent, et qui sont eux-mêmes profondément affectés par nos activités, nos pensées et nos sentiments (Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022a, p. 2).

Les appuis théoriques de ces études sont variés. Compte tenu de la récence de ce champ d'études, il n'y a pas à ce stade d'approche dominante ni de théorie cohésive qui prévaut. D'entrée de jeu, certaines des études associées à ce tournant prennent pour point de départ des concepts ou des théories qui sont, dans leur version originale, anthropocentrées, pour ensuite les adapter et les étendre aux animaux (Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022a). Par exemple, Jammaers et Huopalainen (2023) étendent à la question de l'anthropocentrisme le cadre conceptuel de Joan Acker (2006) sur les régimes d'inégalités dans les organisations. D'autres études, pour leur part, s'intéressent davantage aux animaux en tant que ressource à l'action humaine, sans nécessairement chercher à décentrer leur analyse des seuls humains (par exemple : Hamilton & McCabe, 2015; Parker, 2021; Skoglund & Redmalm, 2017).

En ce qui a trait aux approches qui partent d'une perspective plus explicitement posthumaniste, celles inspirées de la théorie de l'acteur-réseau demeurent bien présentes (Doré & Michalon, 2017; Mitchell & Hamilton, 2018; Sage et al., 2016), de même que les études ancrées dans une tradition ethnographique (DeAngelo, 2018; O'Doherty, 2016; Wels, 2015), encore une fois adaptée de façon à la décentrer des humains.

Une influence majeure provient de différentes approches féministes. Certaines sources d'inspiration apparaissent ainsi de façon récurrente, dont les travaux de Donna Haraway (par exemple : Charles & Wolkowitz, 2019; Cudworth, 2022; Davies & Riach, 2019; Huopainen, 2020; Knight & Sang, 2020; Satama & Huopainen, 2019), ceux de Karen Barad (par exemple : Finkel & Danby, 2019; Knight & Sang, 2020) et les approches écoféministes du *care* (Connolly & Cullen, 2018; Cudworth, 2022). Par contraste en particulier avec la théorie de l'acteur-réseau, ces approches posthumanistes associées aux courants de pensée féministes conceptualisent de façon riche la dimension affective, intersubjective et charnelle de nos rapports aux animaux, de même que les enjeux éthiques inhérents à ces relations (Finkel & Danby, 2019; Satama & Huopainen, 2019). À ce jour, elles semblent émerger en tant que principales ressources pour s'opposer et offrir une alternative à l'anthropocentrisme en études du management et des organisations.

Au regard de ce portrait sommaire, j'ai opté dans cette thèse pour une approche composite, fortement inspirée à la fois par le pragmatisme et par le nouveau matérialisme féministe. Cette approche a été assemblée en particulier à partir des travaux des philosophes Donna Haraway (2003, 2008, 2016b, 2018) et Vinciane Despret (2002, 2014, 2017, 2019; Despret & Dolphijn, 2021; Despret & Porcher, 2007; Despret & Stengers, 2011), avec des contributions additionnelles de philosophes et chercheurs tels que Karen Barad (2007), Bruno Latour (1991, 1999b, 2015), Isabelle Stengers (2013, 2017, 2019, 2022a), Anna Tsing (2015, 2022), et Thom Van Dooren (2022). J'ai colligé et agencé certaines des idées clés qui rassemblent ces différents auteurs pour pouvoir aborder la problématique qui me préoccupe, soit la composition d'une politique et d'une éthique multispèces dans les situations organisationnelles.

Cette approche, que j'ai appelée «compositionniste», et la façon dont elle a été assemblée seront approfondis dans le premier chapitre de cette thèse. Sans représenter une nouvelle théorie, un cadre conceptuel ou une méthodologie, l'approche compositionniste constitue un mode d'attention et d'engagement aux situations. Elle amène en particulier à penser le monde commun comme une composition multispèces.

L'approche compositionniste rassemble à la fois des éléments pragmatistes, posthumanistes et féministes. Elle est pragmatiste car elle prend pour point de départ des situations incertaines pour s'intéresser aux façons dont une pluralité d'êtres s'en saisissent pour composer collectivement des réponses. Elle met notamment l'accent sur le pluralisme intrinsèque de ces situations. En rejetant le représentationnalisme, elle envisage par ailleurs la recherche comme une forme d'engagement dans le monde, qui s'accompagne de responsabilité et d'imputabilité.

L'approche compositionniste est également résolument posthumaniste car elle considère notre vulnérabilité aux autres espèces, de même que la participation d'une multitude d'espèces aux pratiques organisationnelles. Ces autres espèces sont conçues à la fois en tant qu'habitants de nos mondes organisationnels partagés, mais également comme participants actifs à la composition du monde commun. En d'autres termes, le pluralisme caractéristique du pragmatisme est ici étendu aux autres espèces.

Enfin, en dépit du fait qu'il n'y soit pas explicitement question de genre, l'approche compositionniste est également féministe. Elle s'inscrit ainsi dans un courant distinctif de la littérature sur les animaux en organisation, qui est particulièrement attentif à la façon dont les modes traditionnels d'enquête, de théorisation et d'écriture limitent les perspectives inclusives des autres espèces (Sayers et al., 2019, p. 239). La tradition féministe de production de connaissances incarne en effet un engagement à remettre en question les inégalités, la marginalisation et l'exclusion, tout en cherchant à créer des futurs viables pour tous (Ergene & Calás, 2023, p. 18). Les écrits qui y sont associés ont donc en commun non seulement un rejet des binaires catégoriques (masculin/féminin, humain/animal, etc.) qui réduisent de nombreux êtres à être catégorisé comme « autres », mais également une prise en compte des pratiques de savoir qui produisent ces exclusions.

Résumé des chapitres et structure de la thèse

Cette thèse comprend un chapitre et deux articles, suivis d'une discussion générale et conclusion. Les chapitres composant le corps de cette thèse sont brièvement résumés ci-après :

Chapitre 1 : «Un mode d’attention et d’engagement « compositionniste » pour la recherche organisationnelle multiespèces»

Dans ce premier chapitre, je m’appuie donc sur une exploration en profondeur des travaux de philosophes posthumanistes – en particulier Donna Haraway et Vinciane Despret – pour développer une approche des organisations et de la recherche en gestion qui soit plus inclusive des autres espèces, et en particulier des espèces animales. Pour accomplir cette tâche, je reprends tour à tour les catégories classiques de présupposés philosophiques (ontologie, épistémologie, agentivité et méthodologie) (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Hassard & Cox, 2013) et, pour chacune d’entre elles, élabore des réflexions et propositions informées par les travaux de Haraway et Despret. Le résultat de cette démarche est l’approche dite « compositionniste », un mode d’attention et d’engagement qui est ensuite mobilisé pour guider mes réflexions et mon processus d’enquête dans les deux articles qui composent ma thèse.

Chapitre 2 : «Collective Action for a Multispecies World: A compositionist approach to grand challenges» [Article 1]

Bon nombre de situations incertaines impliquant plusieurs espèces émergent de ce qui, en études du management et des organisations, est désormais connu sous le nom de *grand challenges* (Brammer et al., 2019; Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022; George et al., 2016). Cet article propose ainsi une approche distinctive des *grand challenges* qui reconnaît, d’une part, leur nature endogène aux organisations et, d’autre part, la nature multiespèces de plusieurs d’entre eux. S’appuyant sur les idées et concepts de l’approche compositionniste, ainsi que sur l’analyse d’une situation prenant place dans un parc urbain, cet article suggère des modes de réponse que les organisations et collectifs pourraient adopter lorsqu’elles rencontrent des *grand challenges*, et souhaitent y répondre d’une façon qui soit plus responsable l’égard des autres espèces.

Chapitre 3 : «Deer in the Limelight: When Multispecies Organizing Goes Messy» [Article 2]

Dans le dernier article de ma thèse, j'analyse une controverse multiespèces liée à la gestion des cerfs de Virginie au sein d'un parc urbain en m'appuyant sur l'approche compositionniste. Je m'attarde d'abord à décrire la communauté multiespèces concernée par la situation. J'examine ensuite comment divers acteurs se saisissent des problèmes concrets que pose l'organisation d'un monde commun multiespèces. Je mets ainsi en évidence deux modes de composition des relations multiespèces, soit l'attachement et le détachement. À travers cet article, je souligne particulièrement la dimension politique et éthique qui se joue lors des processus d'arbitrage entre différentes espèces et leurs modes d'existence.

Chapitre 1

Un mode d'attention et d'engagement « compositionniste » pour la recherche organisationnelle multiespèces³

1.1 Introduction

While some authors have highlighted the decline in paradigm thinking in management and organization studies (MOS) (Hassard & Cox, 2013), the question of the philosophical principles upon which our research practice is built has recently gained traction, as the deeply seated anthropocentrism of dominant research paradigms in MOS is increasingly being recognized and criticized (de Figueiredo & Marquesan, 2022; Ergene & Calás, 2023; Gasparin et al., 2020; Sayers, 2016). A key issue in MOS is therefore the further development and adoption of posthumanist research approaches. Recently, the emergence of a strong stream of posthumanist practice theory (Gherardi, 2019b; Gherardi & Laasch, 2021) and the increasing mobilization of feminist new materialist scholarship (for example: Harris & Ashcraft, 2023; Meriläinen et al., 2022; Valtonen & Pullen, 2021; Visser & Davies, 2021) attest to a justified enthusiasm towards revisiting the foundational assumptions and research practices that put humans at the center of agency.

Simultaneously, along with the growing interest in animal organization studies (Labatut et al., 2016; Lennerfors & Sköld, 2018; Sayers et al., 2019; Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022b) comes the development of new research practices aiming to better integrate other species into our research. For example, Wels (2015, 2020) discusses how methodologies for organizational ethnographies could be adjusted to include other species. He advocates in particular for a new conception of observation informed by Haraway's (2008) notion of "becoming with" that would allow the researcher to "track" other species. Doré and Michalon (2017), for their part, introduce "the concept of anthrozootechnical agencement to envisage the role of animals in the course of action through the lens of their relational properties (p. 761)". While such methodological and conceptual tools are certainly

³ Ce chapitre ayant initialement été formatté sous la forme d'un article, il est présenté ici en anglais. La version anglaise du titre se lit : A "compositionist" mode of attention and engagement for multispecies organizational research.

necessary, what remains intriguing to me is what comes before these tools; how a posthumanist approach and the assumptions that sustain it can “hold together” so as to produce research practices that are more inclusive of other species and of their roles in organizing.

The aim of this first chapter is thus to introduce a posthumanist approach that specifically allows us to focus on issues related to the composition of the multispecies common world in/by/with organizations. The content and approach of this chapter are motivated by a concern with the insidious and deeply rooted nature of anthropocentric assumptions in MOS, and by an ensuing desire to systematically and holistically follow the ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications of posthumanism (or more precisely, of a particular form of posthumanism) for multispecies inquiries in MOS. In other words, rather than presenting an existing theoretical or conceptual framework, this chapter engages in “paradigmatic thinking” by addressing how different categories of assumptions hold together so as to produce a specific posthumanist mode of attention and engagement.

To do so, I draw on an assemblage of posthumanist philosophers, particularly Donna Haraway (2008, 2016b, 2018) and Vinciane Despret (2002, 2014, 2017, 2019; Despret & Dolphijn, 2021; Despret & Porcher, 2007) to offer what I call a “compositionist” approach to inquiry. Threads of their thought are woven together and bound by a specific problem: how can we compose a livable common world when the ‘we’ is utterly heterogeneous and precarious? From an in-depth exploration of their work, I bring forth a particular mode of attention and engagement with multispecies situations, that can guide the practice of inquiry.

In the following pages, I begin by briefly discussing what is meant here by “posthumanism”. Next, I introduce the compositionist approach and how it was assembled. Then, I go through the different categories of metatheoretical assumptions in order to describe its features and demonstrate how they come together to form a coherent approach. Throughout this exploration, I emphasize the implications of a compositionist approach for fostering a mode of attention and engagement with multispecies organizational situations. Finally, I conclude by offering a synthesis of the compositionist

approach, discussing how it alters the researcher's practice as well as their conception of other species.

1.2 What Makes Research Posthumanist?

The approaches that fall under *posthumanism* are numerous and varied, as the term is sometimes even used to describe what is, in fact, an intensification of humanism (Braidotti, 2013; Wolfe, 2010), such as that present in transhumanism. To be clear, posthumanism as it is discussed here intends to depart from humanism, and in particular its over-reliance on the ideas of bounded individualism and human superiority.

As Gherardi (2019b) states, a common project between many posthumanist approaches is to decentre agency from sole humans. This project recognizes, on the one hand, that humans – whether individually or collectively – are not the only ones capable of agency. For example, O'Doherty (2016) acknowledges the active role played by Olly, the resident cat at a British airport, in what he calls a “feline politics” that occurs before humans and nonhumans are even ontologically separated. On the other hand, posthumanist projects also recognize that even when humans are indeed actors, they are never acting “alone”, that is, without the implication of non-humans. In other words, agency is always a more-than-human accomplishment.

Once this common thread of posthumanism identified, many variations are possible. Posthumanist approaches can engage more or less with the specificities of different types of agency and materiality. For example, Actor Network Theory's principle of radical symmetry is often criticized for flattening out particularities between different types of materialities (Dale & Latham, 2015; Jones, 2003). Indeed, much is lost if the common ground on which a “flat ontology” is built is that of objects, which has the effect of “thing-ifying” the beings and arrangements that are explored (Dale & Latham, 2015, p. 168). Researchers can also vary on their distance from the experience of other species. For instance, while some research makes moves towards understanding the lived experiences of animals (Charles & Wolkowitz, 2019), others remain at an analytical distance by treating animals more as concepts than as fleshy, sensual bodies (Doré & Michalon, 2017). Furthermore, there is a recurring tension between, on the one hand, wanting to

decentre research from its humanist orbit by integrating the point of view of animals and, on the other hand, recognizing the impossibility of the task. While speaking *of* animals appears insufficient, speaking *for* them is fraught with complications.

In sum, multiple paths are possible for posthumanist research. In the next section of this chapter, I offer one such version of posthumanism that is veered towards the specific problem of the composition of the common world with other species.

1.3 A Compositionist Approach

The following section introduces in depth the “compositionist” approach. This posthumanist proposition draws inspiration from the works of philosophers Donna Haraway and Vinciane Despret, along with insights from authors including Karen Barad, Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, and Anna Tsing. While they don’t represent a unified approach, these authors *think-with* (Haraway, 2018, p. XX) each other, creating a particularly fecund resonance. The metaphor of a patchwork quilt (Flannery, 2001; Koelsch, 2012) helps explain how I assembled their wide-ranging ideas.

A patchwork quilt is an assemblage of disparate pieces of textile that are combined to form what is experienced as a cohesive whole. It never starts “from scratch”, but creates new relationships between heterogeneous materials that each retain their distinctive properties. Importantly, “the quilt is not merely a hodgepodge of fabric—it has a specific purpose and context (Koelsch, 2012, p. 824)”. Quilt making is necessarily the result of a personal and subjective engagement with the material. By cutting and sewing together smaller and larger patches of fabric from various thinkers, I built the quilt that serves as a basis for this article. The idea is not to form a stable, integrated and closed-ended “new” approach – as patchwork quilts can always be transformed into something else or extended in multiple directions – but rather to bring these authors together, for an instant, bound by the same problem.

Phrasing such as “feminist and pragmatist posthumanism” could help situate this *ad hoc* assemblage of thinkers. For the sake of clarity, I instead opted for the neologism *compositionist*. Originally coined by Latour (2010), the term is meant to convey a

common problem that binds these authors together, namely, how do we, and how can we compose a common, livable, world, when the “we” is utterly heterogeneous and precarious? This is a central question – with infinite declinations - around which many posthumanist scholars interested in multispecies situations gravitate.

To present this approach in a methodical and cohesive manner, I structured this section along the four categories of assumptions that are often used to describe paradigms (Hassard & Cox, 2013), namely *ontological* assumptions, *epistemological* assumptions, assumptions about *human nature*, and finally *methodological* assumptions. The division into such categories is, without question, an artificial task bound to generate multiple tensions. Indeed, as Barad (2007) points out, treating ontology and epistemology (and ethics) as separate issues is misguided once you recognize that there is no position ‘from outside’ that allows researchers to gain knowledge of ‘reality’ without being part of it and, therefore, without being responsible for its effects.

Despite this understandable concern, the exercise has the advantage of making explicit the key ontological, epistemological, and methodological choices. As Martela (2015) comments, such choices are inescapable for researchers: “Whether one makes the choice implicitly or explicitly, these basic methodological assumptions influence what kind of research methods are appropriate, what kind of phenomena one is able to observe and capture, and what kind of results one can expect to find in the first place (Martela, 2015, p. 537).

Furthermore, a more thorough investigation of meta-theoretical commitments could generate new insights and enhance the radical scope of posthumanist ideas. Indeed, it is tempting to add other species to MOS by simply adapting and expanding extant theories and research practices. However, anthropocentric assumptions permeate so many research and knowledge practices in MOS that they often feel invisible or neutral (Sayers, 2016). Starting from the theories and research practices founded on rational humanism to extend the sphere of consideration to nonhumans can only reproduce the type of subjectivities associated with humanism (Wolfe, 2010). Without being a guarantee, recasting research practices by starting with the meta-theoretical assumptions that underpin them could, by

contrast, help create an apparatus of inquiry that is less likely to perpetuate these anthropocentric assumptions.

In summary, addressing the different categories of assumptions one by one - while recognizing that such a categorization is at most an organizing device - allows considering more mindfully the anthropocentric assumptions that underlie research practices, while ensuring coherence throughout.

1.3.1 *Ontology*

According to compositionists, the idea of preformed independent entities that remain unaffected by their continual encounters and that can be isolated from all other kinds of beings is not ontologically tenable. As we live our lives, we are affected by, and are affecting, those around us, making *becoming-with* a more accurate gerund than *becoming*. These transformations occur whether we want it or not, and whether those we encounter are humans or not. In fact, evidence mounts that the “we” we acknowledge to be is, by nature, a multispecies, collective, “we”: “everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option (Tsing, 2015, p. 27)”. “All the actors become who they are ‘in the dance of relating’, not from scratch, not ex nihilo, but full of the patterns of their sometimes-joined, sometimes-separate heritages both before and lateral to ‘this’ encounter (Haraway, 2008, p. 25)”. Barad goes as far as saying that relationships are not the product of independent beings interacting; they are how beings are brought to existence (Barad, 2007, p. 140).

In the absence of independent entities that could serve as objective referents, compositionists turn to concepts that designate different forms of connection-in-action (Gherardi, 2019a, p. 4). Possible conceptual shorthands to designate these are multiple: agencements (Despret, 2013a; Doré & Michalon, 2017; Gherardi, 2016), assemblages (Tsing, 2015), entanglements (Barad, 2007), holoents (Haraway, 2016b), string figures (Haraway, 2016b), etc. Each of these terms carries important nuances, but they all refer to the fundamental idea that we, as inhabitants of the earth (not just humans), are never alone, and thus never act alone. We are always part of, and connected to, rich textures of embodied and situated humans and nonhumans, as well as discourses, knowledges, etc..

Through these *agencements*, we come together more or less fleetingly, coordinate more or less potently, and make effects emerge. The boundaries, topography, components, or effects of these *agencements* are not defined in advance, nor are they stable in time. They can be accessed at multiple scales, with entry points such as landscapes, organizations or individual interactions. Encounters that occur at a seemingly local level have ramifications and genealogies rooted at various scales, timelines and places. These *agencements*, their movements and their effects are what is central in the relational ontology of compositionists, as opposed to the characteristics of the “entities” that compose it.

The posthumanist stance of compositionists derives from this relational ontology. In modernist ontologies, reality is generally assumed to be divided in two autonomous domains, guided by different principles, such as nature and social, material and discursive, nonhuman and human, etc. (Descola, 2005; Latour, 1991). By contrast, for compositionists, this preliminary separation between humans and the rest of the world is revealed as arbitrary and historically contingent rather than an ontological property of the world (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2008, 2016). In their perspective, “reality” is instead composed of “entangled material practices (Barad, p. 168)” that are not “naturally broken up into social and natural realms that get made separately (ibid.)”.

Fully embracing the absence of a *de facto* separation between humans and non-humans is obviously challenging (Gond et al., 2016). For Haraway, however, this commitment is much more about “nurturing and acknowledging alliances with a lively array of others (Haraway, 2018, p. 269)” than it is about a mechanical erasure of reified categories. Nevertheless, it brings to the fore practices of boundary-making, erasing and testing. For example, identifying animals by numbers hardens the boundary between human and “object”, while interspecies play blurs the frontier between its participants (Merritt, 2021).

A consequence of an integrated ontology is that entities that may have been typically neglected in MOS – such as other species – are now, at least in theory, considered relevant. In practice, there is a gap between ‘inviting’ other species and their respectful integration. To begin to fill that gap, compositionists decouple “ontology” from its humanist orbit in

favour of **multispecies world-making**. Their conception of reality includes the world-making activities of other species and assemblage of species, whether or not they include humans. As Tsing (2015, p. 292) puts it, “other beings have their own ontologies” and, as Sayers et al. (2019, p. 239) remind us, other species also work, manage, and organize.

Biophilosopher Jakob von Uexküll (born 1864) was a precursor in exploring what it means to be an animal in the world from the point of view of animals themselves (Uexküll, 2010). He rejected the anthropocentric analyses that put every living thing as objects located in our human world, proposing instead that “each and every living thing is a subject that lives in its own world, of which it is the center (p. 45)”. The body of an animal, through their perceptual and semiotic apparatus, create at every moment a world that can be significant to them. The “worlds” of humans and animals can never be the same, because, as pointed out by Despret, “their bodies give them a totally different world in which things affect them in radically different ways (2013, p. 59).”

Organizational spaces are thus open-ended gatherings of worlds, where the worlds of humans and animals (but not limited to those) are enfolded, in partial connections, but where the world of one never completely encompasses the world of the other. As Van Dooren points out, every living being inhabits and shapes different spaces of existence, both individually and collectively, contributing to the formation of worlds that are at the same time common and distinct (2022, pp. 26–27). Each of our actions reconfigures our world, enfolded in its wake the world of others in ways that can be significant to them. The presence and action of one can constrain or enable the other, but never in a deterministic way. To account for such spaces, we must attend both to the worlds (*umwelt*) of humans and those of animals, and in particular to the contact zones between them.

1.3.2 Epistemology

Stemming from this relational ontology, the theory of knowledge of compositionist authors features three salient facets 1) the way they conceive the relationship between knowledge and reality; 2) the type of knowledge and theoretical contribution they aspire to generate; and 3) the status of the researcher. It also addresses the problem of “voice” and place” when exploring the experience of animals in situations.

1.3.2.1 Relationship between knowledge and reality: ontoepistemology

In a compositionist epistemology, knowledge does not stand separate from the world it attempts to describe. Scientific practices are an engagement in the world, not something that happens at a distance, outside from it. Every knowledge practice and every knowledge device give phenomena a chance to exist in specific ways (and not others), as they both constrain and authorize the unfolding of things. They are propositions of existence that activate in concrete and sometimes perceptible way processes of transformation (Despret, 2002, p. 26). For example, animal trainers possess extensive knowledge about the species, breeds, and specific animals they work with. Whether or not this knowledge is “true” in the positivist sense of the term, this proposition has effects on how the trainer will engage with an animal; this knowledge institutes something. If they believe, for instance, that dominance is the main relational mode between humans and dogs or horses, they will become particularly attentive to anything that marks either dominance or submission. In turn, this will make this relational mode especially influential, and thus especially “real” in that specific relationship. That knowledge is then perpetually adjusted as it is put to the test of reality, while the world – including the animal – is transformed by the activities of the trainer. This is also true for animals, as they also simultaneously create, test and institute knowledge about the trainer, their interactions, and the world. In other words, other species also have “theories”.

Similarly, as researchers, the way we frame problems and ask questions – which are largely influenced by our understanding of the world – allow the problem to be answered in some ways (and not others), ultimately shaping the world in specific ways.

1.3.2.2 Type of knowledge and theoretical contribution generated

If entities exist only as parts of emergent webs of heterogeneous beings, then to account for “reality”, theorizations must attend to contingent situations. The kind of knowledge and truth to which compositionists aspire is thus not “universal” or “transcendant”, but rather the act of “giving reliable testimony” (Haraway, 2018, p. 22). One form of theorization that is well suited to this exercise is the narrative form (Gherardi, 2016, 2019a). Narratives can accommodate the ebb and flow of specific encounters, their historicity, their singularity and their open-endedness. Unlike paradigmatic forms of

knowledge that work at purify objects by reducing them to general laws, stories gather together beings, objects, meanings, experiences, locations, temporalities, etc. They are a remedy to accounts that keep beings separated, and engaged in simple unilateral or bilateral relationships. Even more importantly, the way stories are written can make perceptible and active things and relationships that existed, but that may not have been previously perceived (Despret & Dolphijn, 2021, p. 29). They can depict situations while preserving their share of indeterminacy and trouble.

The importance of stories certainly does not mean that there is no place for explanation, as researchers can hardly evade explanations. However, as Despret reminds us, explaining can take diverse forms: there are explanations which multiply the worlds and honour the emergence of an infinity of ways of being, while other forms of explanations discipline these ways of being, and reassert some basic principles (Despret, 2019, pp. 15–16). The work of compositionist sits them firmly in the first camp.

Indeed, pluralism is a distinctive feature of a compositionist epistemology, especially in Despret's work. She goes against scientific practices that make claims about what a phenomenon "really" is, and where the ambition of one theory is to elude others (Despret & Stengers, p. 69). Such representational practices assume that there is an objective referent against which the conformity and accuracy of a theory can be assessed. For instance, addressed in this fashion, a problem such as "can animals be workers", may be translated from the beginning in: "can animals be workers in the way humans are workers", as it assumes that there is a correct definition of working and, incidentally, that this common ground is based on the unmarked category of '(white, male, occidental) human'.

Compositionists thus suspend the definition and determination of situations, in order to allow multiple versions of the problem to emerge. For Despret, *versions* represent ways of grasping a problem. For example, by asking, "what does it entail to say that animals can be workers?" Despret opens the door to versions of "working" where animals can indeed be workers. As such, versions do not allow the exclusion of one another. Instead of bringing the discussion back to an 'objective referent', they enlarge the understanding

of the problem. For instance, *working-as-animal* and *working-as-human* are not put in competition with one another for the monopoly of a definition of what *working* ‘truly’ is. Rather, taken together, these versions expand our comprehension of working as a whole.

Different versions can be articulated, connected, and the product of research is precisely their arrangement. This doesn’t mean that all versions can be merged together and form a unified theory about a specific problem. As Despret highlights, versions are sometimes contradictory, impossible to harmonize (Despret, 2014, p. 242). Exploring different *versions* multiplies definitions and possibilities, rendering more experiences perceptible (Despret, 2014, p. 240). This approach makes research not so much an interpretation process, but rather a process through which we cultivate and experiment with equivocations (Despret, 2014, p. 240). To know something, then, is to know different ways to hold it, to translate it.

Starting from an indeterminate problem, such as the problem of “work”, the task of the researcher is then to investigate 1) the multiple versions of *work* they easily have access to (as situated humans), and 2) the multiple versions of *work* that they can believe make sense in the experience of others, including animals (Despret, 2014, p. 236). In other words, as we attempt to understand the worlds of other beings, how can we imagine that these beings, through their world-building activities, experience this problem? The versions that emerge through this inquiry might or might not be similar, as the experiences of “working”, for instance, can be quite different both in texture and complexity from one species to another.

To resist the pull towards universalism, compositionist authors extol the merits of patience. In particular, they are leery of the habits of thought that — sometimes unwittingly — impose themselves right away to explain phenomena. Despret tells us to slow down in our explanations, to keep open the possibilities for surprises for as long as possible instead of honing in on specific interpretations. Accordingly, the purpose of a compositionist inquiry is not to overcome the plurality of versions by erecting one (whether singular or composite) as the truth. However, neither is it to merely take note of the multiplicity of versions by embracing relativism and refusing to diagnose what is

happening. For compositionists, the interest of a specific version lies in its effects, in what it can institute or make visible – and those differences between versions matter greatly. Making versions the object of inquiry is not just an exercise of thought, but a concrete engagement with the world, with its materiality that constrains, insists, and resists (Despret, 2002, p. 145). Therefore, the relativist posture, which is disengaged from the importance of the problem for those concerned, is untenable for compositionists. Of course, it may be necessary at times to proceed to an arbitration between different versions. However, this judgment will be made with a keen awareness of what is at stake, and not based on the assumption that each version is morally and pragmatically equivalent.

1.3.2.3 Status of the researcher and of expertise

Compositionists are particularly wary of claims that grant researchers and scientific knowledge a superior or overriding status. Within many methods of inquiry of positivist heritage, the distribution of expertise between researchers and participants is highly asymmetric. As experts, researchers determine the right questions and the problems to which the participants will be asked to contribute to. They determine the very terms under which they will be authorized to testify of their experience. Researchers also single-handedly carry the responsibility for analysis (which is sometimes done using motives unknown from the participants). Such research devices rely on the submission to the expertise of the researcher (Despret & Porcher, 2007). They leave little room for disputing the relevance of a question, telling other stories, or objecting to the researcher's interpretations. By doing so, it doesn't fully recognize that participants are themselves researchers, engaging daily in creating, applying, testing, revising, etc. knowledge on the very problems scientific researchers are trying to address.

Beyond the lack of politeness, these asymmetric practices lead to problematic effects, among which the concern that by reducing the field of attention to what matters to researchers, they miss out on the generative power of surprises. By contrast, for Despret, “interesting research is research conducted under conditions that make beings interesting (Despret, in Haraway, 2016, p. 126)”. And for her, the key to making beings *interesting* is to seek out what matters, what is important, to them. It is to find out and follow them

where they are themselves the most qualified experts in order to chart the ways they formulate and take hold of a given problem.

Inquiry should therefore offer opportunities for recalcitrance, allowing participants to uproot problems. This practice is particularly useful when studying human-animal-organizational situations. In some scientific practices, the repertoire of possible stories about animals is quite restricted, with explanations limited for instance to “instincts” or “conditioning”. Even in disciplines less amenable to positivism, there is a reluctance to give animals access to a complex repertoire of possible competencies, especially if they are not mediated by representations. Conversely, those who live and work with animals are often more liberal in their versions. For example, farmers interviewed by Despret & Porcher (2007) recount anecdotes in which they actively collaborate with a “lead” cow, who understands the intentions of the farmer, and help him carry out these intentions by encouraging the other cows of the herd to follow the farmer. This collaboration is built on shared trust between the farmer and the lead cow, developed over the years. Such an account is a far cry from a portrayal that would reduce cows to Cartesian machinelike animals. By allowing the participants to uproot problems, we can gain a richer understanding of the situations they are encountering, and in particular of how different species, through their practices, compose a common world.

Importantly, animals are among the entities who take hold of problems in certain ways and produce knowledge about them. In other words, they are also relevant experts, with relevant knowledge on the topics we want to investigate. For instance, humans are certainly not the only species to grasp with the problem(s) of collaboration. In dog-handler teams, dogs also have to find their way through a series of problems. Of course, interviewing dogs through our usual (verbal) means has limited achievability, but this does not mean that it is a complete impossibility.

Another problematic effect of the skewed attribution of expertise is its vulnerability to reconveying assumptions that are generally accepted in a given domain. For instance, relying solely on anthropocentric theoretical and methodological resources is unlikely to result in explanations that fundamentally challenge anthropocentric assumptions unless

we recognize the relevance of other versions that formulate problems otherwise. While research is always informed (implicitly or explicitly) by theories, Despret emphasizes that, whenever existing theories make us want to jump to conclusions, we must be suspicious and slow down to listen to the insistence of other versions.

Compositionist approaches to the status of the researcher can be gathered under the term “politeness”, which Despret uses as an “epistemological virtue”. She seeks to build knowledge *with* participants rather than *on* them. “Despret’s sort of politeness does the energetic work of holding open the possibility that surprises are in store, that something *interesting* is about to happen, but only if one cultivates the virtue of letting those one visits intra-actively shape what occurs (Haraway, 2016b, p. 127)”.

In their work, Despret and her collaborators experiment with different devices and practices to induce new versions to emerge, both among their interviewees and among the animals of the ethologists they study. These devices and practices are conceived in a way that not only authorizes a redistribution of expertise, but maximizes the opportunities for resistance and recalcitrance. In *Être bête*, the authors interview livestock farmers to address with them the problem of the difference between humans and animals. Conscious that formulated as such, this daunting philosophical question accentuates the asymmetry between scientists and laypeople, they ask the participants to help them formulate the question in such a way that it could interest their own colleagues. The interviewees take up to the task, and not only do they come up with new formulations, but they also answer their new questions. Interestingly, their versions are more concerned with similitudes between humans and animals than with the “great divide” between them. This is a fascinating example of how closing off a problem by defining it beforehand can make it sterile, while giving it a chance to be displaced can open it up to new possibilities.

1.3.2.4 The problem of voice and place

An important question in decentring knowledge from its humanist perspective is how to know, and talk from, the point of view of animals. Although we cannot directly access the worlds of other species, this does not mean that they are entirely beyond our understanding, and even less that they are unworthy of exploration.

The most significant guidance provided by compositionists regarding this issue is that we should be driven by curiosity, which they consider another central epistemological virtue. This means, on the one hand, approaching situations with attentiveness, openness, and sensitivity to the possibility of being surprised by the presence and participation of diverse beings. On the other hand, it means always seeking to learn more about these others, and about how they participate in the common world. This is not a merely intellectual commitment but also a personal and embodied one for the researcher, who must be willing to be fully present in the situation, and to be affected by those whom they encounter - whether they are human or not. As Haraway (2016b) puts it, it means learning to “stay with the trouble”, being willing to be troubled by the possibilities that emerge from a situation.

This commitment, this curiosity of the researcher extends to the numerous knowledge practices that concern other species. For example, in her work on matsutake mushrooms, Tsing (2015) notes:

... it makes sense to me to use all the learning practices I can think of, including our combined forms of mindfulness, myths and tales, livelihood practices, archives, scientific reports, and experiments. . . I offer stories built through layered and disparate practices of knowing and being. If the components clash with each other, this only enlarges what such stories can do (p. 159).

In essence, what this curiosity allows us to do is to generate new versions – versions where animals are assigned different roles and competences, where they have multiple modes of existence, action, and interaction, where their generative power is manifested differently, and where the relationships between species can take on new forms. The effects of these versions can then be explored, as each one has different instituting effects.

This active practice of curiosity may not enable us to “become animals” nor does it render the intimate experience of their relationship with the world. However, it certainly enriches our understanding of the world of others. Therefore, it is not so much a question of speaking for other species, or of putting ourselves in their place, but rather of seeking to

better understand their world, the multiple ways in which they are affected by it, and how they intervene in it.

1.3.3 Assumptions about agency

A third category of assumptions addresses the question of ‘human nature’, closely related to that of ‘agency’. Here, compositionists outright reject the validity or relevance of the concept of “human nature” (whether voluntary or determined) to think about agency and the unfolding of situations.

When addressing the source of causality in phenomena, compositionists argue that agency is “an enactment, not something that someone or something has (Barad, 2007, p. 214)”. What ought to be followed, then, is action itself, and in particular the differences enacted through that action. Such action is non-arbitrary, since sedimented material and discursive configurations constrain action, making possible some actions while rendering other impossible (ibid, p. 234). Yet, these configurations never determine action, as there are always indeterminacies. It is precisely in these “space[s] of potentialities opened up by indeterminacies (ibid, p. 182)” that agency is located. Agency, then, is understood as “the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices (ibid, p. 178)”. Because they incessantly reconfigure situations, actions iteratively change the possibilities of change, constraining or making possible specific reconfigurations and so on.

If agency is conceived as making changes to practices, rather than as a property of (specific) entities (and not others), then restricting it to humans appears unjustified. Compositionist authors thus question the deeply embedded notion that what is more important in analysis is necessarily human and only human. In their accounts, humans and non-humans both have the opportunity to prove their ability to produce change. While bifurcated ontologies tend to attribute initiative to one side or the other of the nature/culture divide, compositionists focus on the perpetual and often reciprocal transformations that occur within relationships, including in human-animal relationships.

Through this account, we can see that what we term ‘agency’ is perhaps more aptly named ‘interagency’ (Despret, 2013a). As Despret states, “‘agenting’ (as well as ‘acting’) is a relational verb that connects and articulates narratives (and needs ‘articulations’), beings

of different species, things, and contexts. There is no agency that is not interagency (p. 44)”. When ‘agenting’ together, some beings are made “capable of making other beings capable, in a plurivocal manner, in such a way that the *agencement* resists being dismembered, resists clear-cut distribution (Despret, 2013a, p. 38)”. A compositionist approach to agency thus tosses aside the focus on what standalone entities do or are made to do by structural forces. By the same token, it also leaves open the possibility of cross-species inventions (Haraway, 2008, p. 205), of creating together consequential things that weren’t there before, of which the respective contributions escape calculations (Haraway, 2016, p. 10).

This conception of agency invites to more patience and restraint in attributing causality or distributing agency. For instance, Despret (2002, 2007) suggests that by making our partiality mobile — by letting ourselves contemplate the possibility that animals might also be active, for instance — we might be better able to find a fair ground for explanation. In her practice, she takes great care in holding problems “by the middle”, that is, she resists the intellectual habit of awarding ontological priority to some entities and not others (Despret, 2017, p. 32). Her motto here is ‘a little too much when not enough is the usual answer’ (Despret, 2002, p. 145). For instance, when asking the question, “why are animals in the workplace a growing trend?” we might typically jump to explanations where social changes are responsible (such as the growing need for emotional support in increasingly stressful work environments). This is where Despret goes in the opposite direction: “what if the *animals themselves* were responsible for this change?”. Of course, Despret concedes, this version alone is just as untenable as the version that puts all of the initiative into the hands of humans, but perhaps there is more truth to be found in a fairer allocation of causation between human and animals. Perhaps merely asking this odd question might engage the researcher to enlarge their view of the problem by including the agency of other beings.

This commitment to holding problems “by the middle” goes hand in hand with disinterest towards identifying definitive precedents or ultimate causes to phenomena. What Despret does instead is accounting for how actions and situations create occasions for new beings and new relationships, i.e., how they act as conditions for existence (Despret, 2002, p.

19). She thus recounts stories of cascading capacitations and transformations, articulated by terms such as “inciting, provoking, producing, inducing, arousing, sparking, evoking, instigating, engaging, inspiring, and so on (Despret, 2013a, p. 38)”, or their mirror image, “the capacity to be incited, inspired, engaged, or provoked, or in being induced to produce—or even in terms of the power to give another being the power to affect you (ibid.)”. Compositionists thus think processes through emerging constraints and capacitations, rather than in terms of ultimate origins.

In organizational settings, animals and humans share projects, albeit asymmetrically, and they transform each other in that process. A compositionist approach to human-animal-organizational situations is thus to recount narratives where animals and humans have mutually transformed themselves, where they have affected each other, have exchanged propositions and mutually adjusted their relationships (Despret, 2007, p. 15), to tell stories of “entanglements of beings in technoculture that work through reciprocal inductions to shape companion species (Haraway, 2008, p. 281)”.

1.3.4 Methodology

The fourth category of assumptions, i.e., methodological assumptions, informs the way one attempts to investigate and obtain ‘knowledge’ about the world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2). The category itself is once again problematic in a posthumanist approach since, as Gherardi (2019b) puts it, “once we accept a posthumanist research practice, the very idea of method is disrupted (p. 44)”. More extensive discussions on what becomes of method in posthumanism go beyond the scope of this dissertation, but can be found in the growing stream of research on post-qualitative inquiry (Benozzo & Gherardi, 2020; Gherardi, 2019b; Huopainen, 2020; St. Pierre, 2021).

A key insight of this literature is that once we stop thinking of ontology and epistemology as separate from each other, the purpose of inquiry shifts from the “correct” linguistic representation of reality to material-discursive practices (Barad, 2007, p. 135). As “thinking and living are simultaneities” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 655) the idea of a methodology that is external to the researcher and the situation, and that would act as a medium between reality and its representation, becomes incompatible. Accordingly, if we

practice posthumanist research, there is no closed definition of “what counts as ‘data’, ‘the field’, ‘the interview’, ‘observation’ and so on (Gherardi, 2019b, p. 45)”, nor are there “preexisting, formalized, systematic research process[es] that one can follow, thereby guaranteeing validity (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 5)”. Hence, to put it plainly, there is no such thing as a compositionist “methodology” that could be applied to study any situation in order to better account for other species.

This, however, does not mean that “anything goes”. The absence of a methodological instrumentation aimed at producing a form of external, mechanical and objectified validity does not mean abandoning validity entirely (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). However, this does mean that validity is recontextualised as “relational, internalized, and negotiated » (Pozzebon et al., 2014, p. 301). As highlighted by Amis and Silk (2008), “quality then becomes *internalized* within the underlying research philosophy rather than being something to be tested at the completion of the research or an outcome of the application of robust methods.” (p. 458). In other words, notions of validity and, more generally, of quality, are constructed through the theoretical and empirical engagement of the researcher.

Indeed, through the theoretical commitment and assiduous reading of a theoretical corpus, the researcher is transformed and *becomes with* the theory(ies) and/or the theorist(s) they study. The “researcher must live the theories (will not be able *not* to live them) and will, then, live in a different world enabled by a different ethico-onto-epistemology (St-Pierre, 2018, p. 604)”. This attentive practice, consistent with that performed here with Haraway’s and Despret’s work, institutes a particular *mode of attention and engagement*, whose effects are felt at every moment of the inquiry, and help steer the many choices that make up the process of inquiry. As Koro-Ljungberg puts it, in posthumanist inquiry, “the credibility of research or findings might have more to do with choices researchers make rather than established and documented procedures (2010, p. 607)”.

In this regard, we can attempt to characterize the mode of attention and engagement by referring to certain concepts or *virtues* (Despret, 2005, p. 360). While such *virtues* do not allow us to assess the quality from an external viewpoint, they can help account for what

guided the researchers in their inquiry. They come into play not by prescribing techniques, methods, or strategies, but rather by serving as resources for the researcher in the various decisions they have to make throughout the research process. They continuously prompt the researcher to question the ways in which they can perform and enact these virtues, from the initial stages of “paying attention” to a situation, to beyond publication (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). Enacting virtues is therefore a process that is always uncertain, responsive, and emergent, as they are not something that can be accomplished or fixed.

For example, Koro-Ljungberg (2010) offers Derrida’s concept of “responsibility” as an ongoing practice to guide decisions and interactions throughout inquiry. In MOS, Sayers (2016) and Huopainen (2020) have described and experimented with feminist dog-writing, a practice drawing heavily on Haraway’s (2008) work. Feminist dog-writing represents another mode of attention and engagement that focuses in particular in how we write scientific accounts in MOS. In her account, Huopainen (2020) sought in particular to convey the “communicative intercorporeality *beyond* language (Huopainen, 2020, p. 966)”. Similarly, Gherardi (2018) offers different “images of thought”, such as a “vegetal mode of thought”, a “musical mode of thought” or a “fleshy mode of thought” that could orient the thinking and the practices of the researcher.

In this regard, the various elements stated in the previous sections contribute to the mode of attention and engagement that inhabits the practice of inquiry in a compositionist manner. In addition to these considerations valued by compositionists, two others are described in the following paragraphs, namely diffraction and accountability.

1.3.4.1 Diffraction

As discussed above, an important concern for compositionists is to account for the inextricability of ontology and epistemology. Over the last decades, variations of reflexive practices have been incorporated in a number of approaches (Johnson & Duberley, 2003). While such initiatives are intended to critically examine the factors that influence knowledge production, compositionists authors are among those who take issue with it, as they deem it insufficient and flawed. Reflexivity first assumes that there is an independent entity extractable from the practice of research to look back at. This is

obviously problematic for compositionists, for whom “no divine position for our viewing pleasure exists in a location outside the world (Barad, 2014, pp. 228-229)”. Secondly, the practice of reflexivity also assumes that the location of the researcher, which is the focus of reflexivity, is self-evident and transparent (Haraway, 2018, p. 37).

What Haraway (2018) and Barad (2007) propose in lieu of reflexivity is what they call *diffraction*. Simply stated, diffraction is a physical phenomenon in which waves (for example sound waves, light waves or ripples in water) change direction as a result of encountering an obstacle. As they encounter the obstacle, the waves combine or cancel each other out, creating specific patterns. Models of the “history” of the waves can be generated through the analysis of diffraction patterns, although “direct representation is impossible (Myers, 2011, p. 140)” since “diffraction patterns do not generate mirror image reflections of their objects and no single diffraction pattern can tell the whole story of that material (ibid.)”.

The waves can be seen as a figure for forms of embodied knowledge that are made to interact with a given situation. They are, in short, the practice of a specific form of attention and engagement in situation. A diffractive research practice does not seek to represent the situation through a theoretical construct, but rather to put a form of knowledge to the test of the situation in order to experience the effects of their encounter.

Oftentimes, diffraction involves the multiplication of “wave sources”, which will produce more complex patterns that will in turn give more information. By multiplying these “wave sources”, by attending to the different ways they interact with the object, and most importantly how they interact to form specific patterns, the practice of the researcher is accounted for without reifying it or alienating it from the rest of the world.

This is where we can tie in Despret’s notion of *versions*. Versions correspond to ways of grasping, or translating, problems. Different versions can be found throughout disciplines, theories and theorists. Versions, however, are not the exclusive domain of scientists and academics: laypeople also take hold of problems in various ways. In fact, when it comes to human-animal-organizational situations, they tend to be more flexible and liberal than many of their scientific counterparts. Furthermore, animals, down to the humble

earthworm (Darwin, 1999) are also fundamentally problem solvers, and as such they translate problems in ways that make sense to them. Which is to say that even though the world of animals remains inaccessible, we can have some idea of which problems make sense in their experience, and how they take hold of these problems.

A diffractive practice consists precisely in the art of generating versions. The interplay of different versions, i.e., how they combine, how they interfere with each other, is precisely what is at stake in research. This method attends to the effects of knowledge practices, without reconveying a representational ontology.

To implement a *diffractive* practice of inquiry, different course of action can be imagined. A first one is the collaborative inquiry, with researchers from different disciplinary fields and approaches collaborating together. A version of such collaborative endeavour is the Matsutake Worlds Research Group, which brings together researchers from different backgrounds around the study of matsutake mushrooms (Tsing, 2015). Myers (2011), commenting on their approach, qualifies their interpretive practice as “diffractive anthropology”:

Their method requires that they multiply their ways of seeing and learn how to read each other’s diffraction patterns. In so doing, each member learns anew how to interpret relations in their field sites by trying on the light-beams of their collaborators’ theories, concepts, and perceptions. With a shared object they learn to teach each other how to see, feel, smell, track, and taste matsutake well. (Myers, 2011, p. 140)

This kind of collaborative endeavour allows diverse participants to create, together, more complex diffraction patterns, as they do not attempt to ‘explain’ the beings they track or uncover the ‘correct’ reading of these situations.

A second possible course of action consists in placing the understandings generated from different knowledge practices (including non-scientific knowledge practices) in conversation with one another, “reading insights through one another in ways that help

illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter (Barad, 2007, p. 30)”.

A difficulty is certainly the challenge to engage with practices that might be vastly different from those we are familiar with. This kind of diffractive practice requires once again curiosity and open-mindedness, as versions often go against the grain of our habits of thought. Another difficulty is the lack of “bottom line”, of ultimate elucidations of the problem at hand. To uproot Haraway’s idiom, it asks of us to “stay with the trouble” of complex and sometimes conjoined, sometimes disjointed understandings. It asks of us to put aside agonistic practices which pits one theory or one approach against one another, and instead to engage in a praxis that multiplies possible understandings, that give voice to often muted forms of knowledge, and that hold together paradoxical versions.

1.3.4.2 Accountability

Research practices (re)configure the world, which makes them fundamentally ethical practices. Another feature of a compositionist practice of inquiry is thus a strong and unrelenting engagement with notions of ethics, responsibility and accountability: “ethical concerns are not simply supplemental to the practice of science but an integral part of it. . . . *values are integral to the nature of knowing and being* (Barad, 2007, p. 37)”. Barad asserts that responsibility is not a commitment that one “chooses” to uphold. Responsibility is always already there, a consequence from our various ontological entanglements: “we (but not only ‘we humans’) are always already responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled (p. 393)”. Our research practices have tangible consequences in the world, and we bear responsibility for these consequences: there is no neutral position (Stengers, 2015).

The absence of a neutral position first implies that we must make a sustained effort to consider the consequences of the ideas, practices, and exclusions that we enact. One clear example is the reliance on anthropocentric frameworks that either completely ignore other species, or regard them solely as resources to be valued instrumentally. The ethical consequences for the lives of these beings are significant and poignant.

Secondly, this calls for us to cultivate our capacity to respond. We are all contributing to the becoming of the world. The question becomes, “to the becoming of which world do we want to contribute to?”. In this regard, compositionists do not offer a superior moral principle that would allow us to determine the right course of action in all situations. Instead, what they offer is a mode of attention and engagement in the world. This mode of engagement is not based on abstract ethics, but on a willingness to be moved, troubled, and touched by situations and the beings that inhabit them:

Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with — all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape. In touch and regard, partners willy nilly are in the miscegenous mud that infuses our bodies with all that brought that contact into being. Touch and regard have consequences. (Haraway, 2008, p. 36)

A compositionist approach encourages us to engage in active pluralism, in which we actively involve others – human and non-human species alike - in defining and composing what could constitute a better world in a given situation, at a given time. It urges us to learn more about the animals whose worlds intersect with our organizational worlds, and to consider the effects of our interactions with them as we seek to compose this common world together.

1.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to assemble a posthumanist approach that can guide the inquiry into multispecies organizational situations where the composition of the common world is at play. Since I had set for myself the constraint of assembling this approach “from the ground up”, that is, by beginning with the meta-theoretical assumptions put forth by the authors I studied, my strategy was to explore in turn the ontological, epistemological, agential, and methodological dimensions of such an approach. Following the logical thread of all these assumptions and considering them holistically, the resulting “compositionist approach” did not take the form of a research methodology (with specific methods, tools, stages, or strategies), but rather a mode of attention and engagement.

When engaging in any research process, the researcher interested in the composition of the multispecies common world is thus invited to think of situations in relational and dynamic terms, tracing and narrating the threads of the multiple entanglements between species and other non-humans. To this end, they must pay attention to the emerging assemblages of humans, non-humans, knowledge, discourses, and the forms of (inter)agency they give rise to. The researcher has to shift their focus away from humans alone, and strive to understand how the different beings involved in the situation perceive and take hold of the challenges posed by the composition of the common world in a given situation, and how they experience and intervene in these situations. The researcher thus recognizes that animals and other species are not merely part of the context; they are participants in their own right.

In order to be inclusive of these other species, the researcher has a duty to be curious. This curiosity enables them to gain deeper insights about how humans and other species are experiencing and shaping the common worlds they share. To do so, the researcher can rely on various forms of knowledge (scientific, traditional, etc.), while never allowing one form of knowledge or one way of framing the problem to overshadow or stifle the others. Modest and polite, the compositionist researcher emphasizes multiplying versions around a same situation, rather than singling out one “correct” version that simplifies and purifies the situation. To the best of their abilities, they foster and safeguard a space where different versions of the problems posed by the composition of the common world can emerge, even versions that may seem illogical to the modernist thought. Their modes of theorization thus highlights the pluralism inherent to the composition of the common world in any given situation, but is also attentive to the respective effects of these different versions.

Finally, as they are personally and intimately engaged in the inquiry, the compositionist researcher is attentive, responsible, and accountable for the effects of their research practices.

As a result of such an approach, the way animals experience situations becomes a valuable topic of study. Their bodies are recognized as capable of experiencing a sensual world

and entering into relationships with others. They are proven capable of multiple modes of existence and action, often in collaboration with humans and other non-humans. Their agency both contribute directly to the becoming of the world, and is constrained by the agencies of others. Their worlds and the way they inhabit them become of crucial importance, as the notion of “common world” is decentered from sole humans. In other words, the worlds that are composed are also those of other species, and those worlds matter just as much as their “human” versions. In sum, through the compositionist approach, animals can become full-fledged political actors who are not only affected, but also contribute to the process of composing the common world.

A compositionist approach is not a silver bullet that would allow for the easy integration of animals into organizational studies without lingering challenges. However, these difficulties should certainly not prevent us from making the efforts to better include animals. In that regard, the compositionist approach forces us to slow down and ask crucial questions about the worlds of other species, about their realities, and about the myriad ways we are enmeshed through managing and organizing activities. It encourages us to adopt responsible research practices that are attuned to the effects of exclusionary and objectifying practices. In essence, the compositionist approach calls for a systematic alertness and sensitivity to the consequences of our practices – as researchers and as practitioners – for other species.

Critical approaches to diversity have taught us that beyond the mere presence of marginalized Others - whether they be women, people of colour, or animals - the practices by which this inclusion is accomplished (as well as their effects) is what is especially important (Tyler, 2019). As we try to include other species into our researches, the same consideration should be given to our research practices. Relying on the mere presence of animals in MOS as a marker for their inclusion leaves aside the extent to which this presence can also simultaneously rely on mechanisms that can negate, alienate or assimilate them. While I am convinced that a compositionist approach avoids some of the anthropocentric pitfalls, my argument here is primarily that making explicit the operation of translation from meta-theoretical assumptions, as is done here, allows for greater clarity, accountability and responsibility in our research practices. By being mindful of

these choices and the meta-theoretical assumptions embedded in them, we improve our ability to produce accounts that are more respectful of our entanglements with other species.

In the remainder of this dissertation, I will demonstrate two ways in which a compositionist mode of attention and engagement can be fruitful to further our understanding of organizational phenomena. To this end, I will draw upon an empirical situation where an organization, in this case a municipal administration, is faced with the challenging task of managing and organizing multispecies relationships in one of the parks under its jurisdiction. As we will see in a first article, the compositionist approach evokes not only research practices, but also provides insights into how organizations can intervene in order to “better” compose the multispecies common world. In the second article, the compositionist approach will be put into action to explore the different modes of composition of a common world that are put forward in order to organize and manage multispecies relationships.

Chapitre 2

Collective Action for a Multispecies World: A Compositionist Approach to Grand Challenges [Article 1]

Abstract

As the field of management studies widens its scale of reflection to consider the socio-ecological ecosystems of which organizations are part, more attention is devoted to grand challenges. While extent literature generally treats them as exogenous objects, our focus here is on unfolding encounters with grand challenges. We conceive grand challenges as concrete problems of arbitration of more-than-human ways of life, where the managerial practices of organizations enact and transform grand challenges. We put forward a posthumanism and pragmatist style of thinking which, we argue, can help us think with grand challenges and engage in creative ways of composing a common world. Through the story of a problematic situation where tangles of grand challenges abound, we offer a mode of construction that can help us compose what is, in a given situation, a ‘better’ world. This mode of construction is based on three sets of practices, namely *slowing down*, *multispecies world-making*, and *being present and grieving losses*. It facilitates the emergence of new ways of composing the world, helps account for the implication of other species, and foregrounds the elaboration of worlds in a response-able way. Our paper contributes to the grand challenges literature by proposing a mode of attention and action that engages both management researchers and practitioners in the work of constructing multispecies worlds.

Keywords: posthumanism, grand challenges, pragmatism, controversies, multispecies organization studies

2.1 Introduction

Organizations encounter social and environmental crises in increasingly frequent and troubled situations: forest fires made more devastating than ever by climate change

paralyze and destroy entire regions, war in Ukraine coupled with dry spells converge to cause a global shortage of wheat and other aliments, etc. In management and organization studies (MOS), a growing number of scholars have criticized the widespread rational approach as inadequate for addressing complex, uncertain and evaluative situations (Ferraro et al., 2015), such as those described above. Under the term *grand challenges*, this literature addresses how collective action can be organized to better attend to these situations (Barin Cruz et al., 2017; Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022; George et al., 2016; Martí, 2018). It is particularly insightful about the “tentative, temporal and fragmentary solutions”(Martí, 2018, p. 970) that can be scaffolded. These works generally focus on the deliberate action of organizations that decide to tackle grand challenges, or what they consider to be the cause of grand challenges. Although a necessary perspective, we offer that this situation does not encompass all encounters with grand challenges.

Examples abound where organizations have to deal with grand challenges by necessity rather than out of will. The actions—or lack thereof—these organizations then take also contribute to transforming the nature of grand challenges. A textile company facing cotton fibre supply difficulties due to droughts can turn to fibres whose production requires less water (such as hemp), to fibres produced in regions where water supply is not (yet) problematic (such as viscose), or fibres that require less water but come from non-renewable resources (such as polyester). Just as organizations contribute to the emergence and perpetuation of grand challenges (Ergene et al., 2021), these decisions have consequences, and become part of the fabric of grand challenges.

In this paper, we want to offer an alternative perspective on grand challenges by focusing on two of their characteristics that we believe have been little explored so far. Firstly, grand challenges are not exogenous but endogenous to organizations: they transform and take specific shapes through organizations (but not only organizations) and their practices. Secondly, what is at stake in how to respond to grand challenges is a form of *reagencement*, in which a multitude of non-human beings participate, and whose ways of being in the world demand consideration. In other words, a posthumanist sensibility—and the theoretical and methodological considerations that accompany it—are essential to understand and respond to grand challenges.

From these two observations, we draw inspiration from the works of authors concerned with the composition of a common world with nonhuman others (Despret, 2002, 2007, 2014; Haraway, 2008, 2016b; Stengers, 2017; Tsing, 2015; van Dooren, 2022) to develop three sets of practices in response to grand challenges. Specifically, we advocate for slowing down in the definition of problems, to allow the emergence of new ways of composing the world. We also propose ways to conceive and account for the ways of being in the world of other species, so that our responses to grand challenges may be more attentive to them and to our entanglements. Finally, we urge to develop mourning practices in the face of irreversible losses and widespread human and other-than-human suffering (Haraway, 2016).

By proposing a posthumanism pragmatist approach to address grand challenges, this article makes a threefold contribution to management and organization studies. Firstly, we extend the literature on grand challenges by proposing that grand challenges are encountered in situations. These situations are populated by a plurality of human and non-human beings, who are also participants in the becoming of the world. Our approach invites us to think *with* them rather than *for* them. Secondly, we propose a set of managerial practices that reframe the avenues of solution produced by the pragmatist literature on grand challenges. The practices we propose aim to allow the creation of a space of indeterminacy between a plurality of beings so they can accomplish the rearrangement of problematic situations in a response-able way. Finally, we apply these principles to our own research practices to sketch out an approach where researchers do not remain in a position outside the reality they observe.

Throughout this essay, we weave our argument with the occupants of an urban park at the centre of a controversy. We were moved by these occupants and their stories, which were the inspiration for the reflections developed here. We thus invite readers to dive in with us into this problematic situation, and to connect with its participants. The controversy in which the occupants of the park have been thrown entangles many beings and ways of beings, who are unsettled by their encounter with grand challenges. This situation is not merely an example of the consequences of grand challenges. Situations such as this one are how grand challenges come to existence in many organizations, and how organizations

can transform grand challenges by how they chose to respond (or not to respond) (Bowden et al., 2021). It is the aim of this paper to offer some thoughts on how organizations, along with scholars in MOS, can help compose ‘better’ worlds—a composition that is open-ended and always reinvented, and that has its source not only in human action but also in our multispecies communities.

2.2 First Interlude⁴

At the end of the Second World War, Longueuil is a growing suburb on the south shore of Montréal, in the Québec province of Canada. During this expansion, several farms are bought and expropriated to allow for housing development. Among these stretches of lands, a 1.8 km² protected area is established to create an urban park. Officially opened in 1975, this park is nowadays known as Parc Michel-Chartrand. The park is mostly composed of forest, but also features meadows and wetlands, as well as three artificial lakes. The most recent inventory lists more than 600 plant species, some of which are listed as ‘threatened’ or ‘vulnerable’ in the province of Québec, such as ostrich fern, bloodroot and large-flower trillium. Slow-growing understory plants, in particular, are especially susceptible to picking and grazing. For instance, large-flower trilliums typically take more than 15 years to become reproductive, and can live more than 30 years (Rooney & Gross, 2003). The park also hosts around 200 bird species, eight amphibian or reptile species, and 18 different mammal species. Although humans are certainly the most present mammal species in the park, with 600,000 humans visiting annually, the most emblematic mammal of the park is the white-tailed deer, a species of cervid native to the region, which can easily be spotted by visitors.

The deer of Parc Michel-Chartrand do not form a closed population, as they can move between the park and other habitats. In particular, the Boisé du Tremblay, a wooded natural preserve of 2.6 km², is located less than one kilometre away, and connects the urban space of Longueuil with vast stretches of agricultural land.

⁴ The informations used in this running example were gathered from media coverage of the controversy, as well as from scientific papers, publicly available reports, government websites, and interviews conducted by one of the authors for another research project.

Over the last few years, the City of Longueuil and the provincial Department of Forests, Wildlife and Parks have become increasingly concerned with the number of deer living in the park. At the end of the 2010s, they began using the term ‘overpopulation’ to describe their situation, and announced initiatives to ‘regain control’ of the population. Albeit in the higher range, the deer density reported in Parc Michel Chartrand is not completely unusual, even for wild(er) deer populations. For instance, Lesage et al. (2000) report the density of 20 deer per square kilometres in a rural deer population from southeastern Québec. An aerial inventory conducted in 2017 counted 32 deer in Parc Michel-Chartrand, which corresponds to the density of approximately 18 deer per square kilometre.

Many factors help explain this high density. Firstly, predators are practically inexistent in and around the park, as coyotes have been mostly driven out of the territory. The decline in popularity of hunting also has an effect, with only a dozen deer killed annually on the city’s territory (hunting is prohibited in Parc Michel-Chartrand itself because of the risk to visitors). Secondly, deer have access to an abundance of food, whether from the agricultural land nearby, from citizens who take upon themselves to feed the deer and, until recently, from municipal employees. At this latitude, however, the main contributors to deer population variation is the climate (MFFP, 2019). While harsh winters can cause a rapid decline in populations, a succession of mild winters can prompt an explosive growth, since doe can have up to three calves per year. Climate change already impacts deer population, and is likely to amplify this tendency, with overall change towards warmer winters and longer growing seasons (Dawe & Boutin, 2016).

The City points out many problems caused by the overpopulation of deer. Deer sometimes wander off the park towards residential areas, causing dozens of road accidents every year, as well as damages to properties as they feed from trees and bushes in private yards. They are also accused of contributing in propagating parasites to (human) visitors, in particular the black-legged deer tick, which is the vector of the bacteria causing Lyme disease in Québec (Donahue, 2021). Until recently, these ticks were absent from the region, but several factors (climate change, habitat changes, animal movements, etc.)

have now made Lyme disease endemic in several municipalities in Québec, including Longueuil (Radio-Canada, 2021).

The interest in the deer population ties into a larger preoccupation for the protection of the vegetation cover—especially understories—of the park. Experts are concerned that the regeneration of vegetation is insufficient, which leads to rippling effects. For instance, ground-nesting birds may be disturbed and have difficulties finding appropriate cover for their nests. However, the deer are not the only ones to blame for this state of affairs. Canadian geese also overcrowd the park’s lakes and wetlands, with 300–400 geese passing by at the peak of their migration season. Each goose eats around 4 kg of vegetation per day—an amount comparable to what is consumed by one deer. A web of illegal trails is constantly created by visitors who veer off official paths, crushing vegetation and disturbing wildlife. Park attendance increased considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic, worsening the situation. Although they are forbidden from even accessing the park, off-leash dogs are also a recurring problem for understory plants and their inhabitants. More importantly, the park is at the epicentre of an undergoing invasion of emerald ash borer, a small insect whose larvae feed from the inner bark and sapwood of ashes, often causing the death of the tree only two to three years after infestation. Ash borers have caused the loss of at least ten thousand trees in Parc Michel-Chartrand alone (Ville de Longueuil, 2022). The introduction of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed, invasive phragmites, and buckthorn are also to blame, as they crowd out native species and reduce biodiversity. For example, buckthorn grows rapidly early in the season, forming very dense colonies which prevent other species from catching the sunlight.

As if it weren’t already enough, these different problems compound each other. For example, the young trees planted to replace those torn down by ash borers are prized food for deer, who quickly devour them. Invasion by exotic plants, which are generally not eaten by deer, further increases the pressure on remaining native plants. When food is scarce at the tail end of winter, deer may ultimately turn to these exotic species that are not part of their normal diet, causing them health problems. In view of the emaciated appearance that deer sometimes take on at the end of winter, some citizens take upon

themselves to feed them, which may make the deer sick and desensitize them to humans. This leads to deer getting closer to humans, and sometimes even attacking them.

2.3 Grand Challenges as Multispecific Encounters

Over the last decade, the literature on grand challenges has mushroomed, attesting to a desire among scholars to help alleviate some of the current and future plights of our world. Examples of grand challenges identified by authors include climate change, poverty and inequality alleviation, water scarcity, safeguarding of human rights, technology development, etc. (Benschop, 2021; Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022). Grand challenges are often characterized as seemingly intractable problems which affect the well-being of large populations (Ferraro et al., 2015). Gehman et al. (2022) have defined them as ‘matters of concern that entail complexity, evoke uncertainty, and provoke evaluativity’ (p. 260).

Among notable contributions, the literature explores strategies to tackle grand challenges using a pragmatist approach (Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022; Martí, 2018) or more generally through management research (George et al., 2016). Although we agree with these authors on many aspects of their work, we would nevertheless like to reconsider the characterization of grand challenges. In particular, we see two main limitations in the way they are generally formulated (including in much of the pragmatist stream of research), namely their programmatic conception of action and realist framing of grand challenges, as well as their limited inclusion of nonhumans. Because forms of knowing are inseparable from forms of engagement with the world (Barad, 2007), both elements have significant effects on the type of response that can be imagined, and thus warrant examination.

2.3.1 Realist and Programmatic Conception of Grand Challenges

In extent literature, grand challenges are often regarded as external entities (albeit with fuzzy boundaries) with bilateral relationships with organizations. Organizations are thus described as *tackling* or *facing* climate change, poverty and so on, with a focus on strategies that allows them to do so. On the flip side, researchers may be interested in identifying ‘mechanisms and contexts by which [they] affect organizations and

institutions' (George et al., 2016, p. 1881). Because grand challenges are seen as exogenous, these approaches focus on programmatic action, that is, on organizations and collectives that deliberately set out to address and resolve grand challenges. While it may be part of the picture for some organizations, we argue that this conception of grand challenges as external phenomena is not how most organizations experience these situations.

Firstly, organizations are confronted with very concrete problems and situations. In the example of Parc Michel-Chartrand, the city is not facing 'climate change', but growing populations of deer and ticks. The problem they are addressing is not 'loss of biodiversity', but the concrete reality that some species of plants replace other species of plants, and prevent them from growing. These are very concrete problems of arbitration between different beings (and ways of being), which are the fabric of grand challenges situations. While being able to connect specific situations with wider phenomena is useful, it can be problematic if it erases the specificities of this situation and what is at stake here and now. For instance, the issue of biodiversity implies that some lives and ways of living will be sacrificed so that some others may flourish. These are not questions that can be answered in the abstract.

Secondly, grand challenges, as they are encountered in situations, are often fuzzier and more interconnected than is typically acknowledged in the literature. Different grand challenges often come up as already enmeshed with other grand challenges, in such a way that the exercise of treating them separately is impossible. Once again, the example of Parc Michel-Chartrand demonstrates this, as it involves issues associated with loss of biodiversity, climate change, habitat destruction and zoonotic diseases (and following other threads of the controversy would certainly lead us to many more grand challenges).

Finally, having to respond to grand challenges is hardly a deliberate choice for many organizations, who instead have to cope with their irruption and disruption. The term *encounter*, as it is used by Tsing (2015), appears more apt to describe how most organizations experience grand challenges, rather than terms such as 'tackling' or 'facing'. This term acknowledges the contaminations, vulnerabilities, transformations and

indeterminacies that are at stake when grand challenges emerge. Grand challenges exist (and come to existence) *through* organizations (but not only organizations) rather than outside of them. Specific relationships between beings are enacted, of which the effects are experienced as problematic (for some species). Grand challenges are not merely the reification of these ‘problematic’ effects under terms such as ‘loss of biodiversity’. For example, the common phragmite was never an invasive species in the province of Québec, until its hybridization with the European subspecies of phragmite which crossed the Atlantic in the ballast of European ships (Tsing, 2022). The phragmite was always in the park, but its encounter with other phragmites led it to proliferate in a mode that destroys all others (Stengers, 2022b). Grand challenges are not abstract entities that can be tackled in similarly abstract ways, but full of actors — human and nonhuman, living and nonliving — that need to be re-agenced.

The way organizations respond materially and semiotically to grand challenges constitute and transform grand challenges in non-trivial ways. What organizations choose to do — and not do — is part of the composition of the future. In other words, even organizations who do not explicitly set out to ‘tackle grand challenges’, unavoidably do so: there is no neutral position (Stengers, 2017).

2.3.2 Anthropocentrism

The second limitation with the way grand challenges are generally regarded in the literature is the overarching anthropocentrism. Scholars are increasingly acknowledging that grand challenges involve more than humans. In their recent reassessment of their original article, Gehman et al. (2022) for example specify that participants in devising solutions must include ‘non-human actors such as forests, oceans, lakes, and cities (p. 262)’, and highlight that ‘non-human actors ... seem increasingly crucial to our understanding of phenomena such as climate change (p. 269)’. Benschop (2021) emphasizes that in order to face challenges such as climate change, it is necessary to decentre ‘both humans and organizations, repositioning them in wider ecosystems’ (p. 13). In short, the recognition of the importance of nonhumans in grand challenges is generally uncontroversial.

However, admitting that nonhumans should be considered in our responses to grand challenges is merely a beginning. Complex questions arise from this statement, among which the question of the adequacy of our theoretical frameworks and methodologies to the task of properly grasping these situations. In other words, the construction of a mode of attention, description, and understanding which accounts for the contribution of nonhumans and for our interactions with nonhumans remains rudimentary. For example, Ergene et al. (2021) criticize the ‘anthropocentric basis of our theories (p. 1326)’ and the ‘conceptual separation of humans from the rest of nature (p. 1326)’, calling for relational ontologies to facilitate ‘imagining different human—Earth relations for a more-than-human world’ (p. 1326).

One instance where the human-centred conception of grand challenges is especially visible is that while nonhumans might be treated as components of grand challenges, their active participation in encountering grand challenges is seldom acknowledged. For example, some plants, such as the invasive phragmite in Parc Michel-Chartrand, alter the surrounding soil in such a way that it becomes inhospitable to other plant species. The phragmite which transforms the soil, the ash borer who kills trees, the deer who devour slow-growing plants, are all actors in the becoming of the world, not merely stakeholders, objects of ethical concern or, worse, part of the context or resources to be managed, controlled, or exploited. Grand challenges are populated by ways of life that intersect and put each other at stake. Some humans’ ways of life certainly play prominent roles in the trajectories of grand challenges, but ignoring the world-making activities of others sets us up to fail. Although emerging elsewhere in MOS—notably in some recent human-animal-organizational studies (Labatut et al., 2016; Lennerfors & Sköld, 2018; Sayers et al., 2019)—such modes of posthumanist understanding remain to be deepened here.

This posthumanist perspective brings out crucial political questions: how to involve these nonhumans? Who can speak for whom and under what conditions? How to build well constructed political devices that are sensitive to, and account for, the multiple ways of being in the world? And, when it comes to devising a course of action, how should we proceed to the inevitable arbitration of different ways of life? Because grand challenges

involve much more than humans' ways of life, creating answers to these questions is necessary in order to build multispecies modes of collective action.

In summary, in this paper, we aim to develop modes of attention and experimentation to problematic situations that 1) makes it possible to respond to grand challenges situations as they are experienced locally, and 2) is based on a multispecies conception of the collective, that is, a conception that takes seriously the fact that our worlds are built and shared with other species. Although we chose to focus on other species, we believe similar arguments could be developed around other entities such as technologies and natural phenomena (forest fires, hurricanes, the ocean, etc.).

2.4 A 'Compositionist' Approach

In order to address both these issues, we suggest a deeper engagement with a posthumanist strand of pragmatism, which we term 'compositionist'. This approach is built from the insights of several authors, in particular Vinciane Despret, Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers, Anna Tsing and Thom Van Dooren. While they don't share a unified approach, they all think-with (Haraway, 2018, p. XX) each other, which makes them particularly fecund through their resonances. Like a patchwork quilt, this approach results from an assemblage of pieces of several textiles sewn together. The patchwork quilt never starts from scratch, but creates new relationships between heterogeneous materials (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013). Importantly, it 'is not merely a hodgepodge of fabric—it has a specific purpose and context' (Koelsch, 2012, p. 824). In this case, ideas from the different authors were bound by a specific problem: how do we, and how can we compose a livable common world, when the 'we' is utterly heterogeneous and precarious? For the sake of clarity, we opted for the neologism *compositionist*, originally coined by Latour (2010), to describe this *ad hoc* assemblage.

This approach, which addresses the characterization of grand challenges made earlier, evoke modes of response that differ from those present in extent literature (although they can be complementary to some extent). In the next section of the paper, we present three such modes of response. But first, our second interlude brings us back to Parc Michel-Chartrand, where the encounter with grand challenges will soon take a turn.

2.5 Second Interlude

In November 2020, the city of Longueuil announces that it will euthanize 12 to 15 deer to counter the overpopulation and help restore the ecological balance of the park. This decision follows recommendations from scientists of the Department of Forests, Wildlife and Parks, who state that the ideal population of deer should be of no more than five deer per square kilometre of forest (Hébert et al., 2013), and that an acceptable population for the park would be between 10 and 15 individuals (Ville de Longueuil, 2021). This plan benefits from what is described as a scientific consensus, although this apparent consensus is broken by some researchers who would like for other options to be explored. It provokes passionate outcry from citizens and animal defence groups: 61 000 person sign petitions, and multiple demonstrations are held at the park. The intensity of the debate is such that the mayor receives death threats.

The most discussed alternative to culling is the relocation of the deer, whether in natural environments or in wildlife sanctuaries. The experts, however, are quick to dismiss this solution, citing a study where 50% of a population of deer who were anaesthetized to be transported in another region was found dead hours or days after their release (the relevance of the study is contested by other experts and naturalists). Relocation also comes with a risk of introducing Lyme disease in regions where it is not yet endemic (once again an objection contested by others).

Two weeks after the initial announcement, faced with strong opposition, the city does an about-turn. A rescue organization is given the mandate to plan the relocation and to find mitigation measures to improve the deer survivability and prevent the propagation of diseases and parasites. A few months later, the solutions found by the organization receive an unfavourable verdict from the committee of experts responsible for authorizing the operation. They raise in particular the inexperience of the organization in this type of operation, and their lack of expertise with the species (Harvey-Pinard, 2021). The city therefore returns to its initial plan of culling the deer.

In the fall of 2021, less than a year after the first announcement, the number of deer to euthanize has grown from 12 to 15, to 55–60, as the city now estimates the population at

70 deer. As the rescue organization had already struggled to find sanctuaries for 15 deer, this ostensible increase makes the culling seem all the more inevitable, with Longueuil's mayor now stressing that it is the 'only viable solution' (Donahue, 2021).

The culling, which can only take place in the fall and early winter due to the doe's gestation and calving seasons, was initially planned during the fall of 2020. First postponed in order to explore relocation plans, it is again postponed in the fall of 2021, this time due to a labour shortage. In the spring of 2022, a group represented by a prominent lawyer brings an action against the city, which leads once again the city to postpone, with an anticipated number of animals to be culled now reaching 70 deer. As we write, the deer still remain to be euthanized, their carcass prepared by culinary school students, and their meat distributed to local food banks (Corriveau, 2022). That is, if their meat isn't a COVID-19 vector, as deer populations in Québec have become victims of spill-back events (Environnement et Changement climatique Canada, 2021; Shah, 2022).

2.6 Compositionist Modes of Response

With so many lives and ways of living at stake, compositionists take to heart the difficult political tasks we are now facing. The underlying idea behind a compositionist approach is that what is at stake in our ways of encountering grand challenges is the perpetual construction of ways of living together — a 'together' that includes multitude beings and of ways of being in the world. What a compositionist approach offers, then (and what we present here), is a mode of construction that can help us compose what is, in a given situation, a 'better' world. What this 'better' means is always emerging and always attuned to the consequences of its definition.

The three ideas presented here are ways in which modes of attention, consultation, and construction could be better created when encountering grand challenges. While some specific techniques and devices might be alluded to (and innumerable others remain to be invented), we focus here on the general idea behind these modes of response. Accordingly, the compositionist approach, should not be interpreted as a universal model of action to be transposed in every situation. Similarly, its goal is not the construction of

one (or several) *solutions* to grand challenges in order to make them disappear, to orchestrate a return to normal, or to achieve a predetermined ideal state.

2.6.1 *Slowing Down*

The first mode of response to grand challenges consists in slowing down in the definition of problems. This ‘slowing down’ is not so much a temporal demand as it is a democratic one. In fact, it stands in opposition to paralysis, by recognizing and accepting the absence of certainties on what ought to be done. In doing so, we create an opening, a suspension, where we can build our capacity to hesitate together (Stengers, 2017, p. 109).

Slowing down stands in contrast with other approaches who rely on predetermined, singular or static views of how the world should be (George et al., 2016). Compositionists want to enhance collective thinking and action by opening up to multiple ways of taking hold of problems and of defining what the world should become. By doing so, their goal is never to negotiate between these different definitions to come up with the ‘best’ one. Rather, they argue that the multiplication and complexification of worlds, and of stories about these worlds, is what is needed to make our world more livable (Despret, 2019; Haraway, 2016b; Stengers, 2017; Tsing, 2015; van Dooren, 2022). This mode of response echoes in some ways the strategy of ‘multivocal inscription’ described by Ferraro et al. (2015) by extending the importance of different voices prior to the stage of solution design, to that of taking hold of the problems at hand in a specific situation.

Slowing down is particularly important when it comes to grand challenges. Just as is the case in our running example, many encounters with grand challenges may be experienced as crises, where immediate action is necessary to mitigate the damages. They may be accompanied by a sense of urgency, a sense that it is nearly or already too late to engage in the kind of deliberations necessary to address the complexity and evaluativity of situations.

This sense of urgency carries with it the temptation to define consultation as a luxury we can no longer afford (Stengers, 2017, p. 141). Under these conditions, the only forms of consultation that might appear possible are more akin to public relations’ operations, creation of social acceptability or consensus building than genuine consultation. This

narrowed view restricts the horizon of possible responses to problems already defined and solutions already created, and presents these solutions as obvious and indisputable. In a striking example of this, the mayor of Longueuil stated on Twitter that killing the deer is ‘absolutely necessary and urgent’ (Fournier, 2022), declaring in an interview that we ‘need to face the reality’ and adding that it is the ‘only possible way forward’ (A.D., 2021). A biologist similarly states : ‘The science has spoken. Two distinct research came to the same solution, that is, the culling of deer’(Champagne, 2022a).

Both the mayor and this biologist neglect to indicate that the problem never had a chance to exist other than as constructed by (some) scientists. To the main decision-makers, the controversy was always about biodiversity. Any chance at a discussion was averted by the imposition of an ideal model—that of the ‘ecological balance’ of the park, as defined by an optimal density of deer per square kilometre of forest, i.e., five deer per square kilometre (Hébert et al., 2013). This definition excludes from the outset multitude ways of forming the problem, or even simply of defining ‘ecological balance’. For example, it leaves out definitions of ecological communities as dynamic states always in the making (van Dooren, 2022). It also excludes certain voices for whom the problem arises quite differently, including the voices of the very beings of which the life and the ways of life are at stake. It excludes from discussion a range of questions that could be discussed and debated by actors. For example, should we keep protecting vulnerable plants in the park? Should we completely exclude deer from the park by building exclosures? Rather than looking at the possible consequences of a given action, the consequences are sorted from the start into good and bad, depending on whether they help achieve the predetermined ideal.

The exclusions created when urgency becomes synonymous with simplification have serious ethical and material consequences. Without this slowing down, without the creation of a space of indeterminacy which allows to take hold of problems differently, the voices who take part in consultations have ultimately little importance. In the case of Parc Michel-Chartrand, those who oppose the culling of deer find themselves forced into the task of finding alternatives that will still obey the predetermined objective of five deer per square kilometre. Nevertheless, some actors do contest the urgency and ask for time

to invent alternative constructions of the problem and of possible responses. For example, a citizen remarks, ‘is it absolutely urgent to euthanize the deer at Parc Michel-Chartrand? No. The forest will not die tomorrow. ... Biodiversity is all the flora, fauna and humans that must learn to live together’ (Lavallée, 2020). This definition of biodiversity is different from the one used by the Department, and evokes different courses of action. This citizen suggests in particular that neighbouring backyards should not include deer preferred plants, and that speed limits in the streets surrounding the park should be reduced and enforced to reduce the risk of collisions.

Importantly, these other versions of the problems are not in competition with one another. They are called upon to enlarge our understanding and our circle of considerations, in a way that allows for different responses to emerge. For this to be possible, questions of asymmetries of power can hardly be ignored (Gehman et al., 2022). For example, Bowden et al. (2021) describe a case where a version of a problem (raising waters in a coastal community) and the solution devised by experts and scientists (a climate adaptation plan) was sidelined by other powerful actors (property owners, developers and real estate agents) to focus on another single version of the problem (falling property prices), which led to avoiding discussions and action on climate change.

Different devices and courses of action can be developed to help slow down the definition of grand challenges. In the realm of business schools, we should not overlook that rational approaches, which prioritize (some) forms of scientific knowledge, are still prevailing in decision-making (Cabantous & Gond, 2011). In such approaches, scientific forms of knowledge are often given a free pass to define problems, and are prone to speed up consultations by offering already built consensus (even though this consensus was built only within the confines of a scientific discipline). As management and organization scholars, developing teaching approaches attentive to the performativity of theories is one way in which we can foster more open-ended decision-making practices.

Slowing down might also look like creating forms of consultation and action that help us explore new ways of living together rather than focusing only on sweeping solutions. In this sense, we should note that the feeling of urgency felt through encounters with grand

challenges is certainly warranted, and the need for response is genuine. Our call to slow down is certainly not a request to ‘wait and see’ or to inhibit action while waiting for more formal consultation. Rather, it is to recognize that addressing a problem in multiple ways is important both to explore innovative courses of action, but also to avoid renewing the mechanisms at the source of the problems we encounter today.

2.6.2 Multispecies world-making

The second mode of response consists in accounting for the ways of life and world-making activities of other species in the composition of responses to grand challenges.

As stated previously, the acknowledgment of nonhumans in grand challenges literature remains generally superficial. By contrast, compositionists adopt a clear posthumanist approach which focuses in particular on acknowledging the multispecies nature of our world. For compositionists, the idea of preformed independent entities that remain unaffected by their continual encounters and that can be isolated from all other kinds of beings is not ontologically tenable. As we live our lives, we are affected by, and are affecting, those around us. These transformations occur whether we want it or not, and whether those we encounter are humans or not. In fact, evidence mounts that the ‘we’ we acknowledge to be is, by nature, a multispecies, collective, ‘we’: ‘everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option (Tsing, 2015, p. 27)’.

Furthermore, every species has a different ontology, since ‘their bodies give them a totally different world in which things affect them in radically different ways’ (Despret, 2013b, p. 59). Each of these beings therefore has different forms of presence and existence, different visions, different ways of questioning the world and being actors in it (van Dooren, 2022, p. 15). Similarly, other species also encounter grand challenges and take hold of these situations in ways that make sense to them. For example, while deer may not be concerned about biodiversity, they may experience problems such as the lack of familiar food, intensive contact with other individuals, increased competition, etc.

In any given situation, this means that there is not a unique, objective world, but the worlds of multiple beings that are enfolded, in partial connections (Haraway, 2016b), where the world of one never completely encompasses the world of the other. We inhabit a world

made up of many worlds (van Dooren, 2022). Each and every action reconfigures the world, enfolding in its wake the world of others in ways that can be significant to them. The presence and action of one can constrain or enable the other, but never in a deterministic way. From these contact zones (Haraway, 2008), where bodies from multiple species entangle and articulate each other, emerge a form of multispecies politics. The hope, then, is to find ways to live well with these other beings, in this shared world (and to learn to construct what ‘living well’ means).

Recognizing the multispecies nature of our world, and hence of grand challenges, requires us to be attentive to the diverse ways of being in the world. A first challenge is therefore to make these beings present and to get to know them as participants in a specific community. To this end, different knowledge practices might be drawn upon, ‘including our combined forms of mindfulness, myths and tales, livelihood practices, archives, scientific reports, and experiments’ (Tsing, p. 159). Non-scientific forms of knowledge are important as they often reflect other ways of grasping problems and other modes of attention, which cultivate other modes of relating and responding. For example, visitors of Parc Michel-Chartrand who regularly interact with the deer might know them differently from the abstract species portrayed in some scientific accounts. This leads them to bring out different concerns, such as the fact that many deer in the park are habituated to humans, which in the view of these person alters our responsibility to them (Cyr, 2022).

Being attentive to other species thus goes further than learning the parameters (quantity of plant ingested daily, size of litters, life expectancy, etc.) that would allow us to manage them as resources. Unlike in rational approaches to decision-making, this knowledge is not a purely cognitive act: it is learning to make oneself sensitive to the sensitivity, intelligent to the intelligence of other beings, in other words, to accept to go through a transformation (Despret, 2002, pp. 92–93). In this way, decisions are not merely more ‘informed’ but more attuned to other species: ‘We have to learn who they are in all their nonunitary otherness in order to have conversation (Haraway, 2008, p. 263)’. Knowing more about nonhuman others does not mean that we must unconditionally accept their

ways of being in the world, but that we should not thoughtlessly define them as undesirable or killable (Haraway, 2008, p. 80).

Recognizing the multispecies nature of grand challenges draws attention on the political devices put in place to develop responses: who should be invited, and to what task should they be invited to participate? In the type of political device envisaged by compositionists, those who are invited are different experiences of the problem, carried not only by experts but also, for example, by philosophers, artists, naturalists, citizens, etc. Importantly, ‘decision must take place somehow in the presence of those who will bear their consequences (Haraway, 2008, p. 83)’.

As for the task to which they must be invited, it is firstly that of building a ‘we’ interested in the situation, to then build multiple forms of response. In the case of the Parc Michel-Chartrand controversy, some of the experts that are mobilized stop short of acknowledging the situation as one of constructing a multispecies community, and instead take a position of judge of solutions, who are there to adjudicate the solutions created by others.

2.6.3 Being Present and Grieving Losses

The third mode of response consists in being present, in refusing to close one’s eyes, as to the state of the world. Since the compositionist approach to grand challenges is not based on the idea of finding transcendent solutions or achieving salvation for all, it is acutely attuned to the fact that irreversible loss and ongoing suffering are inevitable. In many ways, this calls for different practices from those focused on solutions. These practices play crucial roles in healing, learning, thinking and living in damaged worlds (Haraway, 2016b). In a troubling comment, Haraway (2008) states : ‘I do not think we can nurture living until we get better at facing killing. But also get better at dying instead of killing (p. 81)’. The third mode of response drawn from compositionist authors thus calls for practices of mourning and grieving losses.

On the one hand, constructing responses is an ongoing process which requires time and involves countless experimentations. While this world is being built, species disappear, beings suffer, ways of life are destroyed. In the Parc Michel-Chartrand situation, we can

hardly ignore that in the absence of intervention, the number of deer has grown, putting more lives in the balance (whether through death by starvation or by euthanasia). On the other hand, the responses always involve arbitrations of ways of life, with some of these ways of life allowed to flourish, others doomed to disappear, and still others bound to be irretrievably transformed. Composing ‘better’ worlds does not mean that there is no cost to some beings. The worlds we (but not only ‘we’ humans) build through our (in)actions have consequences.

The fact that humans have considerable power to enact such arbitration should command an equally considerable sense of responsibility and accountability. Justifying ‘sacrifices’, such as killing deer in Parc Michel-Chartrand, by alluding to a common good or a calculation of the balance of costs (to whom?) and benefits (for whom?)—however well constructed this calculation is — is necessary, but not sufficient (Haraway, 2008). Indeed, for compositionists, being present in the face of such losses and suffering is an ethical and ontological obligation (Haraway, 2008, 2016b). Being present means to learn to be affected and to make oneself available to the other (Despret, 2004), and learning to share pain nonmimetically (Haraway, 2008, p. 84):

maybe sharing suffering is about growing up to do the kind of time-consuming, expensive, hard work, as well as play, of staying with all the complexities for all of the actors, even knowing that they will never be fully possible, fully calculable. Staying with the complexities does ... mean learning to live and think in practical opening to shared pain and mortality and learning what that living and thinking teach (Haraway, 2008, p. 83).

In the case of Parc Michel-Chartrand, it would certainly be unfair to say that the decision-makers are taking the culling lightly. Nevertheless, as the process drags on, an impression of detachment, impatience and insensitivity emerges. In the spring of 2021, we could read revealing comments left by citizens on a social media post of a national newspaper, reporting another delay in the process (Le Devoir, 2021). These comments were describing those defending the deer as having ‘little sensitive hearts’, suffering from the ‘Bambi syndrome’, having ‘ill-placed compassion’, being ‘emotionally fragile’, and contributing to ‘the feminization of men’. The fact that practices of presence are devalued

by a part of the population is not surprising and does not indicate that they are absent in others. We can nevertheless underscore how a fixation on rational modes of thinking—of the kind denounced by feminist scholars (Benschop, 2021; Huopainen, 2020; Satama & Huopainen, 2019)—robs us of the ability to be truly present, in our bodies and affects, and therefore response-able. It is possible; indeed it is necessary, to recognize that while killing deer might be part of the way to go forward, such a choice would also be truly heartbreaking for reasons we can imagine and others we can't comprehend. Complexity — not only of the cognitive and rational kind—is part of the fabric of grand challenges, and as such it is inevitably part of responding to grand challenges. In short, learning to be present to grand challenges require mindfulness and a 'radical ability to remember and feel what is going on and performing the epistemological, emotional, and technical work to respond practically in the face of the permanent complexity (Haraway, 2008, p. 75)'.

A second consequence of being attuned to irreversible loss and ongoing suffering is the necessity to mourn the beings and ways of life who disappear. For Despret (2017), who has investigated this question, mourning can take multiple forms that are far from being limited to the psychologizing version of it. What many mourning practices have in common, in fact, is to enable those who remain to receive and extend the presence of those who disappeared. Thus, the disappeared, through the living who respond to their presence, have 'ways of being' whose effects can be felt (Despret, 2017, p. 19). For example, the idealized vision of the community of Parc Michel-Chartrand as it was before the upheavals may well never have been true, but its presence in the discussion is not useless. Just because there is no going back does not mean that this vision can't help us think and create the future. In other words, Parc Michel-Chartrand as it (perhaps) once was can have an extension of existence, and continue to have effects. Learning to mourn thus involves the invention of practices of re-suscitation. If the deer of Parc Michel-Chartrand are ultimately killed, or if the presence of deer and other invasive species leads to the disappearance of the large-flower trillium from the park, how can we keep them present so that they continue to inhabit our actions? Here, as in many other situations, it is necessary to think beyond the odd commemorative signs and create more engaged and imaginative practices. Feminist speculative fiction, as well as other practices of imagination and experimentation (Haraway, 2016b; Sayers et al., 2022), can help us enact

this type of affirmative responses. An artist and naturalist interviewed by one of the authors of this paper recounted how she asked school children to look at her paintings of grey wolves – which the children were unlikely to ever encounter in the wild as they are extinct in the region. She asked them to describe what they saw, what they heard, what they smelled, what they felt as they looked at the painting. She then accompanied them in the woods, where she invited them to *feel* the wolf in this environment, which wolves still inhabited a few decades ago. This is the type of imaginative practice that, we believe, can help enact a more response-able future in the wake of grand challenges.

2.7 Concluding Discussion

In this paper, we have presented an approach that cultivates a sensitivity to how many of our encounters with grand challenges happen. This approach helped us develop the modes of attention required to developed response-able responses in these situations, and offers us a methodology of experimentation in the construction of ‘better’ common worlds (a ‘better’ that always remain to be defined — by humans and nonhumans alike).

A first contribution of this paper is to move away from a programmatic framing of grand challenges, where one or more organizations deliberately take action, and to this end deploy different solutions and organizational strategies (Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022; George et al., 2016). We focused on what we believe is closer to what is experienced by many organizations and collectives, namely the ‘encounter’ with grand challenges. These encounters with grand challenges are moments where previous agencements no longer hold, and where reencements must be engineered. Grand challenges are therefore endogenous to organizations since the agencements (Gherardi, 2016) that are unsettled already constitute the organizational sphere. The way this reencement is accomplished (without ever being finished), and the effects of this reencement are central mechanisms in grand challenges.

Even as the literature on grand challenges increasingly builds on the resources of pragmatism (Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022; Martí, 2018), it mostly maintains an ontological fracture between actors and their environment, as well as an epistemological fracture between scientific knowledge and those objectivized by, and

subjected to, this knowledge. As we have argued, such an approach to grand challenges has problematic implications for who is made to matter in the becoming of the world, and how they are made to matter. The compositionist approach suggested here thus offers another way of engaging with grand challenges that resonates with the lived experience of grand challenges.

The compositionist approach thus both broadens the discussion on grand challenges, and makes it more specific. It broadens the discussion by inviting researchers to take an interest in seemingly mundane situations, which were perhaps not labelled as ‘grand challenges’. Local controversies appear as particularly interesting locations to study and experiment responses to grand challenges, but smaller scale phenomena, such as decision-making, also seem promising. Decision-making situations are sites where we can—however fleetingly and imperfectly—take hold of seemingly intractable problems. Through a compositionist approach, each of these sites becomes an opportunity of composing the world differently. Given the centrality of decision-making both in management practice and in management education, we can think that approaching it with compositionist ideas in mind might enhance our collective ability to respond to grand challenges.

The compositionist approach also makes the discussion more specific by conceptualizing grand challenges as concrete situations populated by entangled humans and non-humans where a very material arbitration takes place. This makes it possible to focus on organizations — including those whose mission is not to tackle grand challenges — as nexus where grand challenges happen, and where things can be made to exist differently. This idea is in line with the development of responsible management-as-practice (Gherardi & Laasch, 2021) in its shift from self-standing entities to entities in their becoming.

A second contribution of this paper is to deepen the posthumanist conception of grand challenges which, although evoked by several authors (Benschop, 2021; Ergene et al., 2021), remained generally limited. In doing so, we equip ourselves with concepts, vocabulary, modes of thought and representation, etc. that allow us to think about

situations of grand challenges other than as centred on humans and their concerns. This approach departs from managerial approaches and ‘business cases’, which have been criticized for their focus on (some) humans’ interests and overall inability to enact radical change (Ergene et al., 2021). The compositionist approach is particularly innovative in that it considers living beings not only as objects of care or ethical concern, but also as world-maker, participants in the becoming of the world, and members of a community. This means that the modes of response to grand challenges are no longer simply to ‘think about’, but to ‘think with’ others in order to invent what a better world means, and to invent the means to build this better world.

The approach to grand challenges we offer here echoes a growing preoccupation with how some modes of thought have become so hegemonic in MOS that they hinder the ‘possibilities of radically imagining alternatives’ (Vijay, 2021, p. 1) to the current crises. For instance, Vijay (2021) denounces how the Eurocentric bedrock of MOS effaces other ‘non-Enlightened’ practices of knowledge, even in more critical spaces. In a move consonant with our proposition to think with multiple species in their local situations, she relies on Tsing’s (2015) metaphor of foraging to suggest hearing what the ‘multiplicity of struggles from below’ and their ‘solidaristic transgressions’ (p. 5) can teach us about alternative world-making.

While this paper focused on the activities and interactions of living species and in particular animals and plants, we believe that similar arguments could be made with regard to entanglements with other types of nonhumans. For example, world-making activities are also performed through our alliances with multiple technologies (Haraway, 2016a, 2018), which are present in – and even indissociable from – many grand challenges. Understanding how our cyborgian ‘selves’, equipped with our technological appendages, take hold of problems is thus another key in understanding our encounters with grand challenges.

This paper also contributes to the literature by offering a methodology and a general approach to guide action. The use of the pragmatist approach can be fruitful for this purpose, since pragmatists are especially concerned with ‘how to proceed in an

unpredictable world in which we are nevertheless required to act (Simpson & den Hond, 2022, p. 129)'. For instance, Ferraro et al. (2015) offered three strategies to tackle grand challenges inspired by pragmatist thinking. Here, we extend this idea by putting forward a pragmatist framing of grand challenges themselves.

This allows us to better take advantage of the fecundity of the pragmatist approach, especially as it is 'non-foundationalist and non-dualist, acknowledging the pluralist and relational nature of life and its evolutionary dynamics (Simpson & den Hond, 2022, p. 129)'. The resulting modes of response are therefore distinct, while remaining somewhat compatible with those proposed by Ferraro et al.

Such an approach obviously does not prescribe what are the 'right' decisions, nor does it intend to form a decontextualized 'best practice' to be exported in local contexts. Like Gherardi & Laasch's (2021) proposition for responsible managing, it is focused on how to build what, in a precise situation, at a precise moment, can constitute good decisions. It forms, in other words, 'an ethics of engagement with humans, nonhumans, more-than-humans, and the world (Gherardi & Laasch, 2021, p. 10)'. Although our approach is not aimed at developing best practices, reports of experimentation with different strategies still seem necessary both to feed the imagination of the possibilities available to us, and to better understand how certain effects emerge from certain modes of agencement. Accordingly, we believe that such accounts of local experimentation with grand challenges organizing would be of interest.

Finally, this paper would be incomplete if we did not recognize the contribution of the beings of Parc Michel-Chartrand, whose presence continues to resonate in us. Telling their story as we did, giving them the place we gave them, is important. We have chosen to invite the reader to dive with us into this controversy, in the web woven by its different actors, hoping that, like us, the reader feels seized, curious, affected, troubled; invested in some way in this situation and in the becoming of the worlds. Hoping that a thread of kinship and responsibility was hence spun and tied with these beings. That, as a result, the act of visiting an urban park, inhabiting our multispecies communities, writing and thinking about them, is somehow altered.

Such stories are central to a compositionist approach : ‘If a rush of troubled stories is the best way to tell contaminated diversity, then it’s time to make that rush part of our knowledge practices (Tsing, 2015, p. 34)’. In a compositionist approach, these stories ‘enhance collective thinking and movement in complexity (Haraway, 2016b, p. 29)’. This happens through learning more about others and their relationships, but even more so through a more-than-cognitive mode of apprehension. As we learn to be affected, knowledge transforms us and enhance our ability to respond (our response-ability) to those whose worlds and ways of life we learn more about.

Alternate writing through the use of interludes, which was inspired here by Despret’s similar experiments (2017, 2019), is one way to take hold of things on different modes. The experience related in these interludes is not used merely as a proof that supports what ‘really’ matters (i.e. the theoretical abstraction we derive from it). It is another - equally important - way of accounting for situations, which produces different effects and which affects readers differently. This reiteration on a different mode thus resonates with the idea of slowing down in the way we discuss problems, so that we can leave the space open for new responses to emerge.

If organizations are spaces where grand challenges emerge and are transformed, we could say the same about our journal articles, which can also become spaces of transit (Beavan, 2021, p. 1842). Just as grand challenges are emerging through organizing and managing, ‘academic writing is a platform not just for knowledge but for political change: change in the organization studies academy, organizations, and by extension, society (Beavan et al., 2021, p. 450)’. The way we write about—and with—encounters with grand challenges contribute to their reengagement. Although the form of this paper remains, by many standards, mostly conventional, it was informed by the arguments of feminist and post-qualitative authors who argue that ‘our writing has the ethical capability to transform, develop theorizing around more-than-human relations, and transition to greater inclusion and co-constitution (Huopalainen, 2020, p. 15)’. In this sense, we believe that the literature on grand challenges requires more stories, written ‘differently’ and written *with* more beings, as myriad experiments that can transform the world.

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Chapitre 3

Deer in the Limelight: When Multispecies Organizing Goes Messy [Article 2]

Abstract

In this article, I explore the political work that arises when human efforts to organize space interfere with the way other species inhabit and organize the same space. Drawing from a posthumanist approach influenced by the works of Donna Haraway and Vinciane Despret, this article examines a controversy related to a municipal administration's decision to cull the deer in an urban park. As they engage with this situation, the actors of the controversy negotiate and construct specific forms of organizing and managing multispecies relationships, on which they rely to determine who will be authorized to be a part of the collective, and under which conditions. From the analysis of this situation, I identify two modes of composition of multispecies relationships put forward by the actors, namely *attachment* and *detachment*. I also discuss how political institutions and practices, due to their anchoring in an anthropocentric modernist tradition, may be ill-suited to the challenges posed by multispecies controversies.

Keywords : Controversies; Posthumanism; Animal Organization Studies;

3.1 Introduction

Controversies involving animals and organizations appear to be increasingly common and contentious. For example, in just the past few years, the province of Québec has seen controversies over woodland caribou, chorus frogs, white-tailed deer, and horse-drawn carriages, all of which involved discussions on how relationships between species should be organized and managed. These situations have real—and sometimes dire—consequences for some of the beings affected, besides presenting significant challenges for the organizations experiencing them.

Such controversies are of significant interest for management and organization studies (MOS), as organizing and managing are frequently accomplished *with* other species, and

through our relationships with them—a fact that is often overlooked in the literature (Sayers et al., 2019). Recently, a handful of studies have explored the conditions under which animal bodies and agencies are either included or excluded from organizing, and the various ways they are involved in it (Charles & Wolkowitz, 2019; O’Doherty, 2016; Sage et al., 2016). This body of work illuminates the complexities of multispecies politics inherent to organizing with other species.

Controversies are effervescent moments when ways of living together are negotiated and transformed (Lemieux, 2007; Venturini, 2010). As pointed out by Venturini (2010), “nothing can attain a collective existence without being the result of collective work and controversies are the settings where this work is more visible (p. 263)”. As such, controversies offer a unique opportunity to explore how multispecies politics are realized, and how we collectively manage to compose and organize multispecies worlds. In this paper, I aim to explore this topic further, as I am specifically interested in how various conceptions of “living well together” come into play in the construction of multispecies worlds.

To do so, I draw on a posthumanist mode of attention and engagement, inspired in particular from the ideas of Vinciane Despret (2002, 2014, 2019; Despret & Porcher, 2007; Despret & Stengers, 2011) and Donna Haraway (2003, 2008, 2016b). By viewing organized spaces as multispecies communities where more-than-human organizations intertwine, this perspective shifts the focus away from humans alone, allowing us to think about the composition of the collective in a less anthropocentric way.

Empirically, this paper draws from an inquiry into the controversy surrounding the management of an urban park and the multispecies community that inhabits it. The controversy emerged when elected officials decided to cull the majority of the deer that live there, arguing that their overpopulation posed challenges regarding the conservation of the natural environment of the park. Throughout this uncertain situation, the participants—human and non-human—have to learn and enact forms of multispecies politics by taking hold of the concrete problems posed by the organization of a multispecies community.

In the subsequent sections, I first situate this study amidst recent research on multispecies politics. I then describe the approach employed in my inquiry. Following this, I offer an outline of the controversy and the multispecies community in which it emerges. I proceed with an analysis of the situation, and conclude by discussing my findings in relation to existing literature, highlighting some novel contributions.

3.2 Multispecies politics

In recent years, more studies in MOS have begun incorporating animals into their focus (Labatut et al., 2016; Lennerfors & Sköld, 2018; Sayers et al., 2019; Tallberg & Hamilton, 2022b). Some of these studies examine multispecies politics, underscoring how human-animal encounters prompt negotiations of a common world that are not bound by assumed separations between “nature” and the “social” (Bear & Holloway, 2019; Charles & Wolkowitz, 2019; O’Doherty, 2016; Sage et al., 2014, 2016). As these studies have shown, situations that require organizing, directing and managing a multispecies collective pose unique organizational challenges.

The most obvious of these challenges is that animals, contrary to their classical depiction in managerial literature (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005), are not merely passive, but are actively entangled in numerous organizational processes. For example, in their research on construction projects, Sage et al. (2016) noted that the entanglement of “moor frogs organizing” or “badgers organizing” along with “human organizing” compels us to rethink the notion that animal agencies can simply be ignored, erased or managed. In particular, they pinpointed three practices through which animals are involved in organizing, and which troubles the implementation of human designs.

A second challenge highlighted by this literature is the inherent indeterminacy of animals, who don’t easily lend themselves to representation. Unlike other political actors, the ability of animals to express their perspective on the composition of the common world, as well as their very interest in the political issues that humans might want to engage them in, can be significantly limited. Even when spokespersons take on the task of speaking for them and representing them in political forums, these envoys face significant translation

challenges, as well as the practical impossibility of producing entirely reliable versions about them.

For example, O’Doherty (2016) shows how a cat residing on the premises of an airport became entangled with numerous humans working at the airport. Yet, these entanglements proved very challenging to interpret when deciding if a proposition for building a new “penthouse” for the cat was genuine, or merely a form of parody. As O’Doherty states, “feline politics conjures a dimension in organization in which one is never very clear what might happen next and—whether serious or frivolous—actions and behaviours remain unpredictable and undecidable (p. 426)”. Sage and al. (2016) show that even when formal processes are established, such as environmental impact assessments, animals often defy the experts and their facts about them. The authors cite an example where the representatives of badgers negotiated the construction of an artificial sett and the distribution of food to entice the badgers to relocate outside the boundaries of a pipeline construction project. Evidently dissatisfied with their representation, the badgers remained firmly in place. This forced the project team to bore a tunnel under the original badger sett, leading to additional delays and costs.

A third challenge highlighted by this literature is that encounters between human and animal organizations are highly charged with ethical implications (Sage et al., 2014, p. 773). These ethical concerns can manifest at a relatively abstract level, such as questioning whether a specific mode of interaction with animals is right or wrong. However, these concerns often take shape in more practical terms, and in particular in the definition of the concrete and material conditions of coexistence. As such, these studies provide a nuanced perspective on how ethical issues materialize in these multispecies collective.

In what may seem like a mundane example, Charles & Wolkowitz (2019) describe how therapy dogs visiting a university campus must adhere to certain rules of conduct. They must be quiet, well-behaved, their bodily needs perfectly managed, and they must remain segregated from other areas. In this instance, the “canine” way of being is thus heavily controlled and constrained in favour of the needs of humans, thus enacting a specific form of asymmetry between species. The shape taken by ethical relationships between species

is especially evident in the sociomaterial arrangements that emerge in the spaces shared by different species. For instance, following their study of transitions from conventional cow milking to robotic milking systems, Holloway et al. (2014) note that “ethical relations on dairy farms are unsettled by the intervention of a radically different technology (p. 186)”.

In summary, by examining encounters between human and animal organizations, these studies underscore the important functions of multispecies politics, as well as the complications it can bring about. Collectively, this body of work shows that multispecies politics cannot be conceived or negotiated without “the animals”, and that these “animals” cannot be easily defined, characterized, represented, or managed. It thus appears relevant and important to better understand how various conceptions of “living well together” come into play in the construction of multispecies worlds.

3.3 A posthumanist mode of attention and engagement

As pointed out by several authors (Haraway, 2016b; Lestel et al., 2006; Stengers, 2019; Tsing, 2015; van Dooren, 2022) human and non-human communities do not exist in separate domains. The so-called human communities all involve, to varying degrees, the activities of non-human species, just as non-human communities are affected by human activities. We can think of such shared spaces as constituting *multispecies communities* (van Dooren, 2022). These multispecies communities form “open-ended gatherings” of ways of living (Tsing, 2015, p. 23), comprised of multiple and heterogeneous relationships between individuals belonging to different species. Multispecies communities are always “in the making,” and subject to both endogenous and exogenous dynamics (Tsing, 2015). These changes in relational patterns all involve forms of political dynamics, as species somehow negotiate their ways of living together in a shared world.

Multispecies controversies arise when humans are involved in arbitrating multispecies communities, and when different actors disagree on the appropriate course of action. They refer to situations that involve arbitrations between different species and their ways of being in the world. As such, they raise not only scientific and technical questions but also, more importantly, political and ethical ones (van Dooren, 2022) that can be summed up

by the problem: with whom do we want to live and how? (Despret, 2007, p. 150). While the actors involved in the controversy collectively tackle this problem and its subsidiaries, what is being constructed is a way of living together, and a tentative definition of what it means to be “worlding well” (van Dooren, 2022, p. 32) in this multispecies community.

The study of controversies, which mostly stems from science and technology studies, offers insights into the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of the social (Venturini, 2010, p. 264). Bruno Latour (2004, 2005a, 2005b), in particular, has been a passionate proponent of this approach. According to Venturini (2010), who drew upon his experience as a teaching assistant to Latour, documenting social controversies relies on “methodological minimalism” (Venturini, p. 259). Latour’s directive in this regard is, quite succinctly, to “just look at controversies and tell what you see” (Venturini, 2010, p. 259). There is thus no “methodology” to the study of controversies; no research question to frame the inquiry, and no established protocols, directives or guidelines for data collection, coding or analysis. The inquiry, in this way, “*does not begin with the cogito* of pre-existing, formalized, systematized, instrumental methodologies commonly used in social science inquiry (Gherardi, 2019b, p. 45)”.

Nevertheless, Latour’s injunction to dive into controversies does not mean that “anything goes,” or that inquiry should dispense with theories. As highlighted by Amis and Silk (2008), in posthumanist research, “quality then becomes *internalized* within the underlying research philosophy (p. 458).” In other words, notions of validity and, more generally, of quality, are constructed through the theoretical and empirical engagement of the researcher.

Indeed, a deep engagement with a theoretical corpus produces a way of being (Kuecker, 2020) that is then enacted in research, and which I describe here as a *mode of attention and engagement*. The latter could be described as an open-ended assemblage of “virtues” that are at the same time ethical, ontological and epistemological. These “virtues” come into play not by prescribing techniques, methods, or strategies, but rather by serving as resources for the researcher in the various decisions they have to make throughout the research process. They continuously prompt the researcher to question the ways in which

they can enact these virtues, from the initial stages of “paying attention” to a situation, to beyond publication (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). Enacting a mode of attention and engagement is therefore a process that is always uncertain, responsive, and emergent, as it cannot be defined definitively, or accomplished once and for all.

The mode of attention and engagement developed in this research is rooted in the works of Donna Haraway (2008, 2016b, 2018) and Vinciane Despret (2002, 2014, 2017, 2019; Despret & Porcher, 2007; Despret & Stengers, 2011), as well as others such as Isabelle Stengers (2013, 2017, 2019), Anna Tsing (2015, 2022) and Thom Van Dooren (2022). From their works, I identified in particular four “virtues” that guided me throughout my investigation, namely curiosity, politeness, perplexity, and responsibility. The table presented in **Appendix A** briefly outlines how the four “virtues” informed my inquiry. The concept of versions, developed in particular by Despret (2014, 2017, 2019; Despret & Stengers, 2011), has also been particularly instrumental in framing this inquiry and enacting these “virtues”.

For Despret, as for Stengers, there are forms of abstractions that “thin” our world, whereas others “thicken” it (Debaise & Stengers, 2021; Despret, 2019; Despret & Stengers, 2011). When a researcher presents a theory or explanation while assuming that this is the (sole) accurate representation of reality (Despret & Stengers, 2011), they contribute to this thinning of the world: “une seule logique pour l’hétérogénéité des savoirs, un seul mode d’existence pour la pluralité des êtres, un seul cosmos pour la diversité des mondes” [a single logic for the heterogeneity of knowledge, a single mode of existence for the plurality of beings, a single cosmos for the diversity of worlds] (Debaise & Stengers, 2021, p. 130). In analyzing a controversy, this reduction can manifest in various ways: relying on a single form of knowledge, making determinations on what is “truly” debated by the participants, assuming the authority to decide, either implicitly or explicitly, who is “right” and who is “wrong” in the controversy, and so on.

With the concept of “version,” Despret emphasizes that there is a multiplicity of ways to take hold of a problem. In the context of this study, this means for instance that there isn’t an intrinsic model or definition of a multispecies community. There is not a

predetermined form to which multispecies communities should aspire. To the contrary, there is a myriad of ways to create relationships with other inhabitants of the Earth (Debaise & Stengers, 2021, p. 137). Accordingly, the purpose of an inquiry is not to overcome the plurality of versions by erecting one (either singular or composite) as the truth, but to experiment with different versions and what they make possible. In this practice, versions function as forms of theorization that proliferates worlds and honour the emergence of an infinity of manners of existence (Despret, 2019, pp. 15–16).

As Venturini (2010) points out, the analysis of controversies is not aimed at resolving them, especially not from an external perspective. Instead, it serves to illustrate the numerous ways in which they can be closed, and the multiple forms that the composition of the common world may take. Inquiring through “versions” is precisely geared towards this ambition.

3.3.1 Description of the Inquiry

In an initial round of data collection, I systematically gathered articles from national and local newspapers that covered the controversy, as well as news reports and interviews from various national and local media outlets, including radio and TV broadcasts. This round also involved consulting the recordings of Longueuil’s City Council monthly meetings, where the issue had been extensively debated over the past two years. This corpus of data served as the starting point for my exploration.

From that point, the data collection took several unexpected paths. In dialogue with both the questions emerging from the situation and the concepts and ideas of the posthumanist authors that inform my approach, I unravelled numerous threads from the controversy. For instance, when an actor stated a particular “fact” about the deer, I tracked down that fact in the scientific literature and sought its presence in other forms of knowledge. This exploration allowed me to gain a better understanding of the ways of living of the beings that are part of the park’s multispecies community. Therefore, the study includes articles published in scientific journals across various disciplines such as biology, ecology and ethology. Similarly, the frequent references to temporality in the controversy prompted me to explore archival sources, and in particular the archives of the local newspaper dating

back to the park's establishment. This allowed me to better understand how the multispecies community has emerged, and the ways of living together that were constructed there over time.

In this second round of inquiry, I thus consulted a wide range of additional sources. I analyzed reports, development plans, planning schemes, and other relevant documents produced at the local, regional, and national levels. Additionally, various documents produced by participants to the controversy, including briefs, reports, videos, blog posts, web pages, social media pages, and legal proceedings, were also collected and analyzed.

Finally, I also continued to visit and observe the park and its surroundings. This served a dual purpose: firstly, to provide context for the controversy and enhance my understanding of the situation, and secondly, to document certain aspects of the park's configuration and inner workings that may not be made public or openly discussed by those involved in the controversy.

The study thus relies mainly on secondary sources of data. The use of secondary data is justified by the fact that controversies take place in public (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991). In this case, given the scope of the controversy, its coverage was extensive. Because it involved a government, much of the documentation was also publicly available—either directly or through the law on access to documents held by public bodies. Moreover, in the context of controversies, the collection of primary data can present both epistemological and ethical challenges, as the researcher may quickly become entangled in the controversy. This can be particularly problematic if they are instrumentalized to steer the closure of the controversy (Venturini, 2010), a risk that appeared significant in this specific controversy.

Throughout the inquiry, a first ambition was to gain a deeper insight into the emergence and dynamics of the multispecies community in Parc Michel-Chartrand. This exploration shifts the analytical focus from being solely human-centric to encompassing the multispecies community. Such an approach lends depth and complexity to the situation by documenting the multispecies organizing that take place in this community.

Secondly, by using “versions” as a guiding concept, the analysis consisted in identifying and describing the various ways of constructing this multispecies community that were put forward by participants to the controversy, that is, its modes of composition. This analysis goes beyond merely listing stakeholders and their views. Pluralism, in this context, isn’t limited to the situation itself; it also encompasses the participants, who can embrace multiple modes of composition. This means that participants, whether individuals or groups, may present multiple, sometimes even contradictory, ideas about how the multispecies community should be organized and managed.

3.4 The multispecies community of Parc Michel-Chartrand

Following World War II, a period of intense urbanization leads to the rapid expansion of cities surrounding Montréal (Canada). In order to facilitate residential development, several agricultural lands are then purchased and expropriated. From these lands, a protected area is established in what will eventually become the suburban city of Longueuil, with the intention of creating an urban park. While locations to the west of the future park are already undergoing development, the park and its surroundings are still primarily agricultural. As such, they are home to numerous species of animals, including white-tailed deer, which are highly prevalent in the region. The park officially opens in 1975, spanning a space of 1.85 sq km. During its early decades of operation, its primary focus is providing recreational activities that enhance the quality of life for citizens, such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or leisurely walks. Since the park consists of expropriated agricultural areas, its landscape is predominantly second-growth forest, with fallow fields and wooded areas. Over time, the park is gradually developed. Some areas are cleared up, tree plantations are carried out while other trees are felled, artificial ponds are dug, paths are opened, a hill is set up for sledding, ornamental plants are cultivated, lawns are created in certain areas, etc. People who visit the park quickly note the numerous species that inhabit it. Inventories have documented the flora of over 600 species, while the park is home to over 200 bird species, 17 mammal species, and more than 9 amphibian and reptile species. In particular, the deer living or transiting through the park are easily visible to visitors, and are considered by many to be emblematic of the park.

The multispecies community of Parc Michel-Chartrand is thus not that of a wild forest that preexists its human visitors and that evolves independently from them, but neither is it the tightly controlled and simplified ecology of the plantation as described by Tsing (2015, 2022). It exhibits a form of “patchiness,” where areas that are more or less left to their own devices blend with other areas that are closely managed. While the community is actively and intimately constructed *with* humans who manage and organize it by exerting various degrees of authority, it also leaves ample space for the worlding projects of other species. This creates a situation where, in this multispecies community, the projects of humans and those of other species become intricately entangled.

The space bears numerous material traces of this multispecies enmeshment, both within the park itself and in the seemingly human-dominated spaces surrounding it. Within the park, notable features include the presence of birdhouses and an interpretive nature trail that allows visitors to discover the park’s tree species. Informational signage also reminds visitors of the interdiction against feeding the animals, a practice that was once widespread and still persists to some degree. With or without feeding, the animals that inhabit the park have become quite accustomed to the presence of humans. For instance, the Instagram hashtag #parcMichelChartrand reveals close pictures of the deer, which are quite tolerant of humans, especially when compared to their skittish wild counterpart. Visitors can often get within only a few metres from the animals. This mutual “befriending” between species, in which both humans and deer participate, exemplifies the multispecies enmeshment that emerges in the park.

Around the park, residential developments also bear witness to multispecies enmeshment that extend beyond the park’s boundaries. In particular, the neighbourhood features several small parks connected by trails to Parc Michel-Chartrand, including a tree-lined path that connects the park to the shores of the St. Lawrence River. Wildlife can thus move with relative ease between these green spaces, thereby permeating the neighbourhood.

While it initially underwent numerous manmade transformations, the park eventually received the designation of a “nature park” dedicated to the conservation of nature. In

addition to its recreational purpose, it now serves as a means to protect and value natural habitats. According to the city's policy, adopted nearly ten years ago, new projects should promote biodiversity, and are planned according to identified ecosystems. Among recent initiatives, the "rewilding" of certain fields and the deliberate conservation of dead trees stand out as notable examples. These practices aim to provide nesting sites, food sources, and shelter for a diverse range of organisms, and thus carry on the park's mission.

Of course, simply designating an area as a nature park does not make the park more "natural" or less "artificial." For instance, the abundance of planted ash trees in the park (around 70% of the forest cover), the absence of predators such as coyotes or wolves, or the presence of lawns that provide abundant food for Canada geese, are all manifestations of humans' ongoing role in shaping the park. The ecological model advocated in the city's development plans can obviously contribute to the production of new types of multispecies communities in the park, but it does not make them appear, despite the evident care shown by park administrators for the park's ecosystem.

The ecological mission of the park is now facing substantial challenges, as its multispecies community is in turmoil. One of the most significant disturbances in the community is the felling of nearly 10,000 ash trees, decimated by the emerald ash borer, which has virtually eradicated ash trees from the city in a span of 10 years. These trees provided habitats for various species and supported diverse lifeways that now find themselves in a vulnerable position. The emergence of exotic invasive species, particularly buckthorn, phragmites and Japanese knotweed, has also severely disrupted relational patterns. These invasive species encroach upon areas once occupied by other species, proliferating and spreading without consideration for the intricate arrangements of multispecies life (Tsing, 2022, p. 66). Driven by climate change (Dawe & Boutin, 2016) and the absence of predators, deer populations have swelled, not only within the park but throughout the region. This situation contributes to conflicts between species and the destruction of ways of life, as vulnerable and threatened slow-growing plants are devoured, and as overgrazing creates opportunities for colonization by invasive species.

In summary, the multispecies community of Parc Michel-Chartrand has organized itself in such a way that human projects and the projects of other species are now deeply enmeshed. Despite the city's aspirations, it is now particularly vulnerable to forms of proliferation associated with the Anthropocene and human management of nature (Tsing, 2022). While biodiversity and the preservation of nature are its main considerations, some species refuse the role assigned to them by proliferating, monopolizing spaces, hybridizing, parasitizing other species, etc. This clash between the city's vision and the state of the multispecies community sets the stage for new arbitrations by the city, which are certain to be accompanied by controversy.

3.5 The controversy of the deer of Parc Michel-Chartrand

On November 10, 2020, the city of Longueuil announces its intention to euthanize, in the following weeks, 15 of the 32 deer estimated to inhabit Parc Michel-Chartrand. To justify its decision, the City highlights the issue of deer overpopulation, which causes an insufficient regeneration of the forest, compromises future tree plantations, endangers the biodiversity of the park, creates damages to neighbouring properties, increases the risk of road accidents and Lyme disease transmission, as well as potentially harms the deer themselves (Ville de Longueuil, 2020).

While the culling plan receives general approval from biologists, this decision immediately triggers an outcry among the population. Petitions and protests are organized within a few days, while suggestions for alternative solutions abound : relocating the deer, introducing natural predators, sterilizing the herd, enclosing the park, allowing hunting, etc. Within just a few days, a private organization called Sauvetage Animal Rescue (SAR) submits an operational relocation plan to the city officials, declaring itself ready to bear all the costs of the operation.

The city remains steadfast in its position, but facing what it calls “the threat posed today by certain individuals aiming to thwart, or even counteract, the implementation of the deer population control operation [Parent, S. 2020, November 23rd]”⁵, it finally abandons the

⁵ All the direct quotes from participants have been translated from French to English by the author. A table with all the original quotations and their translation is available upon request.

culling two weeks after the announcement. The mayor instead turns towards relocating the deer, and delegates the process to SAR, under the condition that the organization manages to obtain all the necessary permits from the ministry. The controversy thus fades from view for a short while.

A few months later, in the spring of 2021, the deer relocation effort comes to a halt as SAR and its partners face a complete refusal from the ethics committee responsible for issuing an animal care certificate, which is essential to obtain the relocation permit. This committee, primarily composed of veterinarians and researchers, highlights the lack of experience of the organization with deer as well as numerous gaps in the plan, resulting in an unreasonable risk of injuries and mortality to the deer (Harvey-Pinard, 2021).

Around the same time, the City creates a consultative committee whose mission is to “propose solutions for the restoration and maintenance of the ecological balance and the preservation of the natural areas of Parc Michel-Chartrand” (Ville de Longueuil, 2021). The committee consists of city officials, citizens and representatives from local organizations, and is led by a biologist from the Ministry of Forests, Wildlife, and Parks. As the possibility of relocating the deer slips away, their fate is put into the hands of the consultative committee, which begins its work in May 2021.

The committee submits its report to the municipal administration on November 22, 2021, in which it maintains that “the only viable short-term option to achieve sustainable results is to proceed [...] to the reduction of the size of the herd through a method of capture and euthanasia in order to reach the park’s carrying capacity (Ville de Longueuil, 2021, p. 20).” A week later, the newly elected mayor, who has been in office for less than a month, confirms that she will proceed with this solution and will promptly euthanize the majority of the 70 deer that are now believed to inhabit the park.

This time, the City remains firmly committed to its culling plan. Since the operation must take place in the fall or winter due to the deer’s breeding seasons, the City plans to intervene in the fall of 2022. This new offensive marks the beginning of an increased mobilization of activists. New demonstrations are held, and opponents coordinate themselves to intervene and protest the decision at City Council meetings as well as in

various media. These activists also organize between themselves to feed the deer to ensure their well-being and safety, in addition to actively conducting citizen inquiries into the situation. Legal proceedings are also initiated under the impetus of one of the province's most famous lawyer, who represents the organization Sauvetage Animal Rescue, and the Montreal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

In the year that has passed since then, the situation continued to evolve. The City now estimates the deer population to be over a hundred, and has changed its planned method for killing the deer from euthanasia to crossbow hunting in order to proceed more effectively. This change has sparked a renewed outrage among activists, who decry the cruelty of this particular method. Furthermore, the City's plan to perform its "deer population control operation" in the fall of 2022 is thwarted by the Québec Court of Appeal, which issues an order to suspend the operation until a judgment is made on the appeal for a judicial review filed by the deer defenders. This appeal, aiming to invalidate the administration's decision, is finally heard the following spring, in April 2023. After nearly a week of hearing the case, the judge reserved his judgment, and to date, no decision has been rendered in the matter.

3.6 Modes of composition of the multispecies community

From the beginning of the controversy, participants appeared to split into two factions, hinting at a polarized debate. Yet, the rapid dominance of one mode of composition seems to have stifled the emergence and unfolding of alternative versions. Over time, many who initially resisted the culling shifted their stance, whereas the staunch opponents seemed to coalesce around a particular mode of composition.

It would be interesting to consider if, had the controversy unfolded differently, other modes of composition might have emerged. In this regard, the literature in MOS has already highlighted the existence of purification tactics aimed at excluding points of view based on cosmologies, ontologies, epistemologies and world-making practices that are different from those of the majority (Jääskeläinen, 2023). Tactics aimed at invalidating alternative modes of composing the park's multispecies community were similarly observed in this controversy, making the paucity of versions somewhat unsurprising.

Indeed, opponents to the culling were labelled as overly emotional, in contrast to the proponents of this solution, who would assertedly rely on reason to support their point of view. For example, a management professor and columnist stated that those who defend the deer “are enwrapped in raw emotion and sentimentality without the slightest rational argument [Facal, J., 2023, August 3rd].” Labelling the opposing viewpoint as “sentimentality” or “having a Bambi syndrome” appears to serve the purpose of diminishing the point of view of those who are being “emotional”.

Two modes of composition were prominent during the controversy. By presenting them on an equal footing, I aim to address the demand for perplexity, ensuring that each version is granted room to unfold—sometimes even erring on the side of excess when there’s a tendency towards deficit (“un peu de trop quand on a tendance au trop peu”) (Despret, 2002, p. 145). In the following pages, I propose to refer to these two alternative modes of composition as “detachment” and “attachment.” Table 1 provides an overview of the key features of these modes of composition.

While modes of composition are not attached to actors (i.e. actors can and do mobilize different modes of composition), this controversy progressively evolved in such a way that modes of composition were highly polarized. The mode of detachment was mostly (although not exclusively) put forward by the members of the municipal administration, while the mode of attachment was generally put forward by a small, but very vocal, group of citizens who opposed the culling.

	<i>Attachment</i>	<i>Detachment</i>
<i>Scale of reference</i>	Situation	Abstract, for example an ideal model (“ecological balance”) or a population (the deer, the natural parks...)
<i>Purpose of the arbitrations</i>	Fulfill one’s responsibilities	Solve a problem through technical/managerial means
<i>Preferred forms of knowledge</i>	Specific and relational	Universalizing

Table 1 Modes of composition of the multispecies community in the Parc Michel-Chartrand controversy

3.6.1 Detachment

A first mode of composition of the multispecies community, which I labelled “detachment,” consists in treating the spheres of activity of the deer (and more broadly, of the park’s “ecosystem”) and those of humans separately. The notion of detachment does not imply that the decisions are taken lightly or suggest indifference to the fate of the deer. It describes a way of conceptualizing relationships, particularly those between humans and other species, within this multispecies community.

According to this mode of composition, the interpretation of the situation is that Parc Michel-Chartrand is an ecosystem in peril, in no small part due to the overpopulation of deer in the park. The criterion that is most referred to in order to evaluate and qualify the state of the park is the notion of “ecological balance.” For example, the consultative committee created by the administration was named “consultative committee on the ecological balance of Parc Michel-Chartrand.” Furthermore, the vice-president of the executive committee explained in a session of the City Council: “Nature operates with a balance, which we call the ecological balance. It’s a balance between prey and predators. And when there aren’t enough predators, unfortunately, humans have to intervene because we have disrupted these ecosystems [Tabarah, J., 2021, December 14th].” Maintaining the ecological balance of the park would thus, in a certain way, guarantee the continuity of the “nature” of the park. Because the overpopulation of deer disrupts this balance, a human intervention is needed to maintain the state of the nature; otherwise, the park’s ecological integrity is at risk.

Although the exact nature of the “peril” looming over the park is not explicitly stated, the threat is repeated on multiple occasions. For example, during a press conference, the vice-president of the executive committee states: “If we don’t do something quickly, it’s unfortunate, but we will lose the park. There won’t be a park anymore” [Tabarah, J., 2022, July 20th]. The diagnosis of the situation is therefore a very general one, targeted at an entity, the park, believed to be in such a precarious state that it requires immediate (and drastic) human intervention. Humans are thus considered as external to the situation, detached from it, and called upon to assess and intervene in it.

The omnipresence of the notion of ecological balance in the debate is interesting, and seems to attest to the power of this particular conception of living together. Behind the concept of ecological balance lies a type of multispecies political ideal, where each species would occupy a defined place and function, in “balance” with other species. Humans are, in this scenario, considered to exist outside of the multispecies community. Interestingly, the concept of “ecological balance” is not itself unproblematic in its discipline of origin (Cuddington, 2001), especially as anthropogenic disruptions are increasingly present (Coulson, 2021). This political ideal nevertheless provides criteria both for diagnosing and resolving the problems at hand. The absolute priority is to preserve the ecosystem of the park and the ways of life of the greatest number of “desirable” natural species. The criteria for exclusions and inclusions in this protected environment remain somewhat unclear, but the deer are certainly excluded due to their destructive way of worlding, which classifies them as undesirable. The idea of ecological balance also provides a logical solution to the problem, namely, reducing the number of deer. The solutions that are needed to attain this ideal arrangement of beings thus takes on a technical and managerial nature, with the objective being the regulation of the number of representatives from different species.

The choice of technical means to be implemented is also based on a form of generalization, scalability, and even standardization. This time, it is not a matter of relying on an ideal model, but rather of detaching the deer from their context. For instance, some participants put the situation into perspective in order to evaluate it on a larger scale. In other words, the discussion is no longer about the deer of this park and what should be done about them at this place and time, but becomes about an abstract population, i.e., the specificities are eluded. For example, the mayor compares the potential culling with the deer that are hunted in the province: “When you consider the fact that 50,000 deer are hunted every year in Québec, and now we’re only talking about a few dozen... [Fournier, C. 2022, October 13th]”. The scale of reference thus moves from a local situation and local problem (is it appropriate to kill a few dozen deer in this situation?) to a more general one (is it appropriate to kill a few dozen deer from the whole population of deer?).

In the same manner, the solutions and strategies that are chosen should be applicable to all situations where similar diagnoses (i.e. deer overpopulation) are made. In other words, they should be generalizable. For example, the mayor rejects the possibility of enclosing the park by stating: “That’s not a feasible solution because it’s not replicable. Are we going to start creating a zoo in Parc Michel-Chartrand, a zoo in Bois  du Tremblay, a zoo all over Qu bec wherever there’s a deer overpopulation? [...] So, sure, the situation in Parc Michel-Chartrand is important, but we also have to consider all the others [Fournier, C., 2022, January 27th]”. This demonstrates that the frame of reference is once again broadened. The organization of multispecies relationships is not seen as something that is created locally, but rather as general principles that can be applied to a variety of problematic situations to resolve them.

Another element that distinguishes the mode of detachment is the type of knowledge that is privileged to make the situation intelligible. Indeed, one of the recurring issues in multispecies controversies (and multispecies research more generally) is “who can claim to be the spokesperson for whom, and based on what types of evidence?” In the logic of detachment, the dedicated spokesperson are scientists (and experts informed by science), equipped with facts created in their own system of evidence. For example, when activists protest the deer count reported by the government’s biologists, they take the initiative to conduct their own deer count in the park to inform decision-making. Confronted with these new numbers, the vice-president of the executive committee retorts: “The City of Longueuil will always follow the advice of the real, recognized, experts from the Qu bec government. We can’t just trust any organization that comes up with numbers! [Tabarah, J. 2022, November 15th].”

Scientific knowledge is similarly mobilized to settle a multitude of arbitration, where its facts become a general source of authority (Stengers, 2017). Interestingly, this mobilization of scientific knowledge in this context is less the effort of scientists who have studied the park, and more that of members of the administration. For example, to support his position, the vice-president of the executive committee thus mobilizes experts and scientists: “There is an almost unanimous recommendation from experts [...]. There will always be dissenting voices [...] that may bring up other excessively interesting

points. [...] But as elected officials, we absolutely have to rely on science.” [Tabarah, J., 2020, November 17th].

Science is also used to determine the appropriate method to be employed in reducing the deer population: “So, if we want to protect and save our beautiful Parc Michel-Chartrand, we have only one possibility, one logical and scientific option that presents itself to us, and in this case, it’s euthanasia. [Tabarah, J., 2021, December 14th]”. The forms of authority that enable decision-making come from scientists and experts. For example, in this quote from the mayor, she indicates that citizen consultation is possible, but ultimately, it is the scientists who will be called upon to make the final decision:

it’s a decision that is first based on citizen consultation, which brought together experts and scientists, so it’s both a participatory decision and a decision based on science. For me, it’s essential to follow science in this matter, as well as in others, [...] and it will be the case for all the decisions that our administration will have to make. We will rely on science when taking a stance [Fournier, C. 2021, December 2nd].

3.6.2 Attachment

The second mode of composition of the multispecies community, which I refer to as “attachment,” involves focusing on the specificities of the situation and its multispecies relationships, and in particular on the ties that bind humans and other species.

In contrast with the mode of detachment, the reference model here is not an abstract, ideal model of multispecies politics, but rather the situation itself, and particularly the unique relationships that have developed over time. These relationships entail that the deer of Parc Michel-Chartrand cannot be treated as “just any” deer. A citizen mentions, for example, “We shouldn’t forget that the deer of Parc Michel-Chartrand, they are semi-domesticated. [...] I’m not a specialist for the other parks that are wild [...]. But at least in the Parc Michel-Chartrand, it’s a special case. [...] These are domesticated deer. [Blanchette, R., 2023, April 27th]”. In the absence of a general model to which one could refer to settle the matter, this composition method therefore requires focusing on the specificities of the situation.

Particular emphasis is placed on the relationships of responsibility that have been formed over time. Some activists specifically note that the deer were there before us, and that it is “us,” humans, who have confined them in this space and allowed them to proliferate. Some of these deer have chosen to remain in the park, and over time, relationships of familiarity have developed, to the extent that many of these deer now tolerate human presence. During approximately twenty years, and up to about five years ago, the city had also been feeding the deer in order to prevent them from venturing outside the park, where they could cause road collisions and where they would graze on the plants in neighbouring yards. This practice may have facilitated the deer’s increased proliferation by providing a consistent food source, and it may also have contributed to their habituation to human presence, along with creating dependency ties.

In this view, the community thus has a responsibility towards the past and the role of humans in the emergence of the problematic situation. It is therefore emphasized that it is not so much the deer, but rather the humans who have been “worlding badly” in this situation. A citizen raises the point:

it’s us in the city who created this situation. People stroll around, kids go up to the deer and pet them [...] and everyone takes pictures. So now the deer, they’ve lost their wildness. They’re not like the deer we hunt, the 40,000 who run away as soon as they see humans. These are deer that actually trust us, that come right up to us. We’re the ones who created this whole situation in the city [Grignon, R., 2022, August 23rd].

This sense of responsibility and accountability towards the state of affairs is what engages and mobilizes some of the participants to the controversy. Admittedly, mistakes were made in the composition of the multispecies community, which resulted in the deer worlding in such a way that they now crush other species’ ways of living. However, this responsibility for the past only strengthens the commitment to the deer—not necessarily in order to allow them to continue to live as usual, but rather so that *from there*, things can collectively be made otherwise.

When it comes to deciding on a course of action, the issue is thus not finding technical solutions to an external problem, but rather starting from the situation itself in order to collectively transform it. Technical measures such as sterilization, fencing the park, or even relocating the deer may be included in the responses, but the relationships with the species of the park remain the starting point. For instance, in a statement, the SPCA asserts that “the city of Longueuil should lead the way by demonstrating that ethical and innovative wildlife management, based on the best possible scientific approaches, is possible (Desaulniers, n.d.)”

The forms of knowledge on which this composition mode relies are situated and specific, stemming in particular from a direct knowledge of the park, and a curiosity about “who are *these* deer, and how do *they* behave?” For instance, we can contrast the statements of some scientists that the deer are undernourished due to their number that exceed the carrying capacity of the park, with the observations of a citizen who visit the park every day: “Me, I’m the one who spent the most time with them this year. I went there every day during winter. And I can tell you, they’re not skinny, they’re not undernourished, and they’re not suffering. They’re vigorous. [Grignon, R. 2022, August 23rd]”. In a short documentary they produced, these activists also show images of the deer to support these claims. Activists thus question some of the scientific facts based on their own systems of evidence, which are derived from their observations and direct knowledge of the park.

The example of the number of deer in the park is also interesting. The projections made by biologists state that there are 107 deer in the park. Meanwhile, a group of citizens who fed the deer during the winter, and thus regularly observed them, consistently tallied them at around 60. When a count was conducted by helicopter, activists retorted that “the issue with using a helicopter is that it generates noise and operates during daylight, and it can be pretty scary for the deer. Deer are really nervous animals [Lapierre, J. 2022, November 27th]”, further explaining that in a small space like the Park, it can be easy to count the same deer several times. Therefore, scientific systems of evidence are being challenged by alternative systems of evidence, which are based on the specificities of the situation.

What may be perceived in another perspective as sacrificing everyone for the benefit of the deer is seen here as acknowledging our obligation towards the deer, which cannot be evaded, even if the park is indeed facing deterioration. Therefore, the attachment construction mode involves emphasizing the existing connections between species in the community, even if they may be altered using suitable technical means.

3.7 Discussion and conclusion

In my review of the literature on multispecies politics in management and organization studies, I identified three challenges associated with organizing and managing multispecies collectives. The first challenge pertained to the active involvement of other species in organizational processes. The situation of Parc Michel-Chartrand also reflects this, as despite the ecological vocation of the park and the city's intention to establish it as a natural space, the activities of various species thwart its plans. For instance, invasive plants take over entire sections of the park, insects lead to the demise of thousands of trees, and the rapid proliferation of deer results in overgrazing of vulnerable plants.

Despite the city's numerous attempts at managing and controlling these agencies, this case illuminates the organizational (and arguably managerial) capabilities of other species, and their resilience against our attempts at control. The contrast between this observation and the mode of composition of *detachment*, which was dominant in the controversy, is particularly interesting in that regard. On the one hand, the idea of an ecological balance supposes that nature has to be managed in order to be maintained, whether through the spontaneous intervention of natural phenomena or through human hands and their technical means. On the other hand, more-than-human species are relentlessly disorganizing, troublesome, and never easily managed (Sage et al., 2016). While managerial and teleological approaches to the organization of nature have had some relative and momentary "successes" in controlling nature—such as with plantations (Tsing, 2022)—there are growing indications that our ability to control other species (and natural phenomena more broadly) is quickly waning (Stengers, 2013; Tsing, 2022). This raises questions about the limitations of this mode of composition, especially if it is to remain dominant. More importantly, it underscores the need to cultivate alternative versions and allow them to flourish and produce their effects. This isn't to suggest that

technical and managerial means should automatically be discarded; instead, the repertoire of ways to understand and intervene in these multispecies communities should be broadened and made more complex, rather than simplified.

This idea carves out a role for MOS researchers in social transformation. Despret's concept of "version", especially within the context of controversy analysis, highlights different modes of composition and gives voice to perspectives that might otherwise be invalidated or marginalized because they don't align with certain modernity-derived conceptions (Jääskeläinen, 2023). The role of a researcher investigating a controversy certainly wouldn't be to resolve it, but rather to illuminate these different versions and prevent some of them from being suppressed. Naturally, it is ultimately up to the actors of the controversy to make choices and bear the consequences of these choices. However, the act of making visible the myriad ways to construct and address a collective problem constitutes in itself a potent political gesture.

Secondly, extent literature also showed the inherent indeterminacy of animals. Once again we find examples of that here, as the indeterminacies about "who are the deer and how do they behave". In a manner reminiscent of O'Doherty's (2016) observations regarding the construction of a penthouse for the resident cat in an airport terminal, this indeterminacy can become the focal point of power struggles. Here, different parties, drawing from their own systems of evidence, attempt to impose their own determinations regarding the nature of the deer and of the park more broadly. For example, there were disputes over the appropriate methods to count these deer, disputes around the behaviour of "deer in general" versus the behaviour of "these specific deer", etc.

Just as we cannot claim to ever fully control other species, we also cannot claim to entirely and permanently resolve the indeterminacy of the more-than-human, especially in the open-ended contexts of multispecies communities like an urban park. If adopting posthumanist research practices calls for displacing our inquiries from a sole focus on humans, it shouldn't mean granting a single form of knowledge the power to represent the beings whose presence we invoke. For instance, in this controversy, certain scientific practices (and even more so the deployment of scientific knowledge by some participants)

were evidently used to silence and dismiss what was deemed as “irrational” forms of attachment (Stengers, 2013) to the deer. In this regard, the concept of “version” used in this article provides once again an interesting alternative. To echo Tsing (2015) when she discusses the challenges of accounting for a landscape and its more-than-human inhabitants, achieving this requires tapping into a diverse array of forms of knowledge: “including our combined forms of mindfulness, myths and tales, livelihood practices, archives, scientific reports, and experiments (p. 159)”.

Finally, as previously found in the literature, the politics of multispecies encounters in this case are also imbued with significant ethical considerations. This becomes especially evident when considering the concrete realities that might be brought about by the decisions proposed by participants. As the actors have shown, there is a significant distinction between agreeing that a certain number of deer should be excluded from the park—a viewpoint that many initially subscribed to, especially in the early stages of the controversy—and determining the methods of realizing this exclusion. Whether these methods include trapping the deer to euthanize them, hunting them with a crossbow, relocating them to nearby regions or wildlife sanctuaries, introducing predators, building fences, feeding / not feeding them, sterilizing the does, and so on, the ethical issues would be far from resolved simply by a decision to exclude the deer. In this situation just as in other multispecies controversies, ethical consequences are intrinsic to the arbitrations that are to be made: while inaction likely means that some ways of life will disappear, intervening will also inevitably impact beings and ways of life.

Given all the uncertainties discussed previously, and also considering the multitude of ways of life affected by the outcome of this controversy, it becomes clear that even the best utilitarian calculations or animal welfare codes cannot resolve the ethical issues of this situation. At the very least, they cannot allow for actions to be taken with the detachment stemming from the self-assured belief of doing the “right” thing (Haraway, 2008).

In this paper, I have contrasted two modes of composing the multispecies communities, which I labelled “detachment” and “attachment”. While I have emphasized two modes of

composition, others could probably be identified—if not in this specific controversy then certainly in other multispecies controversies. These modes not only shape how the problem is defined, but they also specify the type of information and the criteria of valuation considered relevant for decision-making, as well as suggest specific types of action that could be taken. In doing so, they provide ways to organize the multispecies community by establishing “rules of conduct”, hierarchies and boundaries. Ultimately, they reflect differing perspectives on how relationships between beings should be organized so that species can “live well” together.

Each of these construction modes has distinct consequences for the community, which remain ultimately unpredictable and incalculable. These consequences, and these differences, matter. For example, the decision to cull the deer not only results in the death—and likely suffering—of these animals, but it may also need to be repeated in a few years. Conversely, choosing not to kill them may result in the disappearance of certain species from the park, and in invasive species overtaking the park. As Haraway (2008) reminds us, “ways of living and dying matter: Which historically situated practices of multispecies living and dying should flourish? There is no outside from which to answer that mandatory question; we must give the best answers we come to know how to articulate, and take action, without the god trick of self-certainty (p. 88)”.

Regardless of the final outcome, it appears that the different modes of constructing the multispecies community have not had equal opportunities to fully unfold during the controversy. On one hand, the aforementioned contrast between “rationality” and “emotions” has contributed to dismissing approaches that rely on affective relationships and attachments. On the other hand, despite the contestations it has faced in recent years, science still wields significant power, including the ability to close debates when it is deemed that “science” has spoken. Although this certainly does not hold true in every case (for example Bowden et al., 2021, have shown how scientific authority yielded to popular authority in the development of climate adaptation policies), it seems to have occurred here.

In this controversy, this had the effect of shifting what was primarily an ethical and political issue (how to live well together) to what is essentially a scientific matter to be resolved (mostly by scientists) through the evidential system of scientific disciplines. It is undeniable that scientific and technical considerations play a significant role in this controversy, and I am by no means suggesting that these questions and facts should have been disregarded in the discussion. However, the relevance of scientific and technical matters does not necessarily need to elude larger political and ethical questions at hand. Rather than criticizing science, this situation prompts us to examine the power vested in certain scientists and scientific facts to settle debates that are fundamentally political in nature.

A contribution of this article thus lies in proposing, through the posthumanist analysis of multispecies controversies, a different role for scientists, and in particular for MOS researchers. The analysis of multispecies controversies first refocuses debates on the processes of political and ethical construction that take place during controversies, rather than merely focusing on their outcome. For instance, while this article does not end with the formulation of a solution that would transcend the debate, what it does is bring to the forefront the important political questions that are at stake. In doing so, it “slows down” the controversy by momentarily suspending the authoritative power of specific ontologies, epistemologies, value systems, and so on that might otherwise close off the discussion. Similarly, the analysis of multispecies controversies also offers an opportunity to improve the visibility, and thus the importance, of beings and ways of being that are perhaps less able or interested in participating in the controversies. In doing so, it broadens the scope of possibilities regarding the organization and management of multispecies communities, surely an important endeavour as the Anthropocene compels us to rethink our ways of living (well) together.

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Appendix A

A posthumanist mode of attention and engagement

This table summarizes the four main “virtues” characterizing the posthumanist mode of attention and engagement that was put into practice in the study of the Parc Michel-Chartrand controversy. The descriptions provided here are merely tentative, and are mostly for illustrative purposes.

	Description
Curiosity	The researcher should “do the <i>work</i> of paying attention” (Haraway, 2008, p. 82) and be actively seeking to know more. This curiosity must be especially turned towards other species and their entanglement in multispecies communities. Accordingly, efforts should be made to document the versions of other species, as a way to frame controversies as more than merely “human” situations.
Politeness	Practicing inquiry with politeness involves recognizing that the controversy belongs to its participants (Venturini, 2010). Accordingly, the researcher should be particularly attuned, receptive and attentive to the participants of the controversy, refraining in particular from imposing interpretive frameworks and instead remaining open to unexpected discoveries (Haraway, 2016, p. 127). Such politeness manifests as an openness that is not solely cognitive but deeply embodied.
Perplexity	In controversies dominated by seemingly self-evident versions, alternative versions still provide significant contributions. It is therefore vital to recognize these alternative versions, and to ensure they are given an opportunity to unfold. One way to do so is to strive for a “middle ground”, which entails doing “a little too much” when “not enough” seems to be the rule (Despret, 2002, p. 143).
Responsibility	Recognizing the plurality of versions doesn’t mean embracing relativism, where all versions are deemed equivalent, ethically or otherwise. Every version, each way of composing the world, carries its consequences. These consequences must be faced without eluding our responsibilities, but also with care and respect. There is no outside from which to answer the difficult questions posed by the composition of multispecies communities no possible self-certainty to absolve our responsibility (Haraway, 2008, p. 88).

Discussion générale et conclusion

Le point de départ de cette thèse a été l'incertitude profonde dans laquelle l'intrusion de la nature, et plus spécifiquement des espèces non-humaines, jette aujourd'hui les organisations, et les problèmes de gestion qu'elle crée. Du point de vue des études en management et théories des organisations, cette incertitude est problématique pour deux raisons. D'une part, les cadres conceptuels en théories des organisations sont généralement anthropocentriques et permettent donc mal de penser cette « nature » autrement que de façon séparée des « organisations », alors même que les situations dont il est question témoignent d'enchevêtrements profonds avec la nature. D'autre part, cette incertitude est problématique parce que les stratégies managériales qui permettaient habituellement de faire face aux incertitudes — celles axées notamment sur le contrôle de la nature, la rationalité, la simplification — ne permettent plus de résoudre adéquatement ces nouveaux problèmes, et sont même susceptibles de les amplifier.

À travers cette thèse, je me suis donc attelée à la tâche de proposer des pistes de réponse face à ces deux problématiques. Dans un premier temps, j'ai proposé un agencement théorique, l'approche compositionniste, qui constitue un mode d'attention et d'engagement posthumaniste destiné à l'enquête des situations multiespèces en contexte organisationnel. Cette approche se veut particulièrement attentive aux enchevêtrements multiespèces qui émergent dans le cadre des activités organisationnelles, et notamment à la dimension politique qui se joue dans ces enchevêtrements. Dans un deuxième temps, je me suis intéressée plus directement aux situations d'incertitude associées aux grands enjeux contemporains, et plus particulièrement aux situations où les enchevêtrements multiespèces posent problème aux organisations. Dans le premier article de ma thèse, j'ai ainsi proposé, à partir de l'approche compositionniste, une reconceptualisation de la notion de « *grand challenges* » qui prend mieux en compte la dimension posthumaniste de ceux-ci. Cette démarche m'a permis d'évoquer de nouvelles pistes d'intervention et de réponse face aux *grand challenges*. Dans le second article de ma thèse, je me suis penchée cette fois sur le travail de (re)composition du monde commun multiespèces auquel obligent parfois les autres espèces, en raison de leurs capacités agentielles

(dés)organisatrices. À travers l'analyse d'une controverse multiespèces où se jouaient des processus politiques d'arbitrage entre espèces, j'ai porté attention aux modes particuliers d'organisation qui peuvent alors émerger.

Au fil des prochaines pages, je me pencherai d'abord sur certaines des limites de cette thèse, puis j'en résumerai les principales contributions dans le domaine des théories des organisations et du management.

Limites

Dans cette section, j'aimerais partager certaines réflexions additionnelles sur des éléments de ma thèse qui, tout en m'apparaissant prometteurs, demeurent jusqu'ici imparfaitement aboutis. Davantage que des limites, je vois donc ces éléments comme des pistes d'exploration, qui sauront certainement alimenter un futur programme de recherche.

Changer des habitudes de pensée

Malgré une reconnaissance croissante de la nécessité d'approches posthumanistes en études du management et des organisations (Ergene et al., 2021; Ergene & Calás, 2023), la façon de pratiquer la recherche posthumaniste demeure un chantier important (Gherardi, 2019b). Bien que j'en offre une interprétation dans cette thèse, je reconnais d'emblée que cette interprétation est à certains moments hésitante et incertaine.

Je peux en particulier évoquer la difficulté d'assumer entièrement les positions ontologiques et épistémologiques des cadres posthumanistes tels que ceux mobilisés dans cette thèse. Les cadres humanistes, importants dans la pensée occidentale et assurément dominants en études du management et des organisations sont devenus tellement familiers qu'ils constituent désormais des habitudes de pensée. Comme toute habitude, ces habitudes de pensée sont particulièrement difficiles à éluder, et se glissent, semble-t-il, avec une facilité déconcertante dans nos pratiques de recherche et dans notre façon de rendre compte de nos observations et de nos analyses. Devenir attentif aux différentes façons dont nos choix ontologiques et épistémologiques se manifestent dans nos pratiques relève d'un apprentissage et d'efforts persistants. C'est de cette façon qu'on peut espérer la formation de nouvelles habitudes de pensée posthumanistes.

Pour ne donner qu'un exemple, la nécessité de penser en termes d'agencements plutôt qu'en termes d'entités constitue un élément central dans une ontologie relationnelle. Néanmoins, il est souvent spontané de référer à des entités sans nécessairement s'attarder à les repenser ou à en rendre compte en termes d'agencement. Par exemple, dans ma description du parc Michel-Chartrand, je glisse à certains moments dans la présentation d'un assemblage d'entités (en évoquant par exemple les espèces présentes dans le parc), plutôt que d'en rendre compte comme de véritables agencements. Bien qu'il puisse être souhaitable de décortiquer méthodiquement chaque geste, chaque phrase, chaque idée, qui trouve son chemin dans nos démarches de recherche et ultérieurement dans nos textes pour s'assurer de sa cohérence avec l'approche retenue, cette tâche s'avère titanesque dans le cours de la pratique de la recherche, de l'analyse, de l'écriture, devant, également, les impératifs de la production académique (et ses inévitables délais et exigences temporelles de performance). Et surtout, ici, on ne peut absolument pas se fier à nos habitudes de pensée pour sauver la mise.

En somme, je dirais donc que le passage à des approches posthumanistes en études du management et des organisations ne peut pas être réduit à remplacer un « cadre conceptuel » par un autre, ni à utiliser à la pièce des concepts tirés d'approches posthumanistes. Cela reviendrait à sous-estimer combien notre façon de faire science est marquée par le réalisme (réalisme des entités ou des théories) et l'idée du représentationnalisme (Barad, 2007), des notions qui continuent de nous imprégner malgré une sincère volonté de pratiquer la science autrement. Ce serait également sous-estimer les pressions institutionnelles qui s'exercent sur la façon appropriée de faire la science en études du management et des organisations.

En ce sens, effectuer un véritable tournant posthumaniste constitue un travail de longue haleine. Cela implique de se familiariser et de s'imprégner d'œuvres complexes et raffinées, qui ne se laissent pas saisir aisément ou rapidement — du moins dans mon expérience. Il n'apparaît donc pas particulièrement constructif de pointer du doigt ceux et celles (moi y inclus) qui feraient à certains moments une utilisation « incorrecte » ou « inappropriée » d'idées posthumanistes. Il s'agit plutôt d'œuvrer à construire collectivement une forme de « niche écologique » où se cultivent des habitudes de pensée

posthumanistes, qui peuvent permettre d'étendre la compréhension et l'intégration des idées posthumanistes en études du management et des organisations⁶. Il s'agit aussi de reconnaître — et c'est l'objet de ma seconde piste de réflexion — qu'il y a probablement une multitude de nouvelles pratiques de recherche à inventer pour rendre possible ce virage posthumaniste.

Méthodologie et posthumanisme

Compte tenu de la nouveauté relative que représentait à ce moment l'inclusion des animaux dans les études du management et des organisations, mon intention initiale était de formuler une contribution méthodologique. Celle-ci aurait pris la forme d'une méthodologie permettant d'étudier de façon non-anthropocentrique les situations multiespèces. Sans aspirer à la production d'un « prêt-à-porter méthodologique », je souhaitais néanmoins esquisser une démarche de recherche qui pourrait être appliquée dans diverses situations. L'objectif était certainement louable, mais le développement de ma thèse m'a conduit dans une direction bien différente.

D'abord, ce que mes autrices avaient à proposer comme « méthodologie » avait bien peu de ressemblances avec ce que le terme suppose en études du management et des organisations. Raconter des histoires, suivre les innombrables fils d'une situation et s'y perdre dans les détours, multiplier les versions, se laisser habiter par les situations, rester avec le trouble... mais avant tout être curieux, poli, attentif, responsable, patient... Même si la question des pratiques scientifiques était omniprésente dans leurs œuvres, il n'y avait là aucune allusion à des méthodes de collecte de données, à des stratégies d'analyse de données, à des critères de qualité... Plusieurs concepts courraient les pages, certes, mais un concept, ce n'est tout de même pas une méthodologie ?

Je me permettrai ici d'être transparente : je n'ai pas remarqué cette absence de méthodologie alors que j'assemblais l'approche compositionniste, ni même lorsque je l'ai initialement mise en œuvre pour comprendre la situation du Parc Michel-Chartrand (dans

⁶ Je noterai à cet égard que cette « niche écologique » commence déjà à être bien peuplée, notamment grâce à Silvia Gherardi, Seray Ergene et de nombreuses autres chercheuses, notamment en *animal organization studies*, qui se sont également risquées à plonger dans le posthumanisme.

le cadre du premier article de la thèse). Après avoir systématiquement décortiqué l'ontologie, l'épistémologie et les présupposés sur l'*agency*, la méthodologie qui découlait m'apparaissait plutôt claire, quoique peut-être un peu parcimonieuse.

Il faut dire qu'à force de fréquenter ces autrices, à force de tenter de les assimiler, j'avais intégré non seulement des concepts, mais aussi des « façons de penser » qui me permettaient de penser les situations et d'en tirer des apprentissages. En l'espace de quelques années, j'avais expérimenté la « méthodologie » compositionniste avec les rencontres multispèces banales de mon quotidien : le matou roux qui déambule chaque jour sur ma rue, l'araignée qui habite le coin de ma chambre, ma chienne Myra, évidemment, qui, de chienne de rue, a dû apprendre à devenir une chienne domestique, Kyrie, la chienne adoptée par mes parents, qui a tout bouleversé pendant les quelques mois qu'elle a pu vivre avec eux... Je l'avais aussi expérimentée pour penser les situations et controverses évoquées tout au long de ma thèse : les caribous forestiers, les calèches du Vieux-Montréal, le rodéo de St-Tite, l'impact de la pandémie de Covid-19 sur les animaux d'élevage... Pour moi, l'approche compositionniste était bien une méthodologie, un mode particulier d'engagement, d'attention. Elle n'était pas établie de façon systématique, certes, mais tout de même, elle m'indiquait où regarder, à quoi et à qui porter attention, comment porter attention, quelles questions poser, elle me donnait des concepts pour m'aider à comprendre, elle me permettait de développer de nouvelles intuitions, elle m'offrait des pistes d'action, etc.

Le malentendu s'est évidemment révélé lorsque j'ai tenté d'articuler ma fameuse contribution méthodologique, et plus encore lorsqu'est venu le temps de rendre compte de la méthode que j'avais employée pour collecter mes données et les analyser. Ce que je parvenais à décrire, un mode d'attention et d'engagement, ce n'était vraisemblablement pas une méthodologie, c'est-à-dire un processus prédéfini de techniques ou de procédures pour définir la question de recherche, concevoir l'étude et la collecte de données, analyser les données, valider et s'assurer de la qualité des résultats, etc.

C'est une brève et superficielle incursion dans la littérature sur l'enquête post-qualitative qui m'a permis d'éclairer ce malentendu. D'une part, je m'étais heurtée au fait que la

notion même de méthodologie s'avère incompatible avec les pratiques épistémiques du posthumanisme, et notamment avec une logique qui n'est pas représentationnelle (Gherardi, 2019b; St. Pierre, 2021). D'autre part, dans ma volonté candide, voire un peu naïve, d'expérimenter avec la « méthodologie » compositionniste, j'avais pratiqué sans le vouloir ce qui prenait certains traits d'une enquête post-qualitative, semblable par exemple à ce que Gherardi (2019c) décrit comme un « style de pensée ».

Je n'ai pas la prétention ici de m'inscrire dans la littérature post-qualitative, et encore moins d'y contribuer. Le résultat de mon expérimentation avec l'approche compositionniste est évidemment plein de tensions — de tentatives à la fois de « faire honneur » aux idées de l'approche compositionniste, qui me tire vers l'enquête post-qualitative, tout en tentant également de répondre aux exigences d'une thèse en sciences de la gestion. Je crois néanmoins que c'est nécessairement vers l'enquête post-qualitative, encore embryonnaire en études du management et des organisations (quelques exemples : Beavan, 2021; Benozzo, Carey, et al., 2019; Benozzo, Koro-Ljungberg, et al., 2019; Benozzo & Gherardi, 2020; Gherardi, 2019b; Huopalainen, 2020) que s'ouvrent ma thèse et l'approche compositionniste. Ce à quoi aspire l'enquête post-qualitative, c'est-à-dire à des approches performatives qui produisent des savoirs différents et produisent des savoirs différemment (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175), est non seulement cohérent avec l'approche compositionniste, mais apparaît également essentiel pour en mobiliser tout le potentiel. Et cela me semble être particulièrement nécessaire pour rendre compte de nos enchevêtrements avec les autres espèces.

Témoigner avec les animaux

En effet, une troisième limite de ma thèse est de « bien » rendre compte des animaux. Il s'agissait d'une des ambitions de départ de ma thèse — présenter une approche qui non seulement décentre l'analyse des humains, mais fasse également honneur à l'expérience que font les animaux des mondes organisationnels. Sans surprise, il s'agit d'une difficulté importante de l'enquête multiespèces, puisque la volonté de « décentrer » l'enquête du seul point de vue des humains se bute au fait qu'on ne peut pas avoir directement et personnellement accès à d'autres points de vue que le sien.

Dans l'approche compositionniste, différents moyens sont utilisés pour aborder ce problème, le principal étant la mobilisation de multiples formes de connaissance qui permettent toutes, à leur façon, de nous rendre sensibles, à certaines dimensions de l'expérience des autres espèces. Cette stratégie a toutefois ses limites. Premièrement, alors que les formes de connaissances sur certains animaux sont riches et variées, d'autres animaux ne bénéficient pas d'un tel éventail de connaissances à leur sujet. Si pour comprendre le monde des chiens, par exemple, on peut se référer à une multitude d'ouvrages scientifiques et professionnels ainsi qu'à l'expérience de ceux qui partagent leur vie, la même démarche avec les cerfs de Virginie du Parc Michel-Chartrand s'avère un peu plus décevante.

Deuxièmement, cette stratégie demeure essentiellement cognitive, et est donc limitée dans sa capacité à bien traduire et à faire sentir le monde des autres espèces. Dans mon enquête sur la controverse du Parc Michel-Chartrand, j'ai pris le temps d'explorer ce que pouvait être l'expérience des cerfs de la controverse. L'idée n'était pas de prétendre qu'ils avaient une opinion sur le problème tel que posé par les humains de la controverse, ou d'imaginer ce qu'ils diraient s'ils pouvaient rédiger une lettre ouverte, mais de tenter de comprendre comment ils pouvaient éprouver la situation actuelle (avec ses changements écologiques, la multiplication de leurs congénères, le danger des voitures qui circulent autour du parc, la diminution du couvert forestier, etc.) ainsi que les options qui s'étaient devant eux (les cages destinées à l'abattage ou au transport, le changement d'environnement, l'abattage par arbalète, la faim, etc.). Ni cette démarche, et encore moins le résultat de cette démarche (soit un troisième mode de composition qui correspondrait à celui mis de l'avant par les cerfs) ne se retrouve toutefois dans la version finale du manuscrit.

Si je m'étais engagée plus franchement dans l'enquête post-qualitative, et plus particulièrement dans l'écriture post-qualitative, le résultat de cette expérimentation aurait peut-être pu aboutir dans cette thèse et contribuer à l'enrichir. En effet, comme le note Huopalainen (2020), « *Our writing has the ethical capability to transform, develop theorising around more-than-human relations, and transition to greater inclusion and co-constitution. It is this prescription for change that allows for alternative, affective, and sensate paths to knowledge creation, as well as novel and surprising possibilities for re-*

thinking and re-writing organisations (p. 15) ». J'évoquerais à cet égard la poignée d'ouvrages littéraires qui ont été publiés récemment, et qui, tout en s'ancrant dans des connaissances scientifiques établies, narrent une histoire du point de vue d'un animal⁷. Ces ouvrages, sans avoir de prétention à représenter fidèlement l'expérience de cet animal, produisent pourtant des changements chez le lecteur, l'amènent à penser autrement sa relation au monde multispèces. On peut certainement imaginer que de nouveaux dispositifs d'écriture permettraient également de mieux nous rendre sensibles à d'autres dimensions des expériences organisationnelles animales.

Contributions

Sur le plan de la théorie des organisations, la littérature récente témoigne d'une préoccupation croissante envers la nouvelle réalité géologique qu'est l'Anthropocène, et envers les implications profondes qu'elle suppose pour les organisations et pour les activités organisationnelles. En effet, comme le soulignent Wright et al. (2018), l'Anthropocène constitue un enjeu crucial pour les chercheurs en études organisationnelles, qui sont appelés non seulement à mieux comprendre les perturbations anthropogéniques actuelles, mais également à penser la mise en œuvre de formes d'organisation mieux adaptées à ces nouvelles réalités (p. 455). Les auteurs soulignent ainsi qu'alors que l'illusion d'une séparation entre les humains et la nature se dissipe, et que l'immense pouvoir d'intrusion de cette dernière se manifeste de façon déconcertante, l'un des premiers défis que pose l'Anthropocène aux chercheurs, notamment en théories des organisations, est d'ordre intellectuel : « *the Anthropocene demands new reflection on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions in Western society and the development of more integrated approaches to knowledge production* (Wright et al., 2018, p. 457) ».

Une telle exhortation est d'ailleurs loin d'être récente, comme nous le rappellent de Figueiredo & Marquesan (2022). Ils relatent ainsi que les années 90' ont constitué un moment faste dans le questionnement du rôle du management et des organisations dans les enjeux environnementaux : « *The early years of the decade comprised deep*

⁷ Je pense ici en particulier à «Pod» et à « The Bees » de l'autrice Laline Paull.

epistemological reflections on the organization-environment relation, which would lead to attempts of paradigm shifts within the Organizational Theory (OT) in favor of more environmentally-oriented perspectives (p. 1). » Pour les auteurs, le choix qu’ont alors fait la majorité des théoriciens des organisations de se tourner vers le concept de « *sustainability* » plutôt que d’amorcer un mouvement vers un paradigme véritablement écocentrique, qui remettrait quant à lui en cause les présupposés anthropocentriques, a été critique. Toujours selon ces auteurs, le concept de « *sustainability* », qui a été qualifié de « *unashamedly anthropocentric* (Lee, 2000, p. 32, dans de Figueiredo & Marquesan, 2022, p. 6) », a « *enabled organizations to justify business as usual practices amidst the growing conscience about the environmental crisis in academia and society (p. 8)* ». En somme, ce rappel historique met en évidence l’importance de fonder les réponses à l’Anthropocène sur un paradigme qui rejette directement l’anthropocentrisme, et ce jusque dans ses présupposés ontologiques, épistémologiques et méthodologiques.

Les animaux et les autres espèces ne sont évidemment qu’une des dimensions à considérer lorsqu’il est question des relations entre l’environnement et les organisations dans le contexte de l’Anthropocène. Toutefois, pour bien des organisations, il s’agit d’un enjeu majeur, et pourtant encore relativement négligé dans la littérature en théorie des organisations. Dans le premier chapitre de ma thèse, je réponds donc en partie à l’appel de Wright et al. (2018) et aux préoccupations partagées par de Figueiredo et Marquesan (2022), alors que je m’attèle précisément à la tâche repenser de façon systématique les hypothèses philosophiques qui sous-tendent nos pratiques de recherche afin de mieux prendre en compte les autres espèces, et en particulier les espèces animales.

L’approche « compositionniste » qui en résulte s’inscrit dans ce qu’on pourrait qualifier de paradigme écocentrique (Purser et al., 1995) ou posthumaniste en théorie des organisations. Elle mène en particulier à reconceptualiser les organisations de telle sorte à rendre compte du fait que nous vivons (et organisons) dans des mondes qui sont partagés avec de nombreuses espèces, et que nos activités (y compris nos activités organisationnelles) et modes de vie s’entrelacent d’une façon qui est souvent inextricable. Il n’est donc plus question d’une organisation (entité indépendante, essentiellement sociale et technique, qui agirait sur un fond d’environnement), mais bien de processus

organisationnels qui se composent notamment à travers l'enchevêtrement de multiples espèces.

Les implications d'une telle approche sont nombreuses, et seules quelques-unes d'entre elles ont pu être explorées dans cette thèse. Premièrement, comme il a été évoqué précédemment, l'approche compositionniste revisite non seulement des hypothèses philosophiques, mais elle revisite également des pratiques de recherche. Elle participe en particulier à une mouvance en études du management et des organisations qui reconsidère la position du chercheur et ses pratiques éthico-onto-épistémologiques (Gherardi & Laasch, 2021). En l'occurrence, l'idée d'un « mode d'attention et d'engagement » reconnaît que la pratique de chercheur ne consiste pas seulement à appliquer un cadre conceptuel sur une situation, mais bien à s'engager, à s'impliquer, dans cette situation d'une façon particulière, avec des effets particuliers.

Deuxièmement, l'analyse de la controverse du Parc Michel-Chartrand démontre bien comment une pratique de recherche informée par l'approche compositionniste contribue à redonner de l'épaisseur aux situations. À cet égard, Simpson et den Hond (2022) soulignent qu'en général, la posture contemporaine en recherche organisationnelle tend à s'extraire de la « *messiness of living situations* (p. 142) » en privilégiant des formes de théorisations qui se distancient de ces situations et les réduisent à quelques abstractions. Ils en appellent ainsi à adopter des postures empiriques riches, qui prennent en compte les « *practical actions of organizing that arise in emergent situations* (p. 128) ». Pour Simpson et den Hond (2022), c'est seulement ainsi que la recherche organisationnelle pourra s'engager face aux complexités croissantes de notre monde, réagir de manière créative, et étendre ses imaginations à des perspectives plus-qu'humaines (p. 141).

L'approche compositionniste, telle qu'elle a notamment été mobilisée dans l'analyse de la controverse du Parc Michel-Chartrand, répond précisément à cet appel. L'analyse prend d'abord le soin de bien comprendre et décrire avec richesse la communauté concernée par la controverse. Ici, donner de l'épaisseur aux situations, c'est s'attarder non seulement à une couche d'activité humaine, mais également à la communauté multiespèces dans laquelle s'inscrivent les actions organisatrices des différents acteurs (humains et non

humains). Par ailleurs, plutôt que de réduire la situation à une seule grille de lecture, l'approche compositionniste apporte également un soin particulier à mobiliser et valoriser différentes formes de savoirs afin de rendre compte des nombreuses versions possibles de la situation.

Troisièmement, en considérant que les organisations opèrent dans des mondes partagés, l'approche compositionniste offre également de nouvelles prises éthiques. De façon évidente, elle étend d'abord la sphère de considération morale et la responsabilité des organisations à tous les êtres enchevêtrés et affectés par les processus organisationnels. L'exemple déjà évoqué des caribous forestiers illustre bien cela : en aménageant des chemins forestiers, les compagnies forestières transforment le territoire qu'elles partagent avec d'autres espèces d'une façon qui est notamment significative pour les loups, qui peuvent emprunter ces chemins pour se déplacer aisément, et ainsi intensifier leur prédation sur les caribous forestiers.

D'autre part, comme il a été discuté particulièrement dans le dernier article de cette thèse, ce qui se négocie à travers l'instauration, le maintien et la transformation de pratiques organisationnelles, ce sont des façons de faire monde commun avec d'autres espèces. Lorsque les participants à la controverse du parc Michel-Chartrand délibèrent, ils débattent d'arbitrages concrets, de la matérialisation de différentes formes de relation, et des effets de ces matérialisations. Autrement dit, en s'intéressant à ces pratiques concrètes de construction du monde commun ainsi qu'aux principes organisateurs qui les orientent, il ne s'agit pas de s'appuyer sur de grands principes éthiques pour pouvoir trancher avec certitude le débat, mais bien de chercher à « mieux » construire les relations entre espèces. En ce sens, l'approche compositionniste rejoint l'idée de *responsible management-as-practice*, proposée par Gherardi et Laasch (2021), qui « *shifts the emphasis from an ethics of accountability to an ethics of engagement with humans, nonhumans, more-than-humans, and the world* (p. 278). »

Enfin, cette thèse propose une vision renouvelée du rôle du management en tant que discipline face aux enjeux écologiques de l'Anthropocène. En effet, plusieurs disciplines scientifiques, telles que la biologie, les sciences de l'environnement, la foresterie ou la

géographie, s'attèlent déjà à l'étude des communautés multiespèces, et se positionnent en première ligne pour répondre à ces enjeux complexes. Si on considère que le management est concerné notamment par l'organisation, la direction, et la coordination du collectif (Fayol, 1917), on peut voir comment l'approche compositionniste peut apporter une contribution singulière, en offrant une conception de ces activités qui incorpore les espèces plus-qu'humaines. De cette façon, le management se retrouve mobilisé d'une façon nouvelle, dans un rôle intégrateur, pour contribuer à orienter la construction des collectifs multiespèces. L'approche compositionniste offre de nouvelles prises aux gestionnaires en proposant notamment une perspective particulière sur la prise de décision. Plutôt que de viser l'efficacité, la rationalité, la légitimité ou tout autre objectif prédéterminé, il s'agit ici d'apprendre à « mieux construire » les décisions en rassemblant et mobilisant le collectif (ainsi que ses multiples formes de savoirs) dans la construction d'un monde « meilleur » — un « meilleur » qui reste toujours à définir collectivement, et de façon inclusive des autres espèces qui partagent nos communautés.

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