Human-animal Interactions : the Challenge of Fair Descriptions
Interview with Charlotte Lundgren

Charlotte Lundgren and Véronique Servais

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Charlotte Lundgren[*],Véronique Servais[**]

Véronique Servais: Dr. Lundgren, we have decided to interview you in this special issue, because you have been working on innovative methods for the close description of interspecies interactions. In their desire to make room for animals' agency, many human-animal studies emphasize the need for symmetrical descriptions of human and animal behaviour. However, very few of them offer explicit and practical methods for doing so. Consequently, the methodological challenge appears to be a limiting factor for the development of equitable descriptions of human–animal interactions. Could you tell us a little bit about you, and why you came to work on interspecies interaction analysis methods?

Charlotte Lundgren: My background is in the interdisciplinary field of communication between humans, where researchers from disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology and sociology have co-developed our understanding of the role of talk as social action, in everyday life as well as in institutional encounters. I have always been intrigued by how we can overcome the fact that we all perceive the world from our own individual perspective, and together create a shared understanding of the world, of what is going on and of what we are doing. Initially, my focus was on the study of such meaning making practices in multiprofessional team confer-

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ences in medical rehabilitation and oncological care. But some ten years ago, I decided to focus on interspecies interactions (across the species divide of humans and horses) to further my understanding of the non-spoken aspects of communication. After all, we humans are not the only animals engaging in shared meaning making practices, and not all human-human interactions are dependent on talk (as in our use of words).

VS: So, for you, taking interspecies interactions seriously is crucial

CL: Yes, I think that taking interspecies interactions seriously is crucial to move toward a more egalitarian and ecological coexistence across species boundaries. Based on experiences made when working with video recordings of interspecies interaction, primarily between horses and humans, over the past ten years I propose an approach that enables close scrutiny of interactions between conspecifics as well as across species. As a linguistic ethnographer, I want to offer an empirically based alternative to biased interpretations lacking analytical rigour due to pre-empirical assumptions; be these that animals are automatons, or overly anthropomorphic. My approach favours an emic perspective grounded in how the participants, regardless of species, appears to interpret what is going on by studying how they display and negotiate these interpretations through the unfolding interaction.

VS: Do you mean that with your method both perspectives can be described? The human one and the animal one? Did you end up with any specific model for the transcription of interspecies interactions?

CL: Yes and no. Yes, I believe that we should in our analyses strive to treat the actions of (non-human) animals on a par with the actions of human animals, and from this follows that we should include these actions in our analyses. By describing what the animals actually do, regardless of if we describe it using terms from ethology or simply describe what they do – raising their head, swishing their tail – and by simply assuming that their actions have, in the same way as we assume that human actions have, the potential for meaning making, we include them in the analysis on the same terms as we include the humans. But of course, there are limitations to our ability to fully understand someone else, be they another human being or a horse, just as there are limitations to how much we can generalise from one interaction to another. So, when I also say no to your question, I do so because our task is not to describe what is going on inside the heads of the participants. We cannot claim to know what they think, or aspire to, or hope for, unless we can pinpoint such elusive concepts by looking at what they do. But we can describe what they do and how they respond to each other's actions, and by doing so, we can describe, or at least represent to the best of our ability, the participants' perspectives, regardless of what species they belong to.

It follows from this that, depending on what we seek to understand, we must make different choices regarding to what to include and exclude

when transferring the richness of interaction "in the wild" (as in, outside of the laboratory, in the real world) to the relative scarcity of the transcripts we rely on for publication. Consequently, I have decided to not champion any specific convention for the transcripts but rather explore different opportunities as can be seen in my own publications (Lundgren, 2021; Lundgren, 2020; Lundgren, 2019; Lundgren, 2017). I believe that we must open up for purpose-based transcription conventions rather than limiting ourselves to any established transcription convention. Analytical rigour comes from a theoretically sound process for transcribing interaction, rather than from adhering to specific transcription conventions.

VS: As I have seen from your previous work, you ground your approach in conversation analysis and ethnomethodology.

CL: Yes, and anthropology. And now you may wonder how the study of mankind – anthropology – can be a valid starting point for the study of animal kind but, please, bear with me! When trying to understand interaction between sentient beings, the best starting point is to think of interaction as a common, everyday activity in which we engage to create meaning and get on with our everyday lives. This makes interspecies interaction interesting to study in its own right, and this is my own primary interest. But studies of interspecies interaction also have the potential of allowing us to better understand current societal ideas concerning the relations between human animals and other animals – at least if we subscribe to the idea that what goes on in interaction, on the one hand, and social norms and beliefs on the other, are interrelated.

Like many other social scientists, I believe that actions and norms are in constant dialogue, or in other words, that they co-construct each other. The study of communication has traditionally been undertaken from an understanding that suffers from a considerable written language bias (Linell, 2005), a bias that has hampered the understanding of face-to-face communication – talk – between humans for a long time (*Ibid.*). But when tape recorders became accessible, and recordings of conversations thus became possible to study, linguists, sociologists and anthropologists came to develop a systematic study of spoken discourse. Over time, interdisciplinary scientific traditions such as conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, came to teach us many important lessons on how humans use talk. The most important may be that talking, as opposed to writing, is something that we do *together*. Through what is called turn-taking, we co-construct what we mean and do. I say something to which you respond, and based on your response I will say something more – to which you will respond, and so on and so forth. It is through these chains of interconnected utterances, acting both as initiatives and responses, that we understand, misunderstand, and move on together to get done whatever it is that we are doing – regardless of if it is discussing the dismantling of the patriarchy in a seminar, conducting a physical examination of a patient, or picking a fight with our partner over the laundry. Contemporary research bas-

ed on video recordings have made it possible to further our understanding of how this is done, and we now know that we rely not only on what can be heard, but also on what can be seen and experienced haptically.

When focusing on the interaction as a process instead of the components making up the interaction (and the fixation of their meanings and functions in vocabularies and grammars), it becomes apparent that a more fruitful way of thinking about them is to ascribe to them *meaning potentials* (Linell, 2009) rather than *fixed meanings*. For instance, we humans tend to have very high thoughts on our ability to use words such as *patriarchy* or *dry-cleaning* as shortcuts to convey meaning. But the exact meaning of these words in the specific, localised context where we utter them, when we utter them, is negotiated through series of interconnected turns of initiatives and responses. Regardless of if your use of them is accepted, challenged or, through a set of turns back and forth between you and your partner refined as to including all shirts and not only hers, you simply cannot count on your better half to interpret your words in exactly the same way as yourself. This focus on the co-construction of meaning, on negotiation and on the situatedness of meaning making practices does not negate the idea that such interactions can result in recognisable patterns that transcend the local situation of each interaction, and that can be described in for instance a vocabulary. Berger and Luckmann (1966) famously called this process *sedimentation* – and what can be sedimented is by no means restricted to tiny components such as words. Indeed, sedimentation is a process acting across the scale from the tiniest components of our understanding of the world to large scale concepts such as societal institutions and abstractions such as the role of horses in our modern, mechanised society.

VS: How would you relate this to the study of communication or interaction amongst non-human animals? Does this human-centred conceptual frame could still apply?

CL: I believe so. As I said before, we humans are not the only ones who engage in shared meaning making practices, and there is no reason to believe that our ways of interacting are the only ones on which the process of sedimentation operates. I believe that we can, and should, try to bridge the gap between researchers studying human interaction and researchers studying interactions amongst non-human animals. Both disciplines stand to gain from such an endeavour. For instance, the scientific discipline traditionally studying interactions between non-human animals (ethology) has not yet embraced the dialogical concept of meaning making practices. Many ethological studies of animal interactions seem to remain rooted in a more monological and monodirectional understanding of meaning making, favouring a system-based understanding of interaction. By this I mean the understanding of interaction as a system for the transmission of monological "utterances" that have fixed meanings (called "displays of behaviours"), quite like the now largely abandoned idea that human interaction

can be understood as the transmission of "messages" from "senders" that can simply unpacked by the "receivers". We know now that this is not how human interaction works – we are dependent on contexts (in plural). And although contemporary ethologists have successfully challenged society's previously heralded ideas of animals as, by and large, automatons guided by instincts rather than sentient beings capable of emotions, reasoning, and social learning, the focus on "displays of behaviours" related to inner affective states (hunger, anger, sexual arousal etc) appears persistent in ethological publications in general, and in the construction of so called ethograms (catalogues of behaviours) in particular. However, the importance of context is embraced in so far that contemporary ethograms identify, classify and describe behaviours based on studies of animals in specific contexts, rather than of for instances horses without further definition of the context. Historically, such omissions have given rise to for instance the idea of dominance in wolf packs and the existence of alpha wolfs, now proved to be a myth. In relation to horses, contemporary ethological research has provided us with for instance ethograms of facial expressions of horses in pain as well as ethograms related to how pain is expressed in the ridden horse. And just as ethologists have learned about the importance of context to the interpretation of wolf interaction, those of us who come from disciplines historically advocating human exceptionalism can learn about the nuances of for instance how horses express resistance or adversity and incorporate such knowledge in our analyses of human-horse interaction. In doing so, I believe that those of us who come from a more dialogical understanding of interaction may also advance the understanding of how meaning making is, amongst all animals, dependent on the processes of interaction where a shared understanding is negotiated through turns of social actions, whilst dependent on, and simultaneously re-creating, the contexts in which these actions take place.

VS: Yes. Even if, as early as 1956, someone like W. John Smith has emphasized that the meaning of animal displays is not fixed but depends on the situation – thus leaving room for the interpretative work of animals engaged in social interactions, and despite the work of von Uexküll, who showed that animals respond to the meaning of their environment, a meaning that can change according to the circumstances, the idea that each display possesses a fixed meaning has persisted and is still prevalent among animal behaviour scientists. And of course, this is quite the opposite of the "potential meaning" you mentioned earlier. What are the consequences for the study of human-animal interactions?

CL: Researchers in ethology do of course also study the interaction between animals and humans, but such studies are typically carried out to explore the abilities of the studied species better, such as horses' ability to convey to a human if they want to keep their blanket on or not (Mejdel *et al*., 2016). When the interaction itself is studied, this is often done in pre-post designs seeking to establish best practices for handling animals, such

as when horse training is approached from the perspective of behaviour modification theory. However, some ethological researchers have moved beyond the ethological correspondence to written language bias and engaged in the exploration of interaction between non-human conspecifics departing from the concept of turn-taking initially developed by researchers of human-human interaction. One interesting example is the Comparative BioCognition lab at Osnabruck University in Germany, where turn-taking amongst animals (including human infants) is studied (see for instance Pika/Wilkinson/Kendrick/Vernes, 2018; Abreu/Pika, 2022) under the lead of primatologist Simone Pika. But researchers traditionally exploring human-human interaction have also chosen to cross the traditional disciplinary divisions to study conspecific interaction between primates (Mondada/Meguerditchian, 2022) as well as interaction between dogs and humans, as well as between horses and humans (Mondeme, 2023a; Mondémé, 2023b). Following these researchers, and my own research on the interaction between horses, riders and trainers, it is safe to say that interspecies interaction (as in across species divides) is based on turn-taking and on the negotiation of the meaning of symbols. And although the studies I mention here focus on the interaction per se, studies on interactions between humans and other animals can also *show* how we relate to other animals (and not only how we believe that we relate to them), thus fostering reflection and laying the foundation for genuine change. When combined with other methods, interaction analyses allow us to link practices as they unfold in real situations with self-reported accounts obtained through observations, interviews and informal conversations during ethnographic fieldwork. Of course, they can also be combined with analyses of other types of data. If we want to be part of a change to the better, by which I mean a more egalitarian and emphatic relation between humans and animals, conducting careful interspecies interaction research thus appears to be a promising effort also for researchers who are more interested in interactions as analytical windows into actual practice.

VS: In recent years, there was a change in the social status of horses. It seems that people here are more and more inclined to see them as companion animals.

CL: The change in the social status of horses has indeed made many humans consider them companion animals not only capable of forming bonds with "their" humans (who may, but must not, be the owners of the animals in a legal sense) but as being individuals that are valuable in their own right (Digard, 2009; Michalon, 2013; Birke/Thompson 2018; Michalon, 2020; Argent/Vaught, 2022). Many are cared for by humans who are truly interested in how horses can live *with* rather than *for* humans, that is, how humans and horses can engage in relations based on mutual trust rather than coercion or violence, without compromising the horses' natural behaviours (especially their need for social relations with conspecifics, foraging and free movement across large areas). The extent to which we

humans are ready to go to meet the needs of the horses in our care does of course however differ, and as always, we humans are entangled in the materialities of human life – the most important with regards to caring for horses obviously being our economical situations. And since most horses are, compared to house pets, quite large animals who can hardly be kept in the same house as the one their humans live in, in opposite to for instance cats or dogs, keeping them in our vicinity ideally means keeping them at some kind of farm. As they live longer than cats and dogs, and eat more, and as their medical care is more costly, caring for horses and their needs is more often than not, to put it simple, quite expensive. About ten years ago, a Dutch group called Rewilding Europe suggested a complete change in the way we keep horses, in line with the concept of "rewilding" for the benefit of more sustainable ecosystems (Linnartz/Meissner, 2014), but hitherto this seems to have been an ambition too advanced to become reality in but very few places. Whether or not rewilded horses will come to complement or even substitute our current horse cultures and roam European soil in the future thus remains to be seen. Until recently, the scientific study of horses has been dominated by studies in veterinary medicine and biology (ethology), a lack pointed out by Digard (2004). But researchers in social sciences, humanities and arts are catching up and expanding the study of them and their relations to humans across history and across the globe. The number of studies on horse cultures (as in human cultures centred around horses) and equitation cultures (focusing on ridden horses and horse riding) is steadily rising (see for example Davies/Maurstad, 2016; Dashper, 2017; Birke/Thompson, 2018; Birke/Wels, 2019; Bornemark/Andersson/Ekström von Essen, 2019; Argent/Vaught, 2022). To sum things up: the relations between humans and horses, as well as between horses and humans, open up many interesting avenues towards a deeper understanding of how we relate to each other and how these relations change the lives of us all. There are even researchers analysing the interactions in multispecies triads involving not only horses and humans, but also cows - such as the intricate interaction between horse, cowboy (Petitt/Brandt-Off, 2022).

VS: But since the famous Nagel's paper, we know that, as human beings, we cannot fully endorse the horse's perspective…

CL: Of course not, this goes without saying. But, like I hinted at earlier, this limitation also applies to our ability to understand other humans. It is indeed impossible to ever fully understand the "Other", even if we restrict ourselves to human Others. We must honour Levinas' proposition that it is precisely the Otherness of the Other that make us morally responsible for and to that Other; we are not responsible to and for the Other because the Other is so much like us, but exactly the opposite – because the Other is *not* like us. To me, then, referring to what we do as the study of horse-human interaction is to make explicit that we approach the actions of the Eq-

uine Other with the same carefulness and respect as we approach the actions of any Human Other.

VS: If we come back to the main contribution of your work, the analysis of human-horse social interactions : what would be your first step when starting a research project based on human-horse interactions analysis?

CL: Let me first say a couple of words on what it means to do analysis when doing interspecies interaction analysis. The process of transcribing interaction is iterative, by which I mean that one has to work on the transcript over and over again until one is satisfied with how the aspects of the interaction that one seeks to understand better are represented. Real life interactions (by which I mean interactions from outside of laboratory settings) are messy, complex and multidimensional phenomena, and no transcription of such interaction can be anything but a very reduced version of the real thing. And already at the stage of transcription, we must thus make numerous decisions on what details we will include/exclude in the transcript and how we, through the organisation of the transcript itself, chose to position certain aspects of the interaction in the foreground and others in the background. In many disciplines, transcription is thought of as a preamble to the analysis. It is a matter of mere preparation before the analysis can commence. But when we transcribe interaction, we engage in analysis from the very first attempt at representing the interaction in writing. The process of transcribing, of reducing the messiness and representing it in specific ways, *is in itself analysis*.

Let me tell you a story to make it clear: working with my video recordings from training sessions in dressage, I had developed an interest in gait transitions and was looking through my video logs and recordings for such events. One of the first entries in the video log mentioning a gait transition simply said "half halt, transition into canter" but when first looking through the related clip I had to admit to myself that I was not sure that I could see any half halt (which is when the horse responds with a brief change in posture when the rider shifts her balance backwards a tiny bit whilst taking lightly on the reins, and which tells the horse to watch out for a request for a change in gait, direction or similar) prior to the transition. The transition from trot to canter was obvious, but could the half halt actually be pin-pointed analytically or was it just a result of my pre-understanding making me expect a half-halt to have taken place before the transition? Careful frame by frame analysis of the video recording revealed that there were visually accessible clues to support my claim (see facsimile of analytical transcript below). I could note a difference in the angle of the rider's left elbow, and although I did not see her right elbow at that precise moment due to the camera angle, I could deduce – from the fact that the horse's head as a result did not tilt to the right – that she most probably made the same movement with the right arm. This indicated that the rider took a little on the rein, which is a common aspect of doing a half halt. As I could also see a change in posture and muscle tension of the

horse, something that would be the natural response to a half halt initiative from the rider, I decided to consider this enough evidence of that the rider had asked for a half halt which had been performed by the horse. Unfortunately, the method for anonymisation that I had chosen for the publication of this sequence (blurring) did not allow for this change in posture and muscle tonus to be shown in the transcription, information that I added to the gloss in the text that explained the gist of the transcribed event.

	Rider		Horse		Trainer
1.					(stands silently leaning with back to wall at middle of long side (at B), follows equipage with gaze)
2.		[takes with both hands]* [shifts balance slightly backwards]		makes half halt (collects himself) while trotting	
					*Only left visible to camera, but horse's head does not turn right.
3.		gives with boths hands*		trots w slight flex to right	
					*Only left visible to camera, but horse's head does not turn right.

Facsimile of analytical transcript of gait transition study.

VS: Is this a good example of how you organize your data?

CL: Yes, or at least it is one example. Here I chose to organise the transcript in four columns in a table, one column to number each analytically relevant frame, and one for each of the three participants. I made sure that there was room for both snap shots and comments in the Rider and Horse columns, but decided to refrain from snap shots of trainer, as I was not interested in what the trainer was doing but in if and how I could "see" the half halt. By adding the same snapshot in both Rider and Horse column I could make comments on what I might otherwise interpret as changes in posture and other potentially interesting details with regards to these two participants taking place simultaneously. By positioning them next to each other I was seeking to achieve a "cleaner" and more unbiased (by my pre-understanding of how riders are taught that gait transitions work) analytical eye, void of expectations that might otherwise lead me to an analysis that was not firmly anchored in the actual interaction.

VS: Yes, and to my experience, this step can prove to be a real puzzle, since you need to know something of your research object to decide… How do you proceed?

CL: You are absolutely right. One cannot conduct analyses like this without at least a basic grasp of the "culture" to which the interaction is related. This means that you can chose either to study interactions related to cultures of which you have a pre-understanding or engage in an effort to get to know the culture itself as a part of your research process. Personally, I find ethnographic and anthropological methods and theories on the relation between researcher and research objects very helpful to untangle the processes of understanding what is already familiar (where you need to "make the familiar strange" in order to gain the necessary distance between yourself and the object of your study) and of what has hitherto been unfamiliar to you (where you need to "make the strange familiar" to the extent that you stand a fair chance of understanding what logics the members of the culture you study orient towards).

To return to the practical process of transcribing the extent to which you are close enough (but not too close) to your research object will impact the choices you make when it comes to the figure-ground organisation. It is simply not possible to provide a complete, "thick" description of an interaction – at least if the transcript should be readable and understandable to anyone else. Instead, one needs to make choices regarding what the transcript positions as figure, and what it positions as background. It is important to realise both that those choices are inevitable, that they need to relate to the purpose of the study and your research questions, but also that the choices you make also in these regards are analytical choices that will influence the results of your research.

This is where many would think "oh no, this is just too complicated, it takes too much of an effort!". And yes, multimodal analysis is intense work. But it is also extremely rewarding. What I say to my students is: trust the process and dare to limit your analytical scope and refine your research questions until you can actually say something meaningful about *how* something gets done! This is why you cannot leave to someone else to transcribe interaction for you (although it might seem tempting) – and also why you will in the end be able to explain to others exactly how riders and trainers do (or do not) relate to the horse's actions and how they do (or do not) relate what and how they respond to biomechanical knowledge about the horses body.

VS: Earlier, you explained that data analysis is an iterative process. Could you tell us a bit more about it?

CL: There are two parts to this. The first relates to the need to stay open to what emerges from the data, rather than to stick to pre-analytical ideas about what the data will show you. Even though you of course start out with an idea of what it is that you want to study, once you engage in anal-

ysis you will probably realise that your original research questions need to be refined to make sense of what the data actually tell you about what is going on. As you delve deeper into the analysis, you may need to refine the research questions further to be able to answer them in a way that is both meaningful and true to the data.

The second relates to the practical work of moving from a set of recordings to transcripts of these recordings (or rather, parts of them). This process can be divided in several steps. Engaging in these steps equals engaging in analysis of your data.

1. The first step is to get acquainted with the data and create an overview of your recordings

I find it useful to create a document for each recorded interaction, where I note the basic facts of the recording (when, where, who etc) and, whilst watching the recording (this is one of the instances where an overview angle can be useful), note, in everyday language, what happens. You can also add your thoughts on the recorded interaction – or anything else that strikes you as interesting, strange, related to your research questions, or, not the least, anything you might need to investigate further in order to better understand what is happening. Throughout the years, I have experimented with analogue versions as well as digital ones.
Both have their advantages and shortcomings. In an analogue video log, you can add sketches and various kinds of markings that help you organise your thoughts, and you can work on it anywhere. In the digital one, you can add to and expand your descriptions as you wish. You can also use the search function to find certain key works. Regardless of what type you choose, make certain that you organise and store your video logs in such a fashion that you can move from recording to video log and back again without trouble, as patterns emerging as you work your way through the recordings will at times make you want to return to earlier video logs to add notes. To save yourself from having to spend hours trying to locate the relevant part of a recording, make sure that you note time codes at least once every minute!

2. The second step is to gather clips from the recordings and excerpts from the video logs in collections.

Once you have completed video logs for all your recordings, you can begin the next iteration of your analysis. Depending on your research questions and the ideas you generated when creating the video logs, you can create "collections" of examples relating to the patterns that emerge. These collections consist of clips from the recordings. My advice is to be generous in what you include in each clip (not only the most interesting seconds, but rather a small section of what comes before and after). It may also pay off to add clips that seem to contradict your first impression. These collections of clips will be your core sets of data, as it is the recordings that are the primary data source, not the transcripts. You will need to

return to the recordings later in the analytical process, so make sure that you name and store them in a logical fashion.

3. The third step is to transcribe the clips

The collections of clips can now be transcribed. Note that the transcriptions can be organised in different ways, and that the level of detail can vary widely. You can decide to follow established conventions for the transcriptions or establish your own convention (as long as you construct some kind of key and represent various aspects of the interaction in the same way across the collections of clips). The files with the transcriptions should be named in a similar way as the clips they represent.

Transcriptions can be divided into three broad categories, depending on their purpose: base transcriptions, analytical transcriptions and publication transcriptions. A base transcription is the rough notation of the actions each participant engages in as they unfold in the clip. In this first version of a transcription, it is useful to use automated line numbering (one number for each line) to allow for references to specific parts of the interaction. The base transcription, or parts of it, can be further refined until it makes reasonable justice to the interaction as it unfolds without making it impossible to navigate the interaction throughout the clip. The point of the base transcription is to lay the foundation for the next step, and once the base transcription is completed, it might be wise to revisit your research questions for guidance on how to focus the further analysis and proceed with the construction of the analytical transcriptions. These are the result of a considerably more detailed re-transcription of the clips, where you try to represent the unfolding interaction in as much detail as possible. You might find that you will need to include stills from the recording, or to represent how the participants move around in relation to each other in some way. It all depends on your research questions! This is where you must become creative whilst staying true to the messy, thick reality of the interaction as it was caught by your camera(s). It might not be necessary to re-transcribe every clip in every collection – the point of the analytical transcript is to work out the answers to your research questions without overlooking anything that you would miss if not taking seriously the task of working through the clip over and over again. Once you have managed to untangle all the details and validated the relation between recording and transcription through discussions with colleagues, it is time to consider what should be included in the publication transcription. This is the version of the transcribed clips that you will include in the publication reporting on the results of your analysis. The publication transcription may be quite similar to your analytical transcription, but it is likely that a somewhat reduced version might make it easier for someone who is not familiar with the setting or with reading highly detailed transcriptions to follow your argument in the publication. When writing up the text reporting on your results, you will also need to add a "gloss" to each transcript, i.e. an explanation in plain language of what is going on, to guide the reader's

understanding of the transcription. To me, no specific way of transcribing is better than any other – what works best can vary between projects. However, the choice of what to include in publication transcription, and what conventions to use (or ignore) may have repercussions on where you can publish your work. In certain fields, a manuscript that does not respect the traditions of that field may result in rejections. It is therefore a good idea to consider such expectations where the manuscript will be submitted when deciding what conventions to use for the publication transcription.

VS: The method is very time-consuming. What is its added value for the study of human-animal interactions, compared to traditional ethnography?

CL: It provides a peek hole into the messiness of what is actually going on as compared to what we humans believe is going on. If you interview people, they tend to sound more coherent than they are, they have expectations, and their perception may be biased. Of course, the researcher, especially if (s)he is is familiar with the settings where the data are gathered will also carry with her such preconceived ideas. The analysis must thus be approached with care to avoid overinterpretation or bias based on the transcriber's pre-understandings, and the transcriptions should be checked with colleagues in a structured manner to ensure some degree of inter-observer reliability. But when done correctly, multimodal interspecies interaction analysis can be considered neutral to the extent that this is possible. The observance of ethnomethodological indifference provides a reasonably unbiased albeit not naïve analyses. Ethnomethodological indifference is the policy of deliberate agnosticism, or indifference, towards the dictates, prejudices, methods and practices of sociological analysis as it is traditionally conceived by those of us who do not identify as structuralists. But ethnomethodological indifference is of course not the same as indifference to the problems inherent to power dynamics or the asymmetries of the social order. Indeed, I would argue that by adhering to ethnomethodological indifference, one can make even stronger claims about the relation between for instance interactional structures and power dynamics, inequalities and domination than I think you can if you start out explicitly looking for them. I know that it is impossible to completely ignore what we know about the relations between humans and animals, but I still believe that one must commit to being open to what actually is in the data, and to stay with the emerging patterns until they start to make sense from an emic perspective. And I believe that the best way to do so is to strive for ethnomethodological indifference, impossible as though it may be to achieve it at all points. But then, I am a die-hard empiricist…

VS: Would you say then that the multimodal analysis of interspecies interactions is an appropriate methodological tool for the critical animal studies?

CL: As multimodal interspecies interaction analysis is a data-driven research method that acknowledges the messiness of the world and that tries to take the members perspective on what is going on, I would say that it is

an excellent method also for critical animal studies. If one is interested in how societal norms and actual practices are interrelated, I can think of no better place to start than the close, systematic scrutiny of real interactions across the species divides.

VS: I have a last question, which will bring us back to what is discussed in this special issue. If you wanted to investigate the domination that human beings are imposing on animals, how would you proceed? Do you think that multimodal methods can be useful in these circumstances? I mean, is "domination" something that can be described? I'm not talking about violence here, but about domination, a situation that seems to have more to do with the broader context (i.e. who control the resources) than the interactions themselves. Let's suppose that you want to investigate this in, for example, a riding school: how do you proceed?

CL: Certainly multimodal interaction analyses can be useful to understand how domination is constructed, reinforced, challenged, and achieved again and again. I truly believe that what we call domination is not solely a question of structural aspects such as who controls the resources, but rather, following Berger & Luckmann (1966), very much a matter of a social construction that we create, re-create, question and challenge, and that we can teach to others.

Consequently, if one would want to better understand how domination is "made" between humans and horses, one could look for instance for how the subtle art of making a horse do what you want it to do in the stable, or in the riding arena and so on, is executed in everyday situations – or how it is taught to beginners by an instructor. We are socialised into this as much as into everything else. One might ask "How do the humans engaging with horses handle the fact that horses do not necessarily share their ideas about what is necessary at a given moment in time" (like succumbing to a bodily examination by a veterinarian) or what is the right thing to do right now (like accepting to have one's body cleaned?) Horses are not unlike 3-year-old children, aging relatives and others that we think we have a right to "handle" rather than negotiate with when it comes to things such as cooperating with a doctor ("standing for the vet"), getting cleaned, getting dressed and ready to go out etc. Or one might ask what happens if a horse, or a 3-year-old child, insists on not passing that dangerous place where for sure sabre-toothed tigers or other scary creatures reside? Is domination not also a question of who gets the last say about such things? And can we not perhaps discuss the various ways we use to get horses/3-year-olds to willingly accept, unwillingly succumb to, or violently oppose, our plans, ideas and wishes in terms of, for instance, domination strategies or practices? And even divide those strategies or practices into categories and discuss them in relation to for instance theories from psychology, ethology or sociology? I think we can, and I think we should. And I think the best way to uncover such strategies and practices is to study the interaction as it unfolds in real time and untangle our multimodal interaction in

all its minute details, so that we can begin to properly understand how we *do* domination across species boundaries.

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