**Conversational Storytelling Research Methods:**

**Cats, Dogs, and Humans in Pet Capitalism**

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**Abstract**

This essay is about methods of interpretation of conversational storytelling. By doing what Donna Haraway calls ‘multispecies storytelling’ research involving humans, dogs, and various animal organizations, we use storytelling to study what we call ‘pet capitalism’. We address the problems of interpreting story fragments in multispecies storytelling conversations in order to explore the Tamara-Land of organizational contexts of animal organizations within pet capitalism. We explore what Linda Hitchin calls ‘untold stories’, such as the euthanasia consequences of pet capitalism. We examine what those untold stories tell us about the animal-human-organization’s resistance to being researched as pet capitalism. We apply Jean Paul Sartre’s existentialism and Harold Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology to the problem of intersubjectivity. Finally, we discuss implications of our explorations for the intersubjectivity of storytelling conversations which have unstoryable and unnarrativizable aspects of the multispecies storytelling of pet capitalism.

**Key Words:** Pet capitalism, antenarrative, conversational storytelling, ethnomethodology, unstoryable, unnarrativizable

**Introduction**

Our purpose is to research conversational storytelling using ‘multispecies storytelling’ (Haraway, 2016). Our research site is a conversation between a puppy, a dog, a cat, and a husband and wife, who are also co-authors of this essay, as well as storytelling researchers. These characters are engaged in ‘conversational storytelling’, the subject of a book recently accepted for publication (Boje & Rosile, *in press*). In

conversational storytelling, we assume that truth is co-created between the subjects. We call this aspect “intersubjectivity.” With our case example of intersubjective multispecies conversational storytelling, we contribute to the journal’s ongoing discussion of storytelling research methods (Hartley, 2015; Goode, 2018; Ryder & Vogeley, 2018).

You may be wondering what multi-species storytelling conversations (puppy, dog, cat, and human language mingling within cross-species dramaturgy) has to do with organizations and organizational communication? Everything! A puppy mill, an animal shelter, pet food manufacturers, the Animal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and so on, are organizations that communicate to human consumers about animals and are concerned about animal welfare (Buddle, Bray & Ankeny, 2018). In fact, these organizations all participate in what we call ‘pet capitalism’. This includes shelters and the ASPCA dealing with the externalities of puppy mills, and owners who abandon their animals to urban streets or to a rural farm.

**What is Pet Capitalism?** We did not find the term ‘pet capitalism’ in any Google Scholar search of articles and books, except one for DeMello (2012) showing its table of contents, but ‘pet capitalism’ is not actually there, nor in its index, nor in our search of the book. There are, however, enough critiques of capitalism in DeMello’s book about pet ownership under capitalism, to develop the concept of ‘pet capitalism.’

In pet capitalism, human society relies heavily on the exploitation of animals to serve human needs. Much of pet capitalism is within a human-animal society which is structured such that humans typically dominate interactions with non-human animals, and where pets are dualize from livestock. Livestock is objectified, while pets are fetishized. This way people (non-vegans) can eat livestock (which they do not name), while keeping pets, which they do name. Also, ironically, pets can eat ‘pet food’ made from nameless livestock.

Consider the pet fetishism of pet clothing. On Halloween, pets are dressed in Spiderman, or Princess, or a Little Maid costume. This is one of the mediums of pet capitalism, in a narrative of virtual pet capitalism. Pet capitalism fits seamlessly into late modern neoliberal capitalism, because we need recovery time in pet relationships from the drudgery of the broader capitalism. Pet capitalism is part of the story of stuff, and the accumulation of more stuff for landfill disposal in late modern neoliberal capitalism. There is also an untold story (Hitchin, 2015) by the media, involving the underreporting of tainted chicken or beef or fish in the pet food supply chain.

There are fragments of ‘pet capitalism’ mentioned in various non-scholarly media sources. For example, one that went viral was about how capitalism is stealing our life world:

“40 yours of my workweek + recovery time. My education choices. Where I can live. Whether I own a pet. Capitalism limits the wonderful things I could do in my life” and “customizing HTML on my Neopets shop page for virtual pet capitalism.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

According to the Pet Products Manufacturing Association (APPMA), the percentage of the American population keeping pets jumped from 46% in 2008 to 68% in 2009. Americans spend $45 billion on pet food, pet toys, pet clothing, and pet travel paraphernalia (DeMello, 2012: 47). These numbers have likely increased since then.

***Language Matters in Pet Capitalism***Workers in pet shelters deem the many volunteers as “untrained, unprofessional, and unaware of the realities of working in a shelter and the hard realities of, and need for, euthanasia” (DeMello, 2012: 223). Recently, in the U.K., animal lovers have stopped calling them ‘pets’, claiming ‘pet’ is an insulting word, and rebranding them as ‘companion animals’.[[2]](#footnote-2)

***The Untold Stories of Euthanasia in Pet Capitalism***The people-pet relationship is part of pet capitalism discourse, in the “pet breeding and -sellers industries” that are “laxly regulated and … the public remains uninformed about their practices, so that their profits will not be reduced” (DeMello, 2012: 273). This includes the exotic pet industry, and the animal companion industries. There is now a surplus of animal companions in the U.S., a surplus beyond the adoptable, which results in euthanasia or death by the pet-abusers (DeMello, 2012: 441, 443). In sum, living with a pet is romantic narrative of pet-people relationships that has a dark, unstoried side: the realities of pet capitalism. With Petco and PetSmart (big box stores) across the U.S., pet capitalism is a $45 billion dollar industry in the U.S. alone, including pets bought and sold, and all that pet stuff for sale (DeMello, 2012: 147). We observe “Americans indifferent to animal pain and suffering”, but yet “people would never eat *their own pet*” (DeMello, 2012: 149, 152).

Pet capitalism includes the care and feeding, the clothing and toys, and the medical treatment of pets, and then the disposing of millions of pets each year (DeMello, 2012: 152). Pets have become another animal species, with a history of over 3,000 years of pet breeding. Middle class pet keeping is part of American society, and its speciesism. “In capitalism, animals are to be exploited” (DeMello, 2012: 273). Animals are considered as resources, factors of production, bred in factory farms, and slaughtered for food, including the pet food that is made from animals and fed to pets (DeMello, 2012: 273-277).

The multispecies storytelling transcript we will analyze here is part of a larger study of humans and animals interacting with various organizations in animal capitalism. A full review of pet capitalism is beyond the scope of this article, but it is part of our overall project.

Next we will give some background to ‘what is multispecies storytelling’ and ‘what is conversational storytelling’, and then proceed to explore an instructive case to demonstrate multispecies conversational storytelling. We conclude with a discussion of existential and ontological foundations these types of storytelling, and make some claims about their application to communication studies.

***What is multispecies storytelling*** Donna Haraway (2018) is concerned that with global warming, species are headed for extinction. Haraway (2016: 5) describes ‘multispecies storytelling’ as being “about recuperation in complex histories that are as full of dying as living, as full of endings, even genocides, as beginnings”.To do that we will have to let the animals speak for themselves, and perhaps even transcribe their conversations with humans. For example, Cuddlebear (our year-old Blue Heeler) each morning puts his upper torso on David’s lap-type writing desk, and then edges his paws towards his keyboard. There is this bodily communication and breathing, with some movements. This is their morning ritual, his way of saying good morning.

In the face of unrelenting climate change, animals are multispecies players, with different species affected in different ways. We need research attuned to the variety of future conditions needed for their flourishing on ‘Terrapolis’ in multispecies becoming. For this we need to be able to fabulate in order to induce a transformation in our understanding of how human (& organization) activities have consequences for the mass multispecies extinctions happening (p. 31). We need to start now “cultivating multispecies response-ability” (p. 132).

***What is intersubjectivity in conversational storytelling?*** In conversational storytelling, intersubjectivity is defined here as a process of shared meaning making. It is treated here as an aspect of existentialism: truth is relative to taken-for-granted, everyday practices of agreement within particular locations in Tamara-Land (Boje, 1995).

The term Tamara-Land refers to the Tamara play, which was staged in a huge mansion. Characters were spread throughout the mansion, and action occurred in many rooms simultaneously. Audience members had to choose which characters and which plot lines to follow, so that the play was potentially different for every audience member.

Just as with every room in Tamara-Land, in so-called real life, the varied conversations from room-to-room, building-to-building, organization-to-organization, and nation-to-nation, reflects how each conversational storytelling community makes its own agreements in an ensemble of relationships. Intersubjectivity is a precondition of storytelling communication. In conversational storytelling, meanings are negotiated between two or more conversationalists in order to transcend their particular limits and co-create.

In studying conversations, Harold Garfinkel (1967: 25-26) asked his students to write down what was actually said (*the signs*) in the left column, and what the conversationalists were actually telling/saying about (*the referents*) in the right column. In ethnomethodology, the theory is our conversations are sketchy, partial, incomplete [story] fragments that conceal and mask the corresponding context, missing the *grounding* that is the intersubjectively intended meaning to the conversationalists. For example, someone says “you know how he is.” The shared meaning is unspoken.

One way to investigate intersubjectivity in conversational storytelling is to trace the antenarrating. Antenarrative is a term coined by Boje (2001) and its initial meaning was what is *before* story and narrative, as well as what are the *bets* on the future. As antenarrative theory and method developed, other notions were added: the *beneath, between, beyond,* and *becoming*. The most recent versions of antenarrative theory address the relations between ‘*abstracting*’ common to narrative-counternarrative dialectics, and the *‘grounding’* of a living story dialogism (rather than dialectics), in which one story interrupts another, situated in community and nature. Temporally, the new renditions of antenarrative theory are about the relation between *‘rehistoricizing*’ multiple histories, and the ‘*futuring*’ of many futures.

**Antenarrating in Conversational Storytelling Research**

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**Figure 1: Adapted from Boje (2014) except for item 4, Beyond; Larsen, Brunn, & Boje (*in press*) ‘True Storytelling’ and theorizing the ‘Beyond’ by Boje and Jorgenson (*in review*).**

***Abstracting*** is what monological narratives tend to do (Bakhtin, 1981; Boje, 2008) referring to generalizations or universals.

***Grounding*** is what ‘living story’ relationality tends to do, in the places and times, in-the-middle of their telling (Boje, 2001). In the transcript example that follows, spoken or gesture ‘signs’ are indicated in left column as living story fragments, to be unpacked, along with contextual referents in the right column of intersubjective meanings.

***Rehistoricizing*** is what happens when we engage in after-the-fact theorizing to explain surprises emerging in the present, or when plans are made to justify continuing a business-as-usual future, or to justify some divergent pathway in a different scenario (bet) of the future (Boje, 2011, 2014, 2019a). Look at rehistoricizing signs in the left column, which get unpacked in the right column.

***Futuring*** occurs in preparing in advance to promote some alternate future into being, with forecaring for its becoming manifest, by doing things presently in anticipation of the desired future (Boje, 2012). Note the futuring fragments in the left column, and unpack them in the right column.

There are six B’s *of antenarrating* to investigate and trace antecedent conversational storytelling processes, which have been linked to various of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) *fore*-notions (Boje, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019a): before, beneath, between, beyond, bets, and becoming. Each is explained below.

1. **Before (forehaving):** Interpretation “grounded in something we have in advance” forehaving [*Vorhabe*] (Heidegger, 1927/1962: section 150)
2. **Beneath (foreconcepting):** Interpreting “grounded in something we grasp in advance-in a fore-conception” (Heidegger, 1927/1962: section 150)
3. **Between (forestructuring):** Makes “existential-ontological connection” to forestructure that “is not to be broken up into pieces” and projects its futural possibility of involvements (Heidegger, 1927/1962: section 151)
4. **Beyond (foregrasping):** It is “grounded in something we grasp in advance” (# 150) existentially (# 162). It is a foregrasping of the beyond, an intuitive sensemaking by embodiment, that can be *antenarratively-*antecedent to story or narrative, and perhaps never be storyable or narratable, unrecorded in the left and the right hand columns. Grasping thematically is not the same as grasping ontologically in their existential Being (Heidegger, 1927/1962: section 94, 145, 150, 162).
5. **Bets (foresight):** foresight [*Vorsicht*] “interpretation is grounded in something we see in advance” foresightedly (Heidegger, 1962: section 80, & 250).
6. **Becoming (forecaring):** Caring in advance, in its becoming is the main thesis of Heidegger’s (1927/1962) *Being and Time*.

A full rendition of antenarrative theory is beyond the scope and page limits of this article. For more on the 6 B’s in the context of antenarrative please see these works: (Boje, 2014; Boje, 2019a; Boje, 2019b; Boje, Gergerich, & Svane, 2016; Boje, Svane, & Gergerich, 2016; Svane & Boje, 2015; Svane, Boje, Gergerich, 2015; Svane, Gergerich, & Boje, 2017; Boje & Sanchez, 2019a, 2019b).

Note that forecaring can be for good or evil. A corporation in reputational trouble can do greenwashing to create some fake narratives of its greenness. Another struggling enterprise can keep self-correcting its path until it finds its ethical compass. Antenarrative is a relational-process-ontology inquiry (Boje, 2019b). We mention the prospective nature of forecaring to demonstrate the beginning stages of a ‘self-correcting’ storytelling science analysis (Boje & Rosile*, in press*) in the situation of multispecies storytelling conversation and its analysis. We see 4 phases of this self-correcting storytelling science, as depicted in Figure 2. We explain these phases next.



**Figure 2: Phases of Self-Correcting ‘storytelling science’** (adapted from Boje & Rosile*, in press*)

**Phase 1**: It begins with an autoethnographic self-reflexivity on the Abductions-Inductions-Deductions triadic cycle of Charles Sanders Peirce (1931/1960). Peirce (1931/1960: Volume 5 section 580, hereafter abbreviated as 5.580) actually uses the term “self-correcting effect of the induction.” That said, induction is only one part of the abduction-induction-deduction (A-I-D) triad that Peirce is developing in his writing.

***Abduction-Induction-Deduction (A-I-D) Triad Definitions*** Abductions are ‘flashes of insight’, what Peirce (1931/1960: 2.515, 2.624) calls “an argument or supposition that assumes it was a case of a general rule and of results that still needs actual inquiry”, or assumptions that need to get checked out by induction and deduction. Induction “generalizes from a number of cases and results, of which something is true, to infer the same rule for the whole population” (Peirce, 1931/1960: 2.624). Deduction, “belongs to a general class of result by theory-arguments that in the long run tend toward the truth of case results” (Peirce, 1931/1960: 2.266). For Karl Popper, what Peirce calls self-correcting is termed the ‘trial and error’ of the scientific method, so we arrive closer to the truth (Popper, 1963: 318). Abduction-Induction-Deduction (A-I-D) triadics is “to bring the predictions to the test” (Peirce, 193/1960: 7.115). Quasi-experiment, as Peirce defines it in footnote to 7.115, is “the entire operation eight of producing or of searching out a state of things to which the conditional predictions deduced from hypothesis shall be applicable and of noting how far the prediction is fulfilled.”

Self-correcting ‘storytelling science’ conversational interviews involve enacting from 1 to 4 tests, as needed, to attempt to question or falsify one’s own theory and assumptions:

1. Refutation test of *self-reflexivity, self-conversations,* or in autoethnography, to question assumptions,

2. Storytelling *conversations with others*,

3. U*nderstanding the science and processes of Nature*, and

4. D*oing experiments and practice interventions to get closer to the grounded situation*.

We will proceed by setting the context in Phase I with an autoethnographic multispecies account, and then do the beginning of Phase 2 conversational storytelling analysis, and then some preliminary work in Phase 3, science questions. Phase 4 has yet to happen, and it is something we plan to do.

***Phase 1: Setting the Context of Reflexivity*:** To set the context for the text we will analyze, we will introduce some other characters of our pet ethnography. Affecting our current story is the history of our previous pets at our small ranch in Las Cruces. We start our story with Tiger, our cat.

Tiger is an all-white Turkish Angora-type cat. He just showed up during the first year we were living at our horse farm in New Mexico. He would not leave for over a week despite Grace Ann’s mild efforts to discourage him. We have seen Tiger, at about 12 pounds, attacking dogs weighing over 50 pounds, training them to respect cats as a species clearly superior to dogs. Multispecies storytelling is all around Tiger’s life story. Once a larger yellow Labrador named Sadie, who often visited with our horse trainer, chased Tiger through the barn. The next visit, Tiger lurked on top of a stack of hay bales, and when the Sadie passed, Tiger leapt, digging all four claws into Sadie’s back. Tiger rode Sadie like a bucking bronco, for the longest time. Sadie never bothered Tiger again.

About a year after Tiger’s arrival, our first dog showed up. Sparky, a year-old Catahoula-type dog, was apparently abandoned near our ranch. Perhaps his abandonment had to do with his tail that had a permanent kink as if from being caught in a car door, or perhaps he was abandoned because Sparky was deaf. We discovered his deafness after two days of thinking he was a bit stupid as well as being a very sound sleeper—an interesting example of a communication failure. Sparky was always wary of Tiger, and kept out of Tiger’s way. At their first meeting, Tiger sunk both claws in Sparky’s snout. That was all it took for this dog, who was bred to be an aggressive cattle-herding dog, to learn some respect. About 3 years after Sparky came, we found Honey, a boxer-mix, abandoned near us. After trying unsuccessfully to find her owner, we adopted her too.

For each abandoned animal, adoption meant a vet visit, rabies and other shots, neutering surgery, microchipping, and tending to any other health needs they had. This usually resulted in a rather hefty vet bill of several hundreds of dollars. Thus, in addition to loving these adorable little critters, we were quite literally invested in these adopted pets.

Because Honey came to us at the tender age of only 12 weeks, Tiger taught Honey to wrestle and play with him. Sparky never tried to join this play. Tiger was permitted go into the garage, outside the fencing, and into the cat’s special room, all places prohibited to the dogs. Tiger would torment Sparky and Honey by making sure they saw him go where they could not, giving an insouciant flick of his fluffy white tail as he entered the forbidden territories.

Sparky became ill around 11 years of age, and the vet put him to sleep in our arms at home. Six months later, we heard though friends about a nice dog at a shelter who needed a home. Honey seemed over her grieving for Sparky and ready for a new friend, so we took her with us to meet this dog in El Paso, about an hour’s drive away from us.

We were told that this female appeared to be a pure German Short-Haired Pointer. She was likely abandoned by owners of a puppy mill either in El Paso or just across the border in Mexico. She had to have been only recently taken from her babies, as her teats were swollen and her tummy dragged almost to the ground. She had a terrible odor, that we ignored. They estimated she was 2 years old, which would be 14 in human years, a young teenage mother. She seemed sad to us, as if she missed her babies. Diane, the woman at the shelter, said she just always looked terrified and she shook all day long.

Grace Ann picked up the trembling dog and hugged her and spoke soothingly until she seemed a bit calmer. Then she put the dog in David’s arms and the dog burrowed under David’s arm and soon stopped shaking. Diane said she had not seen her stop shaking with any other visitors before us.

Then we brought Honey out on a leash and over to new dog. The two dogs sniffed each other in all the right places, and did so with caution and respect, in a ritual known only to them. Apparently, they would get along. Within the hour, we were on our way home with the two dogs, Honey in the back seat, but the new dog stayed on David’s lap the whole hour-long trip home. Her markings were much like Sparky’s, white with darker spots, so David named her Sparkles. She quickly overcame her fear and became happy and loving. She accepted Honey as the dominant “big sister” and we told Sparkles she was the little sister and needed to listen to Honey. Honey was about 52 pounds to Sparkles’ 42 pounds.

When Honey was about 12 she became ill over Christmas. We again had the pet hospice vet, and Honey died in Grace Ann’s arms with David present on a skype call due to being snowed in at his son’s house in New Jersey. That left Sparkles feeling lonely, and getting so desperate for a playmate that we could see her trying to get Tiger to chase her, which he did a few times. But at age 15, Tiger was beyond wrestling with big dogs, so we were on the alert for a new companion for Sparkles.

A few months later our horse trainer told us she adopted a nice Blue Heeler-type due to be put to sleep the next day. She cried at the sight of this dog on the internet, and took him home to join her two female dogs. It was a few weeks after that when our trainer told us she had adopted this dog and told us that he was very nice. She said that there was a brother just like him, who might be good for us. The brother was taken by a dog rescue group in Roswell (yes, the infamous UFO-Roswell), and still needed a home. He was about 2 hours away from us. We contacted the shelter, and arranged for volunteers there to meet us half way, in a Home Depot parking lot in Alamogordo. An energetic one-year-old, the new puppy seemed a bit hyper, anxious, but friendly, as he tried to lick our faces then settled for licking our hands the instant he met us.

We got home and David took Sparkles out into the dessert across from our place. Grace Ann brought the new dog. When they caught sight of each other they were both so terrified and panicked and each tried to get away from us and from each other. Eventually they reluctantly and only briefly sniffed each other. In the early days, they would lie about 10 feet apart from each other in our large fenced-in yard. Within a few days they were lying within a foot of each other.

The new dog so much wants to be in touch with our bodies that we call him CuddleBear. He is about a year old, has been with us a few weeks at this writing, and has already recovered from his neutering surgery. He and Sparkles have begun to wrestle and play, and they lick each other’s faces, which many dog people see as a sign of affection between dogs.

Bear is fascinated by the cat, but wisely cautious, still sorting out his relationship to Tiger. We plan to take him to visit his brother later this week. That should be interesting! How will they react to each other? Grace Ann has had horses who were separated for many years, then clearly overjoyed when they were reunited.

To explore multispecies storytelling, we turn to actual conversation, and its various analyses.

***Phase 2: Conversational [Multispecies] Storytelling:*** We can apply ethnomethodology and existentialism to conversational storytelling. The method is as follows: In the left column, write literally and exactly what was said (the utterances). In the right column write the corresponding indexicals (referents) to the context. Find the grounding to obtain clarity, coherence, and accuracy in the claims, warrants, and so on, by repairing the ambiguity so that a third party not privy to the conversation or to the context, can understand what is going on. Telling the story truely and honestly in what we call ‘True Storytelling’ (Larsen, Bruun, & Boje, *in press*) is progressively accomplished by multiple rounds, the “branching of relevant matters” (Garfinkel, 1967: 26) in their *multiplicity* by getting at more *grounding* features of context of the processes of *spacetimemattering* in the evolving and emerging *futuring* *environs*. We offer an example to explain these concepts by demonstrating how they work.

Our example is the day the new puppy CuddleBear came into our home. You will see that we are engaged in conversational storytelling, *in situ*. We are also doing what we call ‘self-correcting’ of our ‘together-telling’ to work out *claims* and solutions to a problem we have identified (getting CuddleBear to eat his food and not Sparkles’ food). We are making ‘*warrants*’ about what is the problem, trying different solutions, planning, and making bets on the future. It seems like an everyday experience, to bring a new puppy home home and feed him, yet it is surprisingly complicated at first. We must all learn to relate to our multispecies family members.

As we transcribe this recorded conversation for research purposes, you will see words and actions in the left hand column. In the right hand column you will see an explanation of context, of what the utterances mean to those in the conversation. You will also see words in parentheses which are *in italics*. These words are the terms which refer to the antenarrative and conversational storytelling analytic concepts which we are applying to the utterances and actions. For example, you will see the word “before” as *(Before)* and rehistoricizing as *(rehistorcizing).* We will unpack the ‘*you knows*’ and ‘*et ceteras*’ which are actually stated or implied in the left hand column, and unpack their ‘untold story’ (Hitchin, 2015) of what they mean, their referents, in the right hand column.

**Table 1: What’s Actually Said and What’s Storytelling Unsaid, Taken-for-granted**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What They Actually Said (verbatim)?** | **What They Are Telling About (context)?** |
| Sound of footsteps  David: Ok, how can I help you? (Softly asked)  Grace Ann: I’m going to give him his second. So that’s his (points to one plastic tub)  David: OK  Grace Ann: And there’s a bowl, outside for now [more footsteps; sound of food being poured into the bowl] See that bowl there  David: OK?  Grace Ann: We keep them separate (scuffling sound) that’s all right, let him go, he’s going to go with you.  Grace Ann: Sparkles, Sparkles. Good girl. That’s a girl.  David: Here you go. Here you go. Come on. Come here. Come here. Here you go (sound of food being poured into the bowl outside). There it’s in your bowl, for now. We’re outside. Hi Rusty. Here Rusty. Rusty here. Come on….. Maybe some cat food?  Grace Ann: No he’s just worried he’s missing something (shuffling sounds). Eeh, Eeh, OK, come on sweetheart. Eeh, Eeh, No! (in louder voice). Come (Kiss-y noise, Kiss-y noise, and in softer voice) Yeah (sound of bowl moving) Yeah that’s a good boy. Yeah that’s a good boy (sound of food moving around bowl) That’s a good boy, good boy, good boy. See how he’s scared of somebody else taking his food.  David: See how he spit it out.  Grace Ann: Did he spit it out?  David: Yeah, but then he took it in again.  Grace Ann: Kiss, Kiss (clucking sound) Come.  Rusty: Sound of rapid breathing.  Grace Ann: There you go. There you go. That’s a good boy. Come on (clucking sound, and again clucking sound). Come on.  David: Do you think we’ll need the yogurt?  Grace Ann: No  David: Or cat food?  Grace Ann: If he just settles down, then he’ll eat it. Here you go. Here you go (in soft voice with inflection at end, each time) Good fella. Good fella. Oh, there.  David: Oh, you were right.  Grace Ann: Good boy. Good boy, little sweetheart. Good boy. Good boy. Good boy.  Rusty: (Sound of eating, and bowl moving along cement for 1.5 seconds)  Grace Ann: There you go. There you go. Yes.  Rusty: (Sound of eating, and bowl moving less along cement now and again, for about 7 seconds) | David is in his home office in Las Cruces  Grace Ann walks in the office, interrupting David’s usual writing, with Sparkles who usually eats there in that office. The new puppy from the Rescue Shelter is about to get first meal in our home (*Before*). The new dog gets his food second to reinforce to the old dog that she is now the senior dog, she knows the rules, and the new dog should respect her and follow her lead  David agreeing, to show he has heard. There is history here (*Before*), since it is about how Sparky and Honey had been fed in separate rooms before Sparky died. Then Honey was alone, and then later when Sparkles came, Honey became top dog and was fed first. After Honey was gone, Sparkles was alone until the new male puppy was adopted. Now Sparkles is top dog and gets to eat first, and the new puppy is second in rank. This is (*Rehistoricizing)* the dog-to-dog relationship.  (*Futurin*g) Giving her plan (*Foretelling bets on the future*) for how the feeding will be done. (*Grounding)* David is to feed Sparkles in his office. Grace Ann points to Sparkles bowl, in his office.  David indicates agreement, but more than that is getting communicated. David is inviting more input to resolve confusion.  Grace Ann explains the plan (*Futuring)*, while David (still not actively listening) anticipates (*bets on the future, wrongly*) he is staying in his office, but that’s not right. David now gets it, he’s going with new puppy, outside. Better to listen than to jump ahead is a lesson David has been learning slowly for 23 years (*Before*).  As David and the new puppy head to the bowl outside, Grace Ann feeds Sparkles, first. Grace Ann is the one who has decided that Sparkles is the top dog, and will be respected by feeding her first. Grace Ann also decides the time of feeding and the kind of food. She has choosen meat-based pet food, even though David and Grace Ann are vegan.  Rusty is not his final name (*Before-forehaving)*. There were several others including Snuggles, Cuddly, and finally we settled on CuddleBear. Rusty is very terrified on this his first day in his new place. We are being very gentle and patient. Rusty is not eating the dry dog food, and David knows we have canned moist cat food, perhaps, he’ll like it better, or it could be mixed with the dog pellets.  Grace Ann indicates she will calm him with puppy language (*Beneath-foreconcepts*), resulting in some minor movement by Rusty of food in the metal bowl. Lots of positive reinforcement statements, lots of “good boy’s” while we are outside, on the back patio, in a fenced yard, and Sparkles is indoors (she finished her food in about 11 seconds, as usual). The shelter volunteer in Roswell suggested using yogurt to help digestion and get them to eat at first. Just then, Rusty took some food back into his mouth.  The new puppy is still not eating—this method is not working too well.  David is questioning Grace Ann’s decision, and his suggestion of cat food is implying a question “Are you sure?”  Rusty is heard for first time on the tape. It is not a scared breathing, more about anticipation.  Grace Ann keeps encouraging with more foreconcepting, a kind of baby language.  Grace Ann does not agree  David tries again on cat food  Grace Ann reasserts her strategy, and carries it out.  Rusty is eating  Grace Ann keeps encouraging  Some sound of eating more intensely  Reinforcement  Finally, Rusty is settled down, more at home, less terrified and can focus on eating. |

Notice this is what Donna Haraway (2016) calls ‘multispecies storytelling’ by two dogs and two humans. There is also a cat, which helps train the dogs, but is not in this scene. This is not just species telling, there are important materialities that are agential (dog food, yogurt, cat food, metal dog dish, indoors, outdoors, and so on). We are transcribing the talk, as well as the ‘untold stories’ (Hitchin, 2015). We are doing the historiography, predicting the future, grounding the telling in embodiment, using some abstracting, using sounds that are before actual words, in puppy talk.

In doing the right column, there is ‘*ad hoc-ing’* going on, as an intersubjectivity feature of conversational storytelling, to secure conversational claims. *Ad hoc-ing* is a part of conversational storytelling in giving an account, making claims, and negotiating positioning in a relationship. So is ‘glossing’ over some system or process with a very terse referent to what is a whole storytelling of it. We are also *antenarrating*, working with *abstracting, rehistoricizing, grounding* and *futuring* (see where these are pointed out in the right column in the example above). Then of course, there are antenarrative processes (see next figure for antenarrating inquiry questions to ask yourself as you do your own analyses).

**Phase 3: Science Questions:** Several science disciplines confirm our emerging interspecies intersubjectivity theory, and others raise some refutation challenges or bring in auxiliary assumptions (Trafimow, 2012) we had not considered. Konecki (2007) treats linguistics and action as entangled ways of intersubjectivity in human and non-human animal interactions:

“Taking the role of the other gives the possibility of achieving the intersubjectivity proved not only by linguistic accounts, but also by non – linguistic activities directed to the partners of interaction. Action is an instrument of achieving intersubjectivity”

Taylor’s (2007) three-year ethnography of animal sanctuaries raises challenges to ‘animal personhood’ in the intersubjectivity between animals and humans (the animal workers). Animal personhood is furthered by the act of naming some of the cats and dogs in ways that reflect particular physical or psychological character elements. We, in our transcript, were naming the Blue Heeler ‘Rusty’, reflecting the coloring of his fur. We later changed his name to ‘CuddleBear’ to reflect his frequent cuddling closely with each of us, many times during the day. We have often told people that the all-white cat Tiger was named for his personality, not his looks. Personhood for shelter and for adopted animals can be done in a number of other ways too. For example, we need to explore in our research the notion that there are no inherently ‘bad’ animals. It was not CuddleBear, Tiger, Honey, Sparkles, or Sparky’s fault that their errant owners had abandoned each of them. Grace Ann also felt that early “potty accidents” were accidents and not intentional misbehaviors, thus attributing person-like intentions to our dogs. Another assumption to check out in additional research, is that we (the authors) are morally compelled, and ethically answerable to care for the animals we adopted, and perhaps more strongly compelled to care for those who are from homes with dysfunctional previous owners. There are many critics of animal domestication, and many criticisms of the duality of human-animals versus non-human animals, and even critiques of the domestic versus wild animals distinction (Debeau, 2018: 189-190):

“Creating artificial lines in the sand separates humans further from other beings—creating additional violent abstractions, as Marx would call them—and alienates humans further from possible intersubjective, interspecies relational communities… Marx’s distinction between humans and nonhumans leads to contra- dictions within his theory of intersubjective flourishing. Thus, reclaiming species-being as a truly intersubjective conception of flourishing mandates the consideration and political recognition of nonhuman lives. By doing so, the speciesist distinctions that currently underlie the concept of species-being can be corrected.”

We (authors) adopted Tiger, Sparkles, and Honey, who came to the ranch, joining the horses, in an *intersubjective,* *interspecies relational community*, for a variety of reasons. For Haraway (2008), however, domination is not the only storyline.

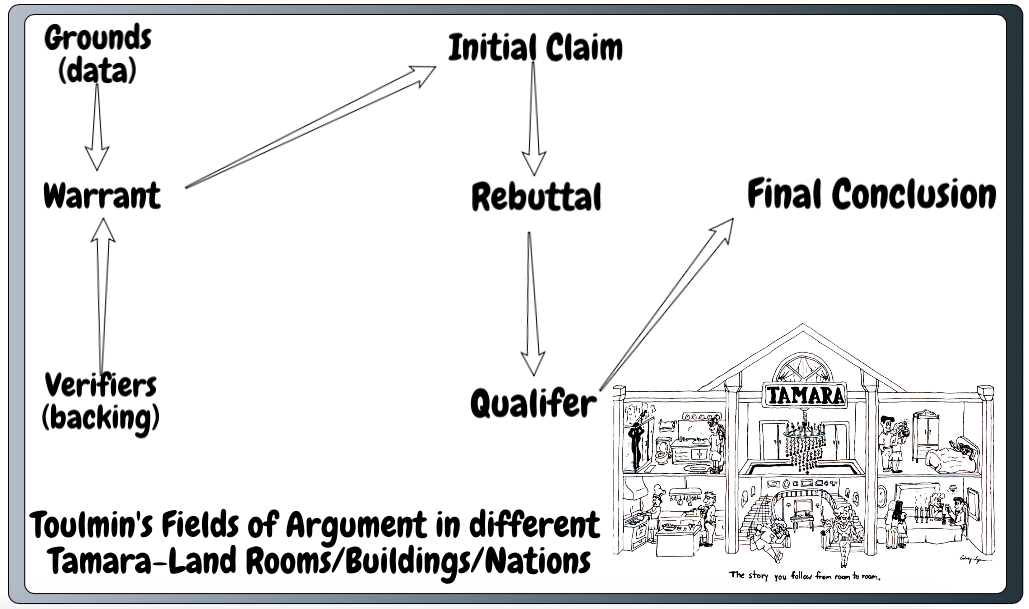
Pet statistics tell a multispecies-story, one relayed in social media accounts of homelessness and euthanasia (for which the literal meaning of the root words is ‘Good Death’), and part of pet capitalism. “Each year, approximately 1.5 million shelter animals are euthanized (670,000 dogs and 860,000 cats). The number of dogs and cats euthanized in U.S. shelters annually has declined from approximately 2.6 million in 2011.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Around 3.3 million dogs and 3.2 million cats enter U.S. animal shelters each year. There are about 1.6 million dogs and 1.6 million cats adopted each year. According to the ASPCA most of us learn about adoption by word of mouth. In underserved communities, the Humane Society estimates 87% are not spayed or neutered, and 77% have never seen at vet.[[4]](#footnote-4) Most pets are homeless. In the U.S. only one in ten pets born will find a home.[[5]](#footnote-5) There are about 3,500 animal shelters in the U.S. and 10,000 rescue groups and animal sanctuaries, trying to do something about animal homelessness and the 1.5 million animals euthanized each year. Shockingly, euthanizing is often done with outdated gas chambers, where conscious animals suffer convulsions and muscular spasms and are traumatized, while slowly dying a high stress death.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Globally, the story of euthanasia and neutering has some twists and turns in pet capitalism. In the U.S. the rate of shelter euthanasia is 5.6 per 1,000 people, while in UK its 0.2 and in Sweden, close to 0.[[7]](#footnote-7) Nor does Norway have a pet homelessness problem, even though castration of dogs is not permitted by their Animal Welfare Act (except for medical reasons). This ‘Scandinavian Paradox’ is explained by Scandinavians having way fewer dogs (20% in Denmark compared to 36% in U.S.). But the big difference is the Scandinavian countries have stricter laws, dogs must be under owners’ control at all times, and dogs are not permitted to run free. Perhaps Scandinavians are more law-abiding. How many times have you been jogging or cycling in the U.S. and been chased by other people’s dogs? New Zealand’ s SPCA euthanized just over half the animals it handled in 2007, but by 2010 it was down to 45% of the total, with a goal to reach 20%.[[8]](#footnote-8)

NZ has a feral cat problem that relates to multispecies storytelling. Feral cats (and owners abandoning or not controlling their cats’ outdoor hunting) are deemed responsible for the extinction of six endemic bird species and over 70 local subspecies, as well as depleting the populations of bird and lizard species.[[9]](#footnote-9) In Australia, there is a ‘No Kill’ movement, with a model called ‘Getting 2 Zero’ (G2Z). This effort is reducing euthanasia by promoting the adoption of cats and dogs, promoting community vet clinics supporting spay/neuter and microchip services, by legislation, and by rehoming strategies. All of this has resulted in the rates of ‘*Good Death’* (euthanasia) being reduced by more than half.[[10]](#footnote-10)

There is an important science question coming to light about the relationship of climate change (its global heating) and what pets eat in pet capitalism, and the pet industry carbon footprint.[[11]](#footnote-11) Pet food manufacturers’ meat-based products affect the paw [carbon] footprint (Rushforth & Moreau, 2013;Orkin, 2017). Estimates are “meat-based food Americans’ dogs and cats eat – and the waste those pets produce – generate the equivalent of about 64 million tons of carbon dioxide a year.” [[12]](#footnote-12) Our dogs and cats are contributing 30% of the US’s total global heating of the atmosphere.[[13]](#footnote-13)

***Phase 4***: We have not begun the testing and experimenting characteristic of Phase 4. However, we do plan to do some interventions to see how dogs, cats, and other animals can be cared for by animal organizations and by pet owners in ways that might reduce greenhouse gases that are due to pet capitalism during this epoch of global heat-up. Animal agriculture is responsible for 25% of the greenhouse gas emissions (64 million tons of CO2), with dog and cat pet ownership the largest share of that amount, and growing year by year.



**Figure 3: Argumentation in a Global Tamara-Land**

The above figure is a way to integrate graphically a Tamara-Land (Boje, 1995) scaled to the level of animal capitalism (Boje, 2017) that we are all within, and ways of doing argumentation based on Steven Toulmin’s (1972) and colleagues work (Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik, 1980). A brief example of such argumentation might be as follows.

**Grounds**: Evidence (data) is used to support claims

**Claims**: The [abductive] proposition the storyteller (arguer) asserts/supports in the storytelling

**Warrant**: Why the grounds support the claim

**Refutation:** (aka Possible Rebuttal): Refute storytelling argument by stating the circumstances the claim may not be true (or is fake)

**Verifiers** (Backing): Justifications for believing the grounds

**Qualifiers**: Statement of the strength of claims

**Fields of Argument**: In Tamara-Land there are different communities of storytellers (arguers) enacting unstated argumentative rules specific to that community. Moving from room to room, chasing storytellers and story fragments means you keep encountering different argumentative rules in the different rooms (buildings, countries).

Next, we apply this type of analysis to our quite preliminary abductions and theory argumentations about pet capitalism.

**A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated**

**Figure 4: Preliminary Argumentations about Pet Capitalism Consequences**

Our thesis is becoming clear: we cannot escape pet capitalism approaches to the privatization and commodification of domestic animals and their home and medical care. But we can become more aware of the dire hidden consequences of the growing pet industry and some of its unintended outcomes such as mass euthanasia. Every product and service of capitalism uses not just direct actual water, but the virtual water of energy, machines, supply chains, transport, etc. Animal and pet capitalism are growing despite efforts by the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the European Union’s Agenda 2030 to keep the average global temperature from eclipsing the target of a maximum increase of no more that 1.5 degrees Celsius since the industrial revolution.

**Conclusions**

We began the article focusing on “storytelling organizations” (Boje, 1991, 1995, 2008) and the “*ad-hoc-ing*” (Garfinkel, 1967: 21) done by organizational participants who manipulate the rules of the game and influence the story with the hidden, unspoken agreements which constitute intersubjectivity. So, for example, our dogs and cats have names and other aspects of personhood, while cows remain nameless and become steaks. We explored intersubjectivity analyses of the way the story told. We saw that the story which is told is only part of the story. Sometimes the most important parts, or even the largest parts of the story, may be those unspoken but understood through shared common understandings which we call intersubjectivities. It is these untold parts of the story we seek to uncover and analyze in the right hand column of our story inquiry. Storytelling occurs in the scenes of conversation in an intersubjective world where there is glossing of the “you know” type of indexicals, and retrospective-prospective sensemaking that no tape recorder or transcriptionist, or bystander researcher, can decode. When a person says “You know what it is like in summer around here!” we know there is a huge unspoken set of shared meanings between the parties to that conversation. We call those shared meanings intersubjectivities.

Researchers also do *ad-hoc-ing*, to make truth claims intelligible without, as Butler (2005) puts it, giving a [moral] account of oneself, even when it is initially unnarrativizable, or embodied antenarrative. There are fringes of untold stories left unspoken, yet so decisive and important, that they make all the difference in understanding what is happening. It is such unnoticed background expectancies in conversations that can make us aware of deep truths about organizationally situated conduct (Garfinkel, 1967: 34-37). There is no clock time coordinating “events-in-a-conversation” into “standard time” so we can decipher the “matter talked about”. To speak about such often unspoken truths is the domain of what some are calling True Storytelling (Larsen, Bruun, & Boje, *in press*).

Classical narrative, when dependent on the left hand column of actual utterances, deprives us access to the living storyability and antenarratability of sociohistorical processes left mostly unstoried and unnarratable, in the margins, in the right hand column of taken-for-granted intersubjectivity assumptions. Our focus has been on interspecies storytelling and storytelling conversations. We bring forward the unspoken stories of pet capitalism, especially crucial during this epoch of planetary heating. The unspoken problems from this untold story include the rising emissions of greenhouse gases from both fossil fuels and from deforestation to grow more food for animals, including pet animals, to consume.

We acknowledge our methods have limitations. We acknowledge our own complicity in pet capitalism, and that our abductions-inductions-deductions definitely need much more systematic research, which we invite you to do.

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