Street dogs at the intersection of colonialism and informality: 'Subaltern animism' as a posthuman critique of Indian cities

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Abstract

This paper argues that colonial biopolitics and informality co-produce a 'state of exception' for nonhuman animals in cities, based on the socio-political construct of a human/animal binary. This state is enacted by exceptionalising animals as not-persons, and humans as not-animals, and through urbanisation, a uniquely human claim on land. 'Colonial' is understood in an anthropocentric sense of (privileged) human imperialism over nonhumans and poor humans. Informality, a carefully produced condition that is exceptional to formal governance and planning, legitimises the view of animals (and poor humans) as 'trespassers' in urban spaces. This paper examines street canines in Indian cities, demonstrating their marginalisation and eviction at the intersection of colonialism and informality. Last, this paper builds upon 'subaltern urbanism' that recognises the agency inherent in marginalised citizens and spaces, to conceptualise 'subaltern animism' as a way of acknowledging animal spaces and citizenship in the city.

Introduction

Urban policy has been cognisant that different identity groups – gender, culture, race and religion, among others – have distinct planning needs as regards mobility, access and broader rights to the city based on complex configurations of power and vulnerability. Thus far, however, analyses of the power/powerlessness that underpins urban development and planning have been largely anthropocentric. The need for the theorisation of animals[1] in urban spaces and ecologies is urgent, especially in the Global South as these regions experience urbanisation on a scale and speed unprecedented

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elsewhere. The diverse range of animals who inhabit urban habitats face steady eviction from spaces that are increasingly privatised, ghettoised, developed, or otherwise removed from nonhuman access. The first place to reconceptualise inclusive *trans-species* cities is 'at the theoretical level, with an eye to rethinking urban theory and unsettling its anthropocentric traditions, to create a new political ecology of people and animals in the city' (Wolch, 2002: 734–735). The theorising of a meta-narrative *via* the weaving together of distinct discourses can then allow the development of a 'toolkit' to animate inclusive, reciprocal and non-violent human–nonhuman animal relations (Wolch, 2002), and frame animal citizenship, agency and voice in urban governance.

To this end, this paper argues that colonialism and informality co-produce a 'state of exception' based on the socio-political construction of the human/animal binary, whereby the animality of humans and the personhood of animals are both denied, to exclude animal rights from the ambit of formal urban governance. The paper theorises a posthuman analysis of urban development by invoking animals as the subjects of anthropocentric colonisation, or human imperialism over nonhumans, especially in cities. It is operationalised through the biopolitics of 'natural' human superiority, which renders animals and their claims on land/ habitat/territory as exceptional to the politics of recognition and rights that is normative for humans. The conditions of informality are likewise an acute expression of the inequalities and violence embedded in colonial configurations of power and powerlessness. Informality refers to 'unauthorised' physical developments; mobilities; economic transactions; and vitally, even *populations* that fall outside the boundedness of formal urban governance (Avni and Yiftachel, 2013). Often strategically produced by formality or formal development, informality – like colonialism – can be used to dismantle democratic governance and equitable social structures to privilege violence, oppression, and even warlike conditions that exploit the labour and bodies of the poor, women and natural resources. In its final analysis, the paper offers a posthuman epistemological intervention to dominant narratives of the subaltern that expands beyond poverty and agency to the urban subaltern itself. It extends Ananya Roy's (2011: 224) conception of 'subaltern urbanism', a way of theorising 'subaltern spaces and subaltern classes' to – 'subaltern animism' – according recognition to the rights of nonhuman animals, in this case, in urban spaces.

Hitherto, colonial urbanisms in general, and informality in particular have been analysed predominantly as human conditions. However, scrutinising the exploitations supported by these frameworks proves just as valuable for understanding the cruelties perpetuated by humans upon nonhuman animals, who are also a vital part of urban ecologies. As urbanisation intensifies in heavily populous regions, key questions for planning and human–animal relations in cities become urgent. What do hyper-technologised futuristic cities forebode for human/nature connections in urban environments? Do important human–nonhuman engagements occur, especially in the spaces of developing cities that need to be considered in ecologically sustainable and justice-oriented planning protocols? What frameworks can we utilise to conceive of human/animal relations and animal spaces in developing regions where much of urban development occurs outside the boundedness of formal urban governance?

Using street canines in Indian cities to focus the argument, the paper examines the rise in their marginalisation, eviction, and even culling through an extensive review of populist, legislative, political and ecological discourses on dog–human relations in the last 20 years, and a small empirical study of Cochin and Visakhapatnam cities. The paper analyses the violence perpetuated upon canine bodies in urban spaces as a co-production of colonialism and informality. As India's growth trajectory advances, its cities, which are at the epicentre

of this rapid development, are increasingly hostile to dogs, often in violation of Indian animal protection laws. Fear-based narratives of 'mad dogs' and disease perpetuate the 'othering' of dogs, in a manner which reflects discourses describing the urban (human) poor as threats to population health, security and economic productivity.

Urban planning in India currently has no formal protocols or frameworks that acknowledge cities as biodiverse spaces, or the rights of multi-species to habitats that have been urbanised. The human/animal binary blurs the fact that 'human', 'animal' and indeed, 'dog' are as much social constructs as they are natural realities. Postcolonial planning practices have recognised and attempted to reverse some of the oppressions perpetuated by colonial urbanisms, even as these frameworks continue to be circumscribed by colonial structures (Porter, 2006). In the case of animals, their invisibility itself debars recognition and reversal of their oppressions. The need for planning theory that dismantles the inherent anthropocentrism of identity politics is vital to construct new urban sociologies in both the Global South and North.

Methods

This paper draws upon three stages of methodological analyses to illuminate the complexities of human–canine relations, and the dispossession experienced by dogs in urban India. First, it surveys media reports, literature/pamphlets from animal welfare organisations (AWOs), and legislations and court petitions submitted by AWOs over a 20-year period since 1995 when animal birth control (ABC) programme for canines were first instituted by some urban development authorities in India. The ABC programme were regarded by animal activists, and planners as a historic milestone in animal welfare reform. These narratives illustrate the trajectory of the human–dog conflict in urban India, where intervention was conceptualised as the management of animal bodies.

The second stage involved a small empirical study involving semi-structured interviews with two sets of 'experts' – 20 planning officials, and 20 animal activists who run or work in prominent AWOs, to survey dog–human relations, each in Visakhapatnam and Cochin. The two sites are classified as Tier 2 cities, i.e., poised for rapid urban growth (UN Habitat, 2012), are currently undergoing important urban renewal projects including the 'smart cities' project, and like many other modernising Indian cities, have experienced an intensive phase of dog culling. The experts have a history of cooperative as well as conflictual relations in working through dog–human struggles over urban spaces. These experts were asked to describe their perception of various human–dog relations in their cities; identify sensitive spots of amiable and aggressive human/dog relations; explain environmental and social factors; and outline their understandings of sustainable/smart cities and the status of animals therein. The interviews serve as a narration as much as a basis for analysis.

In the third stage, scholarly literature on colonial biopolitics and colonialism in planning theory, and urban informality was reviewed to theorise the 'exceptions' that emerged from the first two stages. Inherent in such analyses of course are risks. One, any posthuman analysis of the nonhuman animal condition remains fundamentally anthropocentric, and continues to project human recognition upon the nonhuman. Dogs and other animals 'cannot speak', offer resistance and thus claim citizenship. To this, I point out that *all* engagements of the human, including human–human relations *are* projections of the individual human self. Further, exhaustive studies that theorise animals as political agents amply demonstrate that nonhumans (Wadiwel, 2015), including dogs (Morell, 2014), *do* offer resistance, and it must not be disregarded merely because it is, naturally, registered in species-specific, nonhuman modes of communications. The current scientific methods used

to analyse intra-human engagements cannot apply to understanding inter-species relations (Morell, 2014); in fact insisting upon such 'rationalism' can become a tool whereby human oppression of nonhumans continues to be legitimised. However the theorisations of oppressions in 'intra-human' relations offer a useful basis for understanding and further developing the nascent work in analysing human-to-nonhuman oppressions and conflicts (Palmer, 2003).

Two, the specific focus on dogs can introduce identical hierarchy politics of 'species-exceptionalism' that is associated with human exceptionalism. It is irrefutable that questions of complex biopolitics, and multispecies identities and vulnerabilities, must inform critical theory on inclusive urbanism. The value of specifically examining the case for dogs here then, is not to 'exceptionalise' canines, in particular, by instrumentalising them as 'useful' (or not) from human perspectives. The recent countrywide instances of dog culling in India rather, illustrate the placement of animals more generally at the intersections of colonial biopolitics and informality. These developments especially visibilise the biopolitics of power and powerlessness that operate between humans and nonhumans because of their physical proximity to human bodies and habitations in cities. Vitally, despite inherent differences between species, it is expected that the knowledge generated can nonetheless provide valuable insight on the 'real' workings of human-to-nonhuman biopolitics in urban spaces, as key missing factors in planning multispecies-inclusive cities.

Animals and the biopolitics of colonialism in cities: Life and land as 'exceptions'

The biopolitics of 'natural' racial superiority was pivotal in justifying colonisation to gain control over lands and natural resources. The configurations of racialised power/powerlessness – or 'biopower' – were produced and enacted by the relationship between the state and the positivist discipline of biology, or the 'science of life' (Mader, 2011: 97). Humans were placed on a linearised spectrum of smaller groups distinguished by race, and classified in varying degrees from superior to inferior based on their position in this 'biological continuum' (Foucault, 1970). According to Foucault, the racial inequities that are thus produced are vital to support modern governance structures. In other words, the capacity of the state to 'make life' for some of its citizens is supported by simultaneously retaining its power to 'let die' some of its other citizens (Morgensen, 2011: 55), by relegating these subjects to outside the boundedness of the rule of the law instituted by the formal state. These disposable citizens are further exceptionalised by also rendering colonised *land* exceptional to the 'tenure', for example, of Indigenous people (Morgensen, 2011), or in this case, of animals.

The biological continuum extends on beyond the group of racialised humans to nonhumans, wherein humans not only have a relationship of biopower with the entire spectrum of nonhuman animals but also a specific relational structure with each sub-group or species. As Karlekar (2008: 263) writes, 'As masters, human beings regarded all things, indeed, the whole of Nature, as their colony.' Anthropocentric biopolitical colonialism has proceeded on the implicit assumption of a constructed binary of animality and humanity to privilege *Sapien* claims on the planet, as though humans do not share an animal identity with nonhumans. Colonial biopolitics regarded Indigenous citizens in states of exception beyond human life, as 'animal life' (Mbembe, 2003: 24). Indigenous peoples in Australia were explicitly compared with animals *to* reject their claims to land (Palmer, 2003: 50). Implicit in such racialised violence towards Indigenous people is the assumption that nonhuman animals also have no claims or rights to land.

Narratives of human biological superiority over nonhumans are used to justify their marginalisation and even criminalisation. Where animal presence asserts itself despite human attempts to invisibilise them, colonial narratives based on fear and contempt are often employed to operationalise human–nonhuman segregations. These narratives resemble those used to segregate some humans based on racialised, religious or other ethnic identities, leading to their spatial marginalisation and the formation of informal spaces like slums or ghettoes that are often characterised by violence and poverty (Gayer and Jaffrelot, 2012). In his research on nonhuman belonging in Canadian cities, Nicholas Holm (2012: 58) notes that deep-seated socio-cultural prejudices exist against 'non-human owned' animals in cities; they are viewed as 'debased animals eking out a compromised life among urban waste.' However, perceptions of animals as 'menace' or 'nuisance' are socially and politically constructed rather than 'natural' or 'real' (Holm, 2012). These constructions are influential nonetheless, and street animals are commonly assigned to categories of non-belonging in cities, that is, 'homeless', 'stray', or even 'feral' or uncivilised.

Attempts to reverse some of the inequities perpetuated by colonialism on oppressed subjects principally include the reframing of formerly colonised/subaltern subjects as actors in claiming land or a rhetoric of care and/or assimilation into settler society. Both cases can be fraught with complexities that perpetuate exclusion/exception. In Australia for instance, the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in environmental planning, and the recognition of 'native title' has been pivotal in negating colonial processes of claiming land, i.e., non-recognition of the existence or the moral personhood of the first peoples. Native title bestows on Indigenous people 'specific rights to enjoy and utilise their land *in accordance with traditional practices and customs* [emphasis mine]' (Porter, 2006: 384). However, the very claiming of different modes of governance and self-organisation by Indigenous people can be seen as a 'risk' to mainstream society, ensuing that 'risk of exception' for Indigenous peoples is continuous and 'ever present' (Morgensen, 2011: 64). In an only subtly different way, 'Amalgamation [also operates] as a tool of elimination' (*ibid*), where the distinctions of Indigenous agency, self-governance and organisation are neutralised to facilitate as seamless an assimilation as possible. Wolfe (2008) argues that colonisation, for example, occurs not necessarily through violence, but equally through integration, wherein Indigenous cultures, peoples and vitally, land, are assimilated into more powerful politics of the colonising nation/peoples/cultures.

The counter rhetoric that calls for animal welfare, practices of care, and assimilation of animals into human society may likewise be profuse with violence towards animals. Animal geographer Donna Haraway (2003: 7) has pleaded for love to be enacted 'less violently'. In India, these complex threads of care and violence towards animals are further racialised as what can be termed native Indian as well as British narratives of biopolitics. In her work on animal sacrifice in Nainital city, Uttarakhand in India, Radhika Govindrajan (2015: 506) analyses the affective role and spontaneous feelings of 'mothering' that humans claim to feel towards designated sacrificial animals, where love for the mother/parent demands thanksgiving/gratitude from the 'child'. Likewise, it was explicitly based on a plea for care and responsibility towards street dogs in India that the peace-loving Mahatma Gandhi recommended their culling:

> A roving dog without an owner is a danger to society and a swarm of them is a menace to its very existence. If we want to keep dogs in towns or villages in a decent manner, no dog should be suffered to wander. There should be no stray dogs even as we have no stray cattle . . . But can we take individual charge of these roving dogs? And if we cannot, can we have pinjarapoles [sanctuaries] for them? If both these things are impossible, there seems to me to be no

alternative except to kill them. Connivance or putting up with the status quo is no ahimsa [non-violence]; there is no thought or discrimination in it. Dogs will be killed whenever they are a menace to society. (Gandhi, 1926)

Gandhi (1926) then proceeds to recommend the 'regular science of dog-keeping which the people in the West have formulated and perfected' – which involves neutering, or again, destruction of unwanted animals. Ironically in India (and other developing nations), the animal welfare reform advocacy, significantly led by resident or visiting Westerners, is viewed by many right-wing/nationalist groups as similar to the white man's earlier burden to bring reform to colonised humans (Dave, 2014). The humane alternative of 'care' proposed by such groups – the ABC Programme – is fraught with problems. In lieu of killing, dogs are captured, neutered and released where they were originally found. Castration and ovariohysterectomies, the common neutering approaches for male and female dogs respectively are presented by activists and municipal officials as a sound welfare practice. However they are full of risks for individual canine health and wellbeing, ranging from weight gain, incontinence to even cancer, which are rarely addressed once the canines are back on the street (Srinivasan, 2015). The intersections of violence against dogs, and protections extended to dogs on the street are fraught with risks to canine bodies (Srinivasan, 2015). Further, ABC is ultimately oriented towards eventual elimination *via* ostensibly humane methods. In all these practices of 'care', land rights continues to be 'exceptionalised' for nonhumans, or selectively granted, by exceptionalising animal lives and bodies.

In urbanised space, a uniquely human manifestation of a substantively mechanised environment, 'urbanization' almost becomes synonymous with 'denaturalization' as nonhuman species are perceived as trespassers upon urban spaces (Wolch, 1998: 125). Indeed, historically, 'The ability of a city's physical structure to organize and encode a stable social order depends on its capacity to master and manipulate nature [...] Cities, accordingly, cannot afford to let flora or fauna, wind or water, run wild.' (Davis, 2002: 362). In the project of staking claims to land, urbanisation itself can be interpreted as a strategy of colonialism over nonhumans. Urbanisation usually proceeds on the premise that land is *terra nullius* (Datta, 2015), and the 'existence of existing animal inhabitants is often passed over' (Palmer, 2003: 49). The rapid rate of urban sprawl and cannibalisation of peri-urban and rural regions through the growth of giant conurbations have made existing – and shrinking – green spaces within cities ever more precious for urban biodiversity. Rapid urbanisation brings with it a complex configuration of identity politics among nonhuman species. The differential capacity of multi-species to survive human domination of cities can result in the homogenisation of particular species (such as rats) in urban micro-spaces, which in turn is a risk for urban environments.

There are stark tensions between formal postcolonial planning and animal rights: the power of the formal is the predictability, efficiency, logic and importantly, the apparent controllability of urban spaces, versus the apparent unpredictability of the animal world. There remains 'the implicit sense that there exist "proper" forms and arrangements of nature' (Holm, 2012: 58) and this assumption is heightened in an urban context where every dimension of the environment must be assigned its place and subjected to complete formal control. Further animals in the 'urban wild' have not been bred or manipulated by humans who have had no interference in their physical appearance, nor have 'their tempers been constructed to be either playful or docile or ferocious for us' (Palmer, 2003: 51). Colonialist narratives on placemaking in urban spaces also do not recognise that 'place' is vital not only for human survival, but it is also for humans who have territorial or emotional

attachments to place. Animal bodies are regulated by placing parameters on recognition, thus excluding them from moral consideration.

Perceived or real Western planning worldviews on eliminating 'ferals' are often held as a model of postcolonial urbanisms in India, legitimising and naturalising violence against animals by framing them as encroachers. The land is thus made 'available to new biopolitical violences, even as this naturalised the settler violence enabling them' (Morgensen, 2011: 58). The Mumbai Municipal Commissioner made the controversial statement in 2014 that 'stray dogs must be killed' in India, following what was, he stated, a worldwide practice, including in developed countries (Hindustan Times, 2014). Western cities certainly have a history of eliminating 'stray' or 'feral' animals. In Australia, about 250,000 healthy dogs and cats are killed in pounds annually (Browne, 2010). About eight million homeless dogs and cats are placed in American shelters, of which nearly half are killed or die of infections in shelters themselves (SpayUSA, 2009).

The presence of animality in urban landscapes is further complicated by new forms of cyborg cities. Postcolonial urbanisation can now be said to occur even in spaces of 'placelessness' like virtual spaces. In early 2015, the Indian Government announced its vision to upgrade and/or create a hundred 'smart cities', which will be technologically efficient megapolises that use real-time data to manage urban problems and deliver solutions. What implications, however, may this have in material spaces of the city for nonhuman animal presence? As Indian planning overtly aspires to Western-style Asian cities such as Dubai, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur, it also begins to further subscribe to animal-elimination strategies. In keeping with earlier city beautification strategies where poor humans and animals were evicted from city spaces, street dogs have been killed *en masse* (and continue to be destroyed) in cities designated to be 'smart'. Animal activists and animal welfare/rescue organisations have reported a rapid spike in the culling of street dogs through beatings, poisoning and shootings in almost all cities designated to be 'smart' such as Visakhapatnam, Indore, Cochin, Salem and Coimbatore (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2015; New Delhi Television Limited (NDTV), 2015; The Hindu, 2015). Some of the most violent destructions of street dogs have taken place in the cities of Kerala, which are also high-profile tourist destinations.

Narratives which marginalise nonhumans are likewise supported by processes of informality in the city, whereby animals' ways of accessing and utilising urban spaces and their right to a healthy, safe city fall outside the ambit of formality and, thus, protection. By disregarding the 'animal city' as a concern for formality and therefore implicitly displacing it to a space and status of informality, the 'legitimate' city is allowed to colonise and exploit the 'non-legitimate'. Informality allows planning to treat the human relationship with the nonhuman animal as one of coloniser-colonised, removing any possibility of the recognition of the participation and political agency of urban nonhumans and their rights to existence, safety and even visibility.

Informal citizens and spaces as 'exception'

The large tracts of unplanned or informal development in developing countries and the rapid growth of populations in and around these places has become a major focus in urban studies. This work on informality in cities has included conceptualisation of these spaces themselves, as well as of citizenship, inclusiveness and agency of human citizens within these spaces (Roy, 2005; Yiftachel, 2012). The informality in the city destabilises any perception of the city as 'a space of control' of formal planning authorities and instead allows the South Asian urban space, for instance, to be one of 'autonomy and ambivalence' (Beverley, 2011: 494). In fact,

informality often falls outside of the formally 'plannable', rendering cities 'unplannable' (Roy, 2005: 147). Informality challenges the assumptions of urban governance that 'planning' is the sole prerogative of formality – or indeed, even of humans! – and city spaces in India can be a law unto themselves. Avni and Yiftachel (2013: 487) describe informality thus:

> Urban informalities denote developments, *populations* [emphasis mine], and transactions which do not comply with planning or legal regulations, and are denied planning approval or full membership in the urban community.

Informality does not refer exclusively to illegal or criminal spaces or activities in cities; neither does it solely concern the activities of the poor in unauthorised housing. Informality is a product of the combination of space, social elements and time (Yiftachel, 2012). For the most part, informality indicates the activities as well as structures of the poor, and is as such, 'fundamentally a process rather than a norm' (Dovey and King, 2012: 276). Informality can refer to the unapproved private construction or land-use activities of the wealthy (Roy, 2005) but pertains equally to those activities that have not been formally legitimised, rather than deemed explicitly illegitimate. Most informality is therefore 'gray' rather than black/white. Israeli urban planner Oren Yiftachel (2012: 153) defines gray spaces as:

> developments, enclaves, populations, and transactions positioned between the "lightness" of legality/approval/safety, and the "darkness" of eviction/destruction/death. Gray spaces are neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today's urban regions, which exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans.

However, the work on informality hitherto has been anthropocentric, assuming that questions of the right to city, or contentions over space are solely human concerns. While informal spaces can be created by the powerful as well as the powerless (Yiftachel, 2009), animals are often seen to be powerless, weakened, even criminalised. Nonhumans fall in the shadow space between being tolerated and violently removed, and gray spaces, I suggest, are conceptualised not merely by the blurring of 'legal and illegal, citizen and alien, permanent and temporary' (Avni and Yiftachel, 2013: 487), but also human and nonhuman.

City planning and urban development authorities play an active role in producing and sustaining these gray spaces. The approach attached to these 'stubborn' informalities is a mix of correction and coercion and is almost invariably politically motivated. It neatly describes planning's approach almost globally to the presence of urban animals. This approach is underpinned by the implicit assumption that animal presence is a 'problem' and/or akin to gray spaces, a source of 'contamination and danger' (Avni and Yiftachel, 2013: 490). However, any attempt to directly evict animals from urban spaces might be in conflict with legislation pertaining to animal cruelty, protection of exotic wildlife, and conservation protocols. Planning's strategy towards the gray spaces of informality is thus akin to a delicate dance side-stepping and negotiating around issues of legality and illegality as suits different times and political agenda. It is consistent with colonisation as an 'ongoing process of dispossession, negotiation, transformation and resistance' (Johnson, 1994: 146). Planners typically respond to gray spaces through four stages (Avni and Yiftachel, 2013: 490):

○ Ignore – prolonged turning a blind eye;
○ Neglect – intentional denial and under-development;
○ Limit – institutional and at times violent control and containment;

○ 'Whiten' (selectively) – gradual recognition of selected sections.

At the first stage of (not) addressing and yet sustaining animal gray spaces, nonhuman attachments and rights to place do not even feature as a consideration in planning policies (except potentially as a preposterous or ludicrous notion). During the second stage of neglect, animal presence becomes explicitly more visible and is felt through a combination of population growth and the intensified urbanisation of the city itself. As land areas in and around cities become more developed and there are fewer (or, increasingly, even no) opportunities for escape or alternative survival, animals may come to be viewed more specifically as *illegal* as:

> *scavengers* or even *pests* [emphasis hers]. Such animals are often described as colonizers of urban areas, rather than as colonized beings moving in spaces they formerly occupied, forced to adopt new survival strategies in response to human development. (Palmer, 2003: 51)

At the third stage, after a protracted period of ignoring the implications of animal presence in cities, planning attempts to respond through violent containment. Ananya Roy (2005: 147–148) refers to 'informality as a state of exception from the formal order of urbanization'; this state of exception also enables the complete suspension of universal rights for nonhumans. The state has always employed 'lawfare' against undesirable citizenship in cities (Datta, 2015) by making normative binaries such as formal/informal, black/white, and legal/illegal. 'Lawfare' is used to penalise what lies outside the 'urban' (Datta, 2015) including nonhumans, who subvert privileged human conceptions of desirable space use.

In the last stage of informality, it is finally acknowledged that spaces and subjects of informality cannot be cleared merely by criminalising them or through violent eradication, as they are a part of the cityscape. Animal presence too is 'selectively whitened' and conditionally recognised through ABC sterilisation programme, rescue/rehabilitation/rehoming and conservation programme. These programme are neither unproblematic, nor uniformly applied, as they continue to throw into relief the question of how animal agency in informal spaces may be recognised and granted. Welfare-assisted street dogs in developing cities for instance, may find themselves in the 'gray spaces' of cities where their rights rest on highly unstable territory, and they are not legitimate citizens unless deemed so by human intervention, albeit, post-neutering.

The agency of the informal has been widely noted as counter-resistances manifest in different forms to formality's 'lawfare'. Located at the periphery of legality and recognition, gray spacers 'employ innovative tactics of survival' (Avni and Yiftachel, 2013: 489). The capacity and determination to survive is the enduring feature that forces formality to at least selectively begin to address the informal as spaces and subjects of legitimacy. Identity politics has always been a central feature of the counter-resistance of gray space assertion to formal planning (Yiftachel, 2012). Ananya Roy (2011: 226) conceives of 'subaltern urbanism', the condition of a majority of the urban citizens of Indian cities 'who did not and could not belong to the elite classes' but are nonetheless recognised as 'agents of change' rather than being placed at the 'limits of archival recognition'.

How can nonhuman agency be recognised through a politicisation of the sentient animal citizen? How can animal citizenship and identity politics be understood in the ambivalent urban spaces of the gray and the informal? A significant way in which Indian street canines 'counter-resist' is evident in the spectacular failure of all efforts to keep the dog population 'under control'. Neither violence nor ABC programme have succeeded in undermining the survival instinct of Indian street canines, who, like any sentient beings, are more sensitive to

the enabling environmental factors of the city such as its 'carrying capacity', rather than strategic efforts at their elimination.

'Mad dogs', 'social nuisance' and rabies: Constructed conflict and consequences

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) estimates that there are approximately 30 million street dogs in Indian cities (Sharma, 2015). The free-ranging Indian dog is usually a mongrel mix-breed of the indigenous Indian pariah dog, and other pedigree and mixed breeds, who are often abandoned pets. Indian street dogs are widely noted to be friendly and alert, usually submissive in their relations to humans, and highly independent (Majumdar et al., 2014). Urban dogs also have a noticeably distinct set of socialised behaviours from rural dogs, as they have learnt to develop survival techniques in fast-paced, often hostile motorised urban environments (Majumdar et al., 2014).

The Indian street dog population is rapidly growing mainly because of the country's dismal waste management system, which means that bins overflow with food scraps, as well as the exponential growth in the urban human population that produces such waste (Jain, 2010). Street animals in Indian cities also proliferate through a lack of ABC programme and rescue centres (Butcher, 1999). High-profile tourist cities – and designated smart cities – such as Cochin, Jaipur (Jain, 2010), and Jodhpur report especially high incidences of street animals, especially dogs and monkeys (Totton et al., 2011), because of the large amounts of edible waste that lies around the heritage sites.

'Give the dog a bad name and then hang him': Violent eliminations of canine presence

In his extensive analysis of the institutionalised violence against street dogs in Bangalore (and other Indian cities), Hiranmay Karlekar (2008) carefully documents how human–dog conflicts are constructed in a colonising attempt to evict canines from streetscapes but increasingly also as a political manipulation by ruling parties. The demonisation of dogs depicts dog-killers as humanitarians, and enables assertion of power over dogs *and* humans who are dog/animal lovers. Similar to the build-up to human genocides, a frenzy of hate and fear campaigns is organised against street canines, in this case, fanned by fears of rabies. Approximately 20,000 urban Indians die annually from rabies contracted through rabid dog bites (Sudarshan et al., 2007). In 2012, the World Health Organisation (WHO) ranked India as having the highest incidence of rabies in the world (WHO, 2015), which has been of great concern in a political and planning era in India that draws upon the image and brand-building of cities. However, it is easy to identify and isolate a rabid dog (Karlekar, 2008), and unnecessary to kill street canines *en masse*. Disregarding the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules 2001 which state that street dogs must be neutered and released back into the area originally found, municipal authorities increasingly respond to canine presence in cities with planned and violent eliminations.

In Tamil Nadu, the Chennai Municipal Corporation (CMC) was killing about 135 street dogs a day about 20 years ago; thereafter in 1995, the renowned AWO Blue Cross of India instituted landmark reforms by implementing the ABC programme (Rajan, 2013). However in 2013, the CMC announced an ominous intention either to build 'forever pounds' where street dogs would be placed for life, or begin euthanising again. Animal activists are concerned that these shelters are really 'death mills', and argue that it is human intolerance to canines that needs to be questioned (Rajan, 2013). In Bangalore in early 2007, anti-dog organisations, lynch mobs and some sections of the media organised a hate

campaign against the street dogs by labelling them 'rabid', 'menace', 'nuisances', 'despicable', 'mad' and 'ferocious' (Karlekar, 2008: 17). This was followed by one of the largest massacres of street dogs in Indian urban history, where the Bangalore Municipal Corporation lead the killing of more than 1,500 dogs in two months (Karlekar, 2008: 21). In 2008, Srinagar city in Kashmir announced plans to kill 100,000 street dogs (National Geographic News, 2008).

In Indore, the Municipal Corporation chooses to poison street dogs in spite of establishing a veterinary centre in 2011 with the explicit purpose of neutering them through the ABC programme (Chauhan, 2013). Kerala state destroys over 500,000 dogs annually to keep its cities 'stray dog free' to preserve its status as a top tourism destination (Welfare of Stray Dogs (WSD), 2008). In early 2015, the Cochin Municipal Corporation killed 350 dogs in the Fort Cochin area with cyanide injections though these dogs had been neutered and vaccinated by the Mad Dogs Trust, a local AWO (Kerala Tourism, 2012). Ironically, about 75.6 per cent of the reported dog bites between January and July 2015 in Cochin were inflicted by pet dogs (The Times of India, 2015a). However such violent evictions of street dogs are not a recent phenomenon. British animal rights advocate Crystal Rogers (2000) who settled in India, notes the killing of dogs through strychnine poisoning by municipal workers in Delhi and Kashmir as early as the 1960s, though it was already rejected then by the Animal Welfare Board as cruel.

In Indian and other developing cities where dogs commonly occupy public spaces, the framing of dogs as 'nuisances' or even 'stray' can have devastating consequences for their belonging and inclusivity. The *Guidelines for Dog Population Management* (IFAW, 2007), issued jointly by the WHO and the World Society for the Protection of Animals classify dogs in four ways: fully restricted/supervised dogs (for example, those used for experimentation, or working animals); pets who are semi-restricted and fully dependent; neighbourhood dogs who are semi-dependent/semi-restricted; and feral dogs who are unrestricted/independent. Indian street canines, as per these definitions, can be grouped as neighbourhood or community dogs (Karlekar, 2008).

However the view of nonhuman owned animals as 'stray' is problematic as it wrongly emphasises the 'placelessness' of nonhuman animals in cities and implies that 'home', a place of rightful belonging and safety, solely refers to human habitation. It also ignores the fact that street dogs often enjoy a greater degree of freedom, life satisfaction, and even health than pet dogs in India (Srinivasan, 2015). Indeed, only a certain proportion of these animals can be regarded as 'homeless', having previously had 'homes', albeit with humans, and later abandoned. Otherwise, the myriad urban landscapes, especially the streets, *are* a place of home and belonging for street animals. The more inclusive notion of 'street animals' rather than '*stray* animals' destabilises an anthropocentric worldview of the supremacy of the human home, belonging and rights in an urban environment.

In 2015, the Supreme Court of India (2015) declared that the term 'nuisance dog' is not an explicit one, that dogs are not naturally 'nuisances' and aggressive behaviour is likely to be retaliation towards human abuse. However, the broader institutional and governance contempt for dogs continues to implicitly legitimise virulently cruel forms of killing, including by Municipal Corporations themselves. In 2015, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation was criticized by animal activists for drowning 20 dogs in its pound (MSN, 2015). Diseased dogs are treated with extraordinary violence – firecrackers are tied around sick dogs or puppies, leading them to die of painful third degree burns and infection (Rehman, 2015). Other crimes are perpetuated unchecked despite being violations of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* [PCA] *Act 1960*, and can expect to receive no redressal when canine presence itself is regarded as criminal. The Voice of Stray Dogs (VoSD), a

Bangalore-based dog rescue shelter, estimates that the human rape of dogs in India equals, if not exceeds the rape of human women (VoSD, 2014). Physical examinations of distressed rescue dogs and post-mortems of dogs that have died of unnatural causes, frequently find samples of human semen.

Animal activists and canine experts recognise that dog culling *per se* is a poor strategy for addressing rabies, indeed even dangerous for dogs as well as poor humans in informal settlements who live most closely alongside street dogs. The Indian dog rescue organisation WSD (2008) notes that with the high breeding rate of dogs, culling in fact has been proven to lead to increased rates of rabies in India. As dogs are removed from their territories by killing, new dogs move in immediately to occupy the vacated space, leading to increased dog fights and bites, and causing unintended or panicked attacks on humans as well (WSD, 2008). The greatest imperative to prevent rabies is to *prevent dog bites* – and dog killing *increases dog bites*. Ironically, dog-catchers from rescue organisations are often scared or reluctant to pick up rabid dogs and kill healthy dogs instead (Gandhi, 2013; WSD, 2008). This is in violation of the *PCA Act 1960*, which only permits the euthanasia of rabid, or mortally wounded/ill dogs (AWBI, 2001).

The open-waste reality of Indian cities also renders culling ineffective. The 'carrying capacity' theory determines that every city will, regardless of killing or relocating, continue to have the maximum number of dogs a city's carrying capacity – in other words, it's open waste resources – allows (*interview data from veterinarians from Cochin and Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporations*; The Times of India, 2015b). The combination of the large numbers of humans, dogs and open waste together ensure that only 30–50% of the dogs in any city can be captured at any time. Indeed, while the mortality rate of Indian street puppies is quite high, this may dramatically reduce if dogs are killed (*interview data, Cochin Municipal Corporation veterinary officer;* The Times of India, 2015b). The self-regulating urban ecological system of waste ensures that a steady number of dogs will be maintained. The key to addressing rabies and dog–human conflicts in Indian cities is to institute effective waste disposal and management, rather than to eradicate dogs.

The ABC programme is advocated by both activists and municipal officials who favour a humane approach to managing canine populations. When a city manages to neuter about 70% of its canine population, numbers then steadily begin to reduce (Gibson, 2015). However, ABC programme have been unable to achieve the success they could because of episodic and/or inadequate support from planning authorities [*interviews with AWO in Cochin and Visakhapatnam*]. In a manner eerily reminiscent of the forced sterilisation of male humans in India in 1979, institutional indifference and contempt for canines is also visible in oft-carelessly performed surgeries. An AWO worker in Visakhapatnam recalled her horror at her recent inspection of the municipal vet hospital where 16 male dogs had been put through the process for ovariohysterectomies, leaving them terminally ill. ABC further portends health risks for humans in the longer term if street dog populations begin to dwindle, but waste mismanagement continues. It also reinforces the anthropocentric assumption of humans having the sole rights to the planet in an increasingly urbanised and privatised earth.

Canine roles in the urban ecology

Planners across Cochin and Visakhapatnam were unambiguous that dogs and other nonhumans will have no place in the Indian cities of the future, where smart urbanism technologies will be oriented specifically to serve the needs of privileged humans. Animal presence is particularly seen as a hindrance to features like the Bus Rapid Transit Systems

(BRTS) which will rely on real-time to deliver timely services. 'Dogs must go,' said a chief urban planner of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC). 'We are going to have the BRTS routes where buses will be travelling at high speeds. We can't have dogs in these areas, and we can't stop them from coming from other areas. Dogs, cattles (*sic*), pigs, they must all go.' It remains unclear as to where these animals will 'go'. The chief planner mentioned a municipal animal pound where these animals will be kept till the owners come to claim them but, unlike cattle or pigs, street dogs rarely have a clear human owner.

Even where smart technology is proposed in the ostensible interests of animals, it is fraught with health and ethical issues for street dogs. An animal rights activist *(interview with AWO worker, Cochin)* proposed the idea of microchipping or even using GPS-enabled collars to track animals, following the practice with pet dogs in Western countries. On the one hand, it may enable a degree of efficiency in locating community dogs in a manner that was hitherto impossible, and tracking an approximate a dog Census, with greater accountability for animal safety. This is likely to be prohibitively expensive and thus unviable. However, a greater concern is the increased surveillance, control and intensified regularisation of human-to-animal biopolitics and thus further inhibition of the rights of urban nonhuman owned animals to liberation and freedom of movement.

Municipal authorities also ignore the fact that the human street poor and the street canines share vital interdependent relationships. In fact, the intimate co-habitation of spaces, lives and attachments between dogs and poor humans seem to exceptionalise the latter from moral consideration as well. Slum dwellers seem to be framed as 'less than human' through their close associations with dogs; however some of their most vital basic needs in the city are met through their relations with canine citizens. Street dogs serve as one of the most efficient burglar alarm systems for humans in poor informal settlements – their loud barking at the slightest provocation is irreplaceable [*interview data from AWOs, Chennai*]. Poor single urban women who live alone or in informal settlements rely on dog packs for security and even companionship [*interview data from AWOs, Chennai*]. Poor humans and street dogs usually also live in close physical proximity, and canine killing has a differential and disadvantageous impact on the human poor, as dog killing escalates dog attacks on humans and each other. In Andhra Pradesh state, the Visakhapatnam-based animal rescue group, the Visakha Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (VSPCA) includes the poorest urban humans in their welfare projects as they recognise the vital relationship of interdependency and reciprocal care between the urban poor and the dogs, both of whom occupy the streetscapes and spaces of informality in the city.

Last, dogs themselves have a clear conception of the urban ecology that they inhabit, and their place in it. Multispecies sense of place, however, is rarely understood, even by activists and dog-feeders, who often unintentionally disrupt established canine territories. This was remarkably clear during field observations of dog feeding with a volunteer-expert from the VSPCA. Dogs have clear demarcated boundaries; however when humans enter only some of these spaces with food, or hover at the 'border' of two adjoining 'canine states', other dogs are forced to transgress these lines to access the humans/food, thus leading to aggression. The volunteer, interestingly, framed canine territoriality in terms of the 'understanding' and 'opinion' of dogs in urban ecologies and spaces:

> We have problems with dog fights caused by animal lovers all the time. They don't realise the dogs view their environment differently, they already have their own understandings about it, and idea of what they can do, where they can go in it. People feed dogs but we need to be sensitised to the fact that we are not the only animals with an opinion on the environment.

The planned or unplanned collapsing of canine boundaries by humans acutely depicts canine agency, resistance and assertion of space. Their responses call for their recognition as actors, rather than passive subjects, in the un/making of the urban spaces that they regard as their home, territory, or space. When theorised in inclusive, intelligent, and respectful ways, human relations with animals can lead to flourishing landscapes of coexistence, rather than battlescapes of violence. A politically progressive framework for multispecies planning may develop out of the idea that animals constitute the subaltern and bring their own politics of recognition.

'Subaltern animism': Expanding 'subaltern urbanism'

The subaltern, a key concept to emerge out of postcolonial studies, is defined by Ranajit Guha (1988: 44) as 'the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those... described as "the elite"', that is, it explicitly refers to those who are *not* the elite, and could neither become the elite (Roy, 2011). However Roy (2011) notes the critical shift within subaltern studies from the subaltern in a space of subordination, to the subaltern as an agent of change, where the subaltern gains political identity and recognition. Subaltern urbanism is marked by creativity and 'shrewd improvisation' (Jeffrey, 2009: 205), 'migrant small scale activism' (Cruz, 2007: 75) and 'ingenious, critical alternative systems' of emancipation (Godlewski, 2010: 8–9). Transplanted to urban studies, subaltern urbanism allows for 'new theories of geography' to emerge which are vital to understanding twenty-first century cities (Roy, 2011: 213).

The subaltern space, I argue, can be usefully applied to conceptualise animal geographies in the city by extending its ambit to what I call 'subaltern animism'. 'Subaltern animism' refers to the formulation of new multispecies-inclusive geographies or planning theories that recognise the agency and personhood of nonhumans, as well as the ways in which they claim and occupy space. Subaltern animism draws from the newer innovation in the animals/ environmental political theory nexus, wherein 'animals are *animals* [emphasis in original]', and members of biologically diverse ecologies as well as species (Wissenburg and Schlosberg, 2014: 8). In foregrounding the moral personhood of multi-species, it reverses the problematic separation of animal advocacy and environmentalism, where animals were generally regarded as part of the environment as resources (Narayanan, 2016), or as marginal to greater environmental concerns. This recognition 'forces ecologists to redefine the main actors in the environmental crisis... as an infinitely varied gathering of fundamentally different participants, contributors and stakeholders with fundamentally different, *valid* [emphasis mine] interests.' These interests primarily refer to freedom to lead good lives in ways pertinent to their species (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011).

The question of how the idea of 'human' may be addressed within the ambit of subaltern animism is complex. Currently, the construction of 'human' – a social and political concept rather than purely a natural or evolutionary reality – is embedded in anthropocentric colonialism, and is oppressive to nonhumans (Bolton, 2014). Nonetheless power continues to privilege humans in postcolonial contexts, and, at the very least, humans remain placed in a custodial relationship to animals (Parrenas, 2016). In seeking alternatives to aggressive human behaviour towards street dogs in India, Karlekar (2008: 263) advocates stewardship, a custodian role for humans, rather than a colonising role. The very idea of trans-species planning inevitably places humans in a custodial role.

However animal agency can be fully recognised even within the broad ambit of custodial human-to-animal relations. In the urban context where much of the animal/human conflict arises from the fact of nonhumans not being human, subaltern animism imagines such

animal emancipation as the 'right not to be criminalised' for being nonhuman. Specifically in cities, it refers the freedom to enjoy natural movement and territoriality – a recognised core indicator of wellbeing not only for humans, but also nonhumans. While humans attempt to maximally control nonhuman presence and populations, movement, habitation and consumption in the city, this paper has shown that animals continually disrupt anthropocentric ideals of belonging and recognition. Animal spaces are inherently beyond the boundedness of formal planning and the total human control of urban space.

Subaltern animism calls for a reconceptualisation of spaces whereby urbanisation itself be re-understood as a process of co-production by humans and nonhumans. It takes inspiration from urban political ecology, whose purpose, according to Heynen et al. (2006: 2), 'is about formulating political projects that are radically democratic in terms of the organization of the processes through which the environments that we (humans and nonhumans) inhabit become produced.' Such a trans-species inclusive planning framework acknowledge that nonhumans too make place and have place attachments. Watson and Warkentin (2013: 1) write: 'Place has multispecies meaning [. . .] humans are not the only species to have a relationship to place.' These relationships are enacted spatially, of which formal planning currently has little understanding. Further, animal perceptions of place will not always be congruent with human visions of space – indeed, even *within* human communities, conflicts over space exist. As Nikki Savvides (2013: 42) notes, 'Tensions are at the heart of multispecies communities, just as are species interconnections. These communities [dogs or human] are not stable, consistent, or predictable, but are constantly changing.'

The notion of subaltern animism is based on the assumption that animal-inclusive critiques of space will render possible new notions of spatial justice, but also, that planning itself can reveal and allow a greater understanding of species-specific needs and vulnerabilities. Roy (2001: 109) for instance has argued that planning and feminism can serve each other because 'feminism critiques planning but also because planning issues spatialize and concretize many of feminism's concerns.' In a similar way, a multispecies perspective on planning can clarify a number of issues that are pertinent to animal rights, social justice, as well as the notion of urban environmental sustainability itself.

'Subaltern animism' thus seeks to redraw relational structures of power between animals and humans to accord recognition that animals do register resistance, albeit, naturally, in modes true to their species (Wadiwel, 2015). It seeks to formulate a new landscape of human/animal relations that explicitly introduces and radicalises concepts of 'human' and 'animal' in urban planning frameworks, wherein relations and engagements occur with recognition of both actors as political agents, and it is understood that nonhumans too can determine their relationship with humans and the ecology (Holm, 2012).

Conceptualising 'subaltern animism' is necessarily a deeply *local* project for different ecological niches, even within the same city. It is a complex interdisciplinary project, requiring the participation of ethologists, ethicists, biologists, veterinarians, and animal activists, among others. It offers a distinctive departure for planning from earlier modes of urban development, by *engaging* with animals rather than *managing* them. The urban kingdom continues to be located within an animal kingdom, despite relentless efforts to colonise the planet for the exclusive use of the human species.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that colonial biopolitics and informality together offer a useful framework to understand the marginalisation and decimation of animals in cities. Using the case of street dog elimination from Indian cities as an example, the paper suggests that

these two practices of non-recognition together create a 'state of exception' where the rights and wellbeing of animals are suspended. These practices have mostly been used to analyse human oppressions of other humans. However scrutinising the exploitations sanctioned by these frameworks proves just as valuable to analyse the cruelties and abuse perpetuated by humans upon nonhumans, who also are a vital part of urban ecologies and ecosystems, particularly in Indian cities.

Anthropocentric biopolitics operates in a similar way to the racialised biopolitics of 'natural superiority' of the colonisers over the colonised. In this case, humans are exceptionalised as not-animals, and animals are exceptionalised as not-persons, to privilege human claims on land and the planet itself. In cities, this human/animal binary is intensified through infrastructural and property development, gentrification and privatisation, and nonhumans find themselves increasingly evicted from urban ecologies. Anthropocentric biopolitics – like its racialised form – also renders land as exceptional to the rights/tenure of native/original inhabitants, including, in this case, animals.

In a similar way, informality also exceptionalises some citizens from the ambit of formal governance through non-recognition of their presence as legitimate in the city spaces. This does not necessarily render such bodies illegal but the lack of an explicit recognition of legitimacy places them in unstable 'gray spaces', allowing formality to marginalise, or criminalise them. Animal bodies, this paper has suggested, fall in these gray spaces, making them vulnerable to the eviction projects of the state as modern urban planning projects are conceptualised and executed. Nonhumans typically have no place in these cities, even as they grow and build by dispossessing them of their habitats.

In its final analysis, this paper proposed 'subaltern animism' as a framework of recognition for animals in urban spaces wherein nonhuman animal agency, modes of resistance, and organisation are recognised. 'Subaltern animism' builds upon the notion of 'subaltern urbanism', which recognises the agency of the marginalised, dispossessed, and 'non-elite' populations. It also committed to the complex idea of spatial justice where nonhuman attachments to space are recognised. In order for planners to implement policy that is cognisant of all sentient actors in city spaces, they must first be sensitised to discourses which reveal dynamics of oppression, power and powerlessness, and agency. Pertinent perspectives include colonial and postcolonial critiques of planning, the concept of the animal city/zoopolis, and the politicisation of the nonhuman animal. Planning for a multispecies city is not within the ambit of professional planners and architects alone; this enterprise must involve animal activists, AWOs, and experts from disciplines like veterinary science, ethics, political philosophy, ethology and public health.

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Note

1. 'Animals', 'nonhumans' and 'nonhuman animals' are used interchangeably in this paper.

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