

**Verónica Policarpo, Teresa Líbano Monteiro, Mónica Truninger, Ana Nunes de Almeida, Leonor Rodrigues (ICS-ULisboa) | *A life of their own: children, animals and the critical debate about sustainable development***

Similarly to environmental sociology that in the 1970s challenged Nature-Society dichotomous thinking, a recent body of work within human-animal studies has challenged anthropocentric perspectives within social sciences. It endorsed a more-than-human approach that advocates for the destabilization and abandonment of dualist distinctions between humans and non-human animals. It is suggested that humans and animals co-produce the hybrid worlds they are embedded in, through practices that may either reproduce, or challenge, the human/species barrier.

In this chapter, we aim at contributing to this theoretical debate by exploring the importance of affects, expressed in friendship relationships, to the wellbeing of both children and pets. We ask how friendships between children and pets ebb and flow in everyday life, and how objects and material culture mediate these affective relationships. We take as unit of analysis the *relationship* between the child and (the) animal(s), and argue that these friendships are better understood as *affective practices*, of embodied meaning-making. This means bringing our attention to the body as a major relational element. These contexts of relationships are conceptualized as hybrid worlds, to which all elements involved contribute.

Some research questions are: how can we conceptualize the affective practices between children and domestic animals? How do they impact on child's wellbeing and, particularly, child's social development and education for citizenship? How do they contribute to drawing the boundaries of what is an "animal", a "child", and a "friend"? How do objects, such as pet gadgets, mediate these relationships? How can affective practices contribute to an ethical and sustainable relationship between humans and non-humans?

The chapter adds to the international scientific literature on the topic, developing a sociological perspective that has remained underexplored. For this, it puts in dialogue interdisciplinary contributions from studies about human-animal relations, childhood, friendship, affects, wellbeing and material culture. Moreover, it overcomes the silence and lack of enthusiasm regarding the development of human-animal studies in the Portuguese social sciences and scholarship.