

# BOOK REVIEW

## *More-Than-One Health: human, animals, and the environment post-COVID*

Edited by Irus Braverman, Routledge 2023

Reviewed by Bernardo Couto Soares

One Health is a global health approach that emphasises collaboration across disciplines in response to diseases. It has gained popularity in recent decades, with the most recent definition by One Health High Level Council (OHHLEP) being: “an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals and ecosystems.” (Braverman, 2023, p. 80). According to Steve Hinchliffe, this human-animal-environment triad premises on specific ontological commitments to a one-world metaphysics. His Foreword sets the stage for the volume’s contributions through the question: “What is gained and what might be lost when one adopts the One Health signature?” (Hinchliffe, 2023, p. xx).

The book brings together scholars from multiple disciplinary orientations and case studies with a broad geographical scope. The thirteen contributions are grouped together in a way that allows for a progressive build-up to the editor’s main argument. Irus Braverman envisions modes of governing health that recognise the interdependence between living entities and plurality of knowledges within more-than-one-healths. In this review, I have focused on chapters that illustrate the overarching theme of each Part (I, II, III and IV) and speak to my own research interests and expertise.

The volume’s Part I begins by situating One Health with an initial medical history followed by three contributions of healthcare professionals that provide an insider perspective. Two leading figures within One Health, Chris Walzer and John H. Amuasi, are interviewed in Chapter 3 and 4 of the book. They discuss COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on global health stakeholders’s ways of thinking about health and disease, and preparedness for future epidemiological events. Providing an overview of the current One Health agenda.

The book emerges in a timely manner in this post-pandemic era, with contributions providing important reflections about One Health’s ways of governing lively entities according to notions of disease and health. The volume is divided into three sections: Part II focuses on One Health expansion, Part III is concerned with ways of othering and potential new forms of more-than-human justice, and Part IV speaks about decolonization process within One Health and integration of indigenous knowledges.

The chapters in Part II consider materialities and spaces that have until recently remained relatively marginal in One Health. Elizabeth

R. Johnson and Hannah Dickinson’s chapter explores One Health expansion into ocean governance through case studies about jellyfish overpopulation and shrimp aquaculture’s biowaste. The authors outline how these marine organisms are constituted within capitalist regimes of extraction and One Health’s boundary-defining categories of pathological and healthy.

Through biotechnological practices, shrimp-shell chitin and jellyfish bodies are reconfigured from ecological and economic stressors into pharmaceutical resources. These marine organisms are integrated into Western-centric visions of “healthy bodies” as products, such as antioxidant and fat-loss supplements. The chapter demonstrates how One Health’s idealized notions of interconnectedness are rooted in particular understandings of “good health” and economic growth.

The volume’s Part III considers potential alternative ways of caring. Bjørn Ralf Kristensen’s chapter provides an appropriate reply to Johnson and Dickson’s concerns by re-conceptualizing One Health’s focus on pathogenic organisms. The author explains how One Health human-animal-environment interconnection is unidirectional with animals only being considered in their relation to human wellbeing.

Through the case studies of common murre birds in Stora Karlsö and urban Rock Hyraxes in Jerusalem, Kristensen considers codependency between humans and wild animals in situations of zoonotic spillover. During the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the lack of tourists in Stora Karlsö, white-tailed sea eagles emerged within the island, leading to the worst breeding season for common murre birds. Meanwhile, Jerusalem’s urban development has brought rock hyraxes into the city inhabiting in poor areas with lack of sanitation services or Hasidic neighbourhoods, where food waste is left outside due to religious beliefs.

These cases demonstrate that humans are implicated in other animals’ lives in ways that the unidirectional disease spillover fails to consider. The author proposes *relational spillover* (Kristensen, 2023, p. 194) to illustrate the entanglement between human and animal lives within a specific disease situation. In the same section, Deborah Nadal’s chapter discusses the idea of interspecies camaraderie (Nadal, 2023, p. 186) as a way to encourage mutual care and togetherness among different living entities. The concept contributes

to Kristensen's relationality by calling attention to the need to reflect empathetically about more-than-human entanglements.

The volume's last section, Part IV, remains focused on the shared multispecies vulnerabilities and calls attention to One Health's colonial legacies. Kiheung Kim and Myung-Sun Chun's chapter traces the origins of preventive culling as a zoonotic disease control measure to Korea's colonial and postcolonial history. The authors demonstrate how culling practices are violent both towards human and nonhuman animals and put vulnerable humans at risk. They advocate public health practices to break away from embedded neoliberal forms of governance and colonial legacies.

During Korean annexation to the Japanese Empire (1910 – 1945), quarantine measures were implemented that focused on the disease spatiality instead of pathogenic microorganisms and infected individuals. Sanitation policy was guided by the fact that Korea stood as a buffer zone to Japanese mainland. During the quarantine process, humans and nonhumans were strictly controlled in order to prevent disease spreading towards the rest of the Japanese Empire.

The current day public health system still involves a state-led aggressive approach focused on containment with preventive culling. The process involves the mobilisation of a temporary labour force with variable levels of training and whose work has had associated mental health effects. Both domesticated and wild animals at risk are targeted with no clear demarcations between infected and uninfected. The authors consider that One Health disease control strategies should not focus on a containment model to secure health but on the linked biological, geographical and cultural vulnerabilities

between humans and nonhumans in a shared ecosystem.

This edited book brings particular attention to the social science and humanities contributions to One Health's current debates. The chapters expose power dynamics related to neoliberalism, anthropocentrism and colonial legacies. At the same time, the chapters help to rethink One Health principles of interconnectivity and interdisciplinarity. Irus Braverman brings these contributions together in a logical manner which illustrates the arguments for more-than-one healths, while concluding with an afterword that brings further potential for critical engagements with One Health.

Warwick Anderson's Afterword considers One Health as borderland and calls attention to concepts that define boundaries between lively entities. The "animal" category is oriented towards eukaryotic organisms (animals and plants). Meanwhile, prokaryotic organisms are only recognised as transmissible items in disease ecology. This eukaryote-prokaryote divide separates the living world while maintaining the illusion of the singular human body. These well-defined entities shape our understanding of disease risk.

The author proposes a "post-animal process ontology" (Anderson, 2023, p. 169) that considers "animal" not as a boundary but as no-unitary and interconnected. This moves beyond the volume's previous contributions towards an epistemic decolonisation of "thinking otherwise" about heterogeneous entanglements between lively entities. As Anderson mentions, while citing author Arundhati Roy: "historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew" (Anderson, 2023, p. 170). We need One Health that is not afraid to ask questions about how more-than-human relations are being formatted and is part of ongoing debates about what counts as health.

## References

- Anderson, W. (2023). *Among Animals, and More: One Health Otherwise*. In I. Braverman (Ed.), *More-than-One Health: Humans, Animals, and the Environment Post-COVID* (1st ed., pp. 265–272). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003294085>
- Braverman, I. (2023). One Health, Surveillance, and the Pandemic Treaty: An Interview with John H. Amuasi. In *More-than-One Health: Humans, Animals, and the Environment Post-COVID* (1st ed., pp. 55–78). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003294085>
- Hinchliffe, S. (2023). The Lure of One Health. In I. Braverman (Ed.), *More-than-One Health: Humans, Animals, and the Environment Post-COVID* (1st ed., pp. xix–xxxvii). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003294085>
- Kristensen, B. R. (2023). Anthrodependency, Zoonoses and Relational Spillover. In I. Braverman (Ed.), *More-than-One Health: Humans, Animals, and the Environment Post-COVID* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003294085>
- Nadal, D. (2023). Can Camaraderie Help Us Do Better than Compassion and Love for Nonhuman Health? Some Musing on One Health Inspired by the Case of Rabies in India. In I. Braverman (Ed.), *More-than-One Health: Humans, Animals, and the Environment Post-COVID* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003294085>

**Author:** MSc. Bernardo Couto Soares, DVM  
Research intern at Centre for Sustainable Animal Stewardship (CenSAS), Utrecht University  
Research assistant at Odyssey Conservation Trust

**Licensing:** All content in NJSTS is published under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). This means that anyone is free to share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) or adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material) the material as they like, provided they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.