

Conviviality Conference: October 4-9, 2021

Dana Powell

Invited Discussant for “Multispecies Relations” Panel

Commentary and Questions for Panelists

Between conflict and conviviality: Human-wildlife encounters and the political animal geography of land development

Sören Köpke

<https://vimeo.com/609178273>

Study of “human-wildlife conflict” and the urgent need for a social science perspective that sees the complexity of these conflicts; to decenter the anthropocentrism of political ecology, he takes a “political animal geography” approach, combined with “conviviality” (following Fletcher and Buscher’s 2020 call for this new perspective in conservation governance).

Uses a comparative case study approach, to look at of human-elephant conflicts in Sri Lanka and human-wolf conflicts in Saxony:

Sri Lanka: root cause is crop-raiding and human injuries, by elephants, outside of protected areas. Schemes to relocate and mitigate are failing. Elephants are killed despite being protected, given the “landscapes of fear” that people experience. Encroachment of humans on elephant habitat is the root cause – but of course these encroachments are driven by political processes of human migration due primarily to land dispossession.

Germany: wolves were extinct but in 2000 returned from Poland; they were strictly protected, and yet became “problem” animals, with a high profile shooting in 2007. Conflict due to wolf attacks on livestock/grazing animals – sheep in particular. Licenses issued to professional hunters to exterminate “problem” wolves and wolf packs.

This generates a polemical “wolf politics” – killing vs acceptance;

Or, **conflict**/extermination vs **conviviality**/fencing/compensation for livestock protection

Comparative analysis helps us see:

- As species, both are opportunistic feeders (elephants:crops; wolves:livestock)
- Both can outsmart fences
- Both are keystone species, shaping entire ecologies
- Changing ecologies/landscapes mean both force humans to adapt to their presence

The critique: The “re-wilding” of landscapes prompted by both encroachment and abandonment; overpopulation is a false narrative, and the underlying dynamics are political changes in land use.

Conviviality strategies involve:

1. Habituation – a historical awareness and human adaptation to wildlife

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2. Charisma – enrolment of humans into a sense of alliance with (distant) species

Conflict strategies involve:

1. Assault (from frequent human deaths in elephant case, to clandestine poaching operations); managerialism based on hostility
2. Evasion: some species can retreat into protected areas, and often, human “landscapes of fear” can enable animals to remain safe/free – thus human evasion of animals contributes to zones of rewilding.

Key Insight:

- Cohabitation/evasion can go hand-in-hand with conflict, due to complexity of land politics
- Institutional safeguards don't take cultural concepts into consideration
- Need to take seriously animals as political actors in this *politics of encounter*

DP REFLECTIONS:

I appreciate how Kopke makes two pushes: (1) decentering the human in political ecology (to a political animal geography), to show that land politics are now always, ultimately, about the human, and (2) deconstructing dominant dualisms in “conflict” vs “cooperation”, to show us that “conviviality” approaches offer a more complex, non-binary perspective, understanding habituation and charisma, getting us outside of dualistic thinking in learning to cohabit and flourish.

QUESTIONS:

I would ask, theoretically, how a more-than-human political ecology can reckon with the two core strategies of conviviality that Kopke offers (habituation and charisma), both of which still rely upon the centrality of human agency and human ethics, as we elect to adapt (or not) and to be enrolled (or not) in multispecies ecologies. In other words, the human gets perhaps re-centered in a methodology that relies upon habituation and charisma, to enable conviviality.

Second, what risks are implicit in a political animal geography approach, if we do not qualify or address the radically different historical positions of certain humans, over others? In both cases, the impacted humans are farmers (Sri Lanka) and herders (Germany), but the humans making federal wildlife policy are likely not directly engaged in land-based livelihoods, and have other stakes in controlling wildlife populations. So how can a political ecology in which the human is decentered, address the question of “which human?” (Cattelino), attending to the uneven power relations (caste, class, race, gender, etc) in play, in these socio-ecological zones of political encounter?

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*'Meet the family': Interspecies kinship as a politics of conviviality and conservation on
Australian heritage breed farms*

Catie Gressier

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/602353621>

Scale is key, in Illich's work on conviviality – true of industrial ag, but dominance of blood lines has resulted in specialization of breeds, leading to other extinct livestock breeds. Part of broader paradigm of biodiversity loss.

Diminishing seeds, breeds, and blood lines threaten social and ecological worlds. Diversity not only safeguards the future practically but also there are strong emotional and affective ties to breeds.

Relatedness is *feeding, living together, procreation, sharing of substance, and emotion* (Janet Carsten's schema); extend kinship across species boundaries to look at relatedness between animals and farmers, resulting in material outcomes.

Building from "to make kin ... as a practice to live and die well, together" (Haraway)

Personality traits in certain animals – lead ranchers to affective relations;

Are cows family?

Many answer, yes, they are.

A "human and many varied family"

Many heritage breed farmers would not think this – there is diversity among these perspectives;
not like humans but analogous to human family

Indigenous Australians in care for country have long counted animals among their kin.

Family membership, sharing of household space and nature of companionability, is no longer exclusively human. But cattle/pigs/poultry are often seen otherwise than domestic animals.

Examination, through ethnography, of Carsten's *feeding, living together, procreation, sharing of substance, and emotion* schema for relatedness.

1. *Feeding*

"From the moment they're born, I love my pigs and they love me ... and they make sure we have food on our table and love in our hearts..."

For heritage breed farmers, loving and killing are not at odds with one another. "Animals have a great life, and just one bad day."

Intimate killing vs intensive production.

Cannibalism as maternal care; relatedness can *include* eating one's kin.

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Kinship as mutuality of being (Sahlins); allowing two beings to become one. Eating flesh as act of kin-making.

Ontological and multispecies turn in anthro impacted by indigenous kinship – where animals seen as the affines of those who hunt them. Positive relations of giving and sharing, underpinned by love.

Notions of reciprocity – mutual benefit and burden – are at center of multispecies kinship relations.

Australian farmers have no government incentives to support livestock diversity in Australia; it is market driven – consumers desire for these diversity

2. *Con vivir – living together -*

E.g., making children's birthday cakes in their animal's likeness, celebrating these relations

Cohabitation also leads to competition and violence; strained gendered relationships (esp among fathers and sons), in the context of climate change, and other stressors.

Animal rivalry and aggressions are similar – Farmers must manage these kind of cohabitation risks.

Violent encounters among humans and bulls; breeding for temperament is the mitigation. Humans control them by substituting for the dominant animal. Animals draw humans into theirs, within the farming environment;

3. *Breeding*

Blood lines can be “diminished” and thus are to be protected; “we need cows that work” (informant); knowing a cow as an individual, seeing three generations of humans supporting a bovine bloodline. His work, in turn, supports the farmers.

4. *Substance*

Microgens, pathogens, sperm, blood, sweat, and tears – interspecies microbial exchanges bolster human health in some ways, but also an opportunity for dangerous pathogen transfer.

Blood and milk are most symbolic substances.

Milk breeds allow survival within drought conditions; keeping of house cow for milk is common practice on heritage breed farms. Blood is potent, like milk.

5. *Emotion*

Loyalty, blood, mutual obligation, which are extended across species.

Growing intensification and scale – cheap meat is high cost to enviro and animal welfare, an abuse of the ancient contract between people and animals. Urgency of climate change increases

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need to live together; ag can exacerbate or be part of the solution. Animal consumption deeply
entrenched in dietary practices and the national economy.

For Illich: conviviality entails the opposite of industrial productivity;

Overall: need to decenter the human to build more convivial relationships with those animals
most often considered ‘expendable.’

DP REFLECTIONS:

Appreciate the rich ethnography with Australian heritage breed farmers, to understand their
lifeworld as profoundly (so it seems) alternative to Fordist, capitalist mode of production; to see
their vulnerabilities (eg, to climate change, to intergenerational conflict, to the vagaries of animal
life) and not present them as simple “heros” in an anti-capitalist storyline as we might expect, but
to sense their complex struggles to live and make livelihoods with other species, upon whom
their lives depend – not only economical/materially, but as Gressier beautifully details,
affectively and meaningfully.

Theoretically, paper employs Carsten’s scheme for “Relatedness” alongside Illich’s notions of
scale (thus, the empirical focus on the heritage breed farms).

QUESTIONS:

Thinking with both theorists, how might (can?) Carsten’s schema be ‘scaled up’ to address
industrialized multispecies relations? For example, confined animal feeding operations of
thousands of hogs do not offer the scale, perhaps, for affective bonds of love and entangled
futures (between humans and pigs), but do they say something about *feeding, living together,*
procreation, sharing of substance, and emotion? Certainly, all four of those criteria are ‘in play’
in the factory farm, but not convivially so. So is our answer, as a collective, the total dismantling
of all large-scale operations? Can heritage breed multispecies ethics be ‘scaled up,’ in such a
manner that those four areas of Carsten’s schema could become sites for transformative
encounter, between humans and animals?

Second, Gressier notes the Aboriginal Australian kinship systems have long included animals as
kin; and this may not be “as analogous to humans” (as among the non-Native farmers), but as
beings with whom human life is metaphysically intertwined. Is it possible for farmers, even
heritage breed, to step outside fully from a relatedness that is fundamentally economic and
potentially utilitarian (eg., breeding is about blood lines, to ensure that “we have cows that
work”); are there perhaps other lessons on kinship and interspecies relationality from aboriginal
thought, that might infuse these theories of scale, livelihood, affect, and relatedness for farming
in Australia, in a broader sense? In particular, what boundaries does the “farmily” draw that
keep other species (wildlife predators) excluded from relatedness? Or can a wolf’s desire to prey
upon a sheep, be made sense of in terms of the necessary feeding relationship of relatedness?

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Caring for nonhumans beyond nature-culture dualism: Elephant conservation, mahoutship
labour, and multispecies entanglements in Sumatra, Indonesia

Lubabun Ni'am

<https://youtu.be/sVzMOoPVAcU>

- Sumatran elephants dispossessed due to transformation of rainforest areas;
- perpetuation of nature/culture dualism in elephant conservation practice
- human handlers' caring activities of elephants
 - o = entanglement of these handlers and captive elephants

Tangkahan, North Sumatra, Indonesia

Multispecies ethnographic methods for collecting sensorial understanding of engaging with
elephants

The "multispecies turn": to decenter humans and enlargen the scope of agency to include
nonhumans; to see how the world has become thru these entanglements. Not to see other
worlds outside humans' lifeworlds. Interrogation of being, becoming, long terminated by other
logics.

Theories of care: species activity, everything we do to prepare our worlds to live in it as well as
possible

(Puig de la B.)

An embodied form of grounded and practical ethics

Caring practice as the way humans and nonhumans dwell in an entangled world; dwelling is an
ecological view of inhabiting life world through immersion

Ingold's "dwelling perspective"

Dwelling (Ingold) + Caring (Puig de la B.)

This happens in three ways;

1. Fallen relationships; violence and yet closeness and companionship;
 - a. The handlers' longing for the elephants when they have not handled them for
many days; and yet you must be tough with them, sometimes "we must be daring"
2. Embodied companionships
 - a. Entering the forests as hybrid lifeworlds of humans and captive elephants;
companionships is grazing, but also feeding prepared foods, and bathing. "I dwell,
you dwell" (Ingold); becoming-with handlers/elephants. They are one another's
"companion species" (Haraway).

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3. Relational care and knowing

- a. Handlers' understandings are constructed through sensory experience of their practice and handling. Eg: 3 year old calf with leg and trunk ailment / cysts and application of this relational knowing enacted by handlers: after 2 weeks of treatment, a shaman was secretly invited (not told to vets), with 7 flowers concoction and salts to treat the cysts; the request was to ask the spirits not to disturb the elephants.

Conclusion – *shifts to video of walking through the forest [and yet we cannot tell if the walker is a human or an elephant; very powerful]*

Caring is NOT merely the act of caregiving, but a caring practice enacted by humans entangled with elephants

Multispecies care = a cultural space in which humans are not the only actors involved.

For conservation agents, “caring” is an action carried out by handlers on captive elephants, that carries idea of how captive elephants are “supposed to be” – But rather, this is a mutual caring relationship where elephants are active agents of caring.

The handlers' custodial labor can be relinquished from the broader context of the conservationist, to see that other kinds of relationships are possible. And this might undermine the elephant conservation agent (as sole significant actor).

DP REFLECTIONS:

Nuanced treatment of the caring practices of handlers, to ultimately distinguish their affective relations and practices from ‘the conservation agent.’ Show this through a blending of theory of care with theory of dwelling, a blend that emphasizes phenomenological anthropology and practices (beyond ‘caregiving’ in any conventional sense). Shows three arena, which cut across embodiment, knowledge, and practice – again reinforcing the strong phenomenological and practice theory approach in this analysis.

Case of elephants brought them alive as individuals, highlighting the significance of ethnography for multispecies methods; Ni'am's time spent with the handlers offers an intimate understanding of the affective and sensory relations and how they call upon forms of knowledge (eg the shaman to heal the cysts) in a manner that affirms care, outside of the bureaucratic requirements or expectations of statist conservation (biomedicine/the vet) and supports the argument about entangled relationality.

QUESTIONS:

How does your story and analysis defy the spatial dualisms you note in the beginning, fences, pens, boundaries, that define Cartesian conservation? Do the handlers and elephants working together (perhaps as they enter the hybrid forests?) enact a spatial politics that challenges the spatiality of care, the way in which conservation “units” (parks, reserves, sanctuaries) order the worlds of humans vs nonhumans? It seems that Ingold's “dwelling perspective” opens up more

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possibilities for seeing how a caring landscape is being co-constructed, by handlers & elephants
mutual acts of care.

Second, say more about the tension in caring, when those carting practices of captive animals may
edge towards violence for ‘control’ or ‘management’? (thinking here of Thom van Dooren’s
work on captive birds and breeding technologies, or the forced flight lessons, and other acts of
‘care’ where nature/culture dualisms arise again, as humans (“culture”) assume responsibility for
recreating wildlife (“nature”) through particular human-made technologies, to make that wildlife
live and reproduce. It is thus a biopolitics of care – to make the population live. Does this come
into play, in Tangkahan?

Symbiotic futures: Examining changes in the microbe/human relationship in agriculture

Holly Brause

<https://youtu.be/nNgbhrIxCxc>

Focus: Chili industry in New Mexico

Autobiographical point of entry, through farm smells, linked to her own background growing up
on family farm

Compost additive to protect chili plants, to improve soil health

Large commercial farmers taking interest in soil health

A difficult to observe multispecies relation: microbial life and large-scale farmers (to adopt soil
health practices and biological solutions); in part due to new awareness of microbes in health

Scientists, agriculturalists, and society’s increased awareness of chemicals – effects on bodies
and on soils. Soil health is microbial population health. Robust plants depend on diverse soils
with high level microbial life (at the root level).

Ag professionals now want to partner with microbial life to defend against diseases and pests and
improve soil.

Genomics is showing how all life on earth is dependent on microbial worlds. Growing
understanding of this for the health of the human body and is now impacting discussions of
microbial communities in the soil (comparing now to the human gut).

Body:soil analogy impacts wider understandings of human digestive tract and wider health and
diversity of soils. (So how we understand our interiors is impacting how we understand wider
landscapes of soils).

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Move to embrace organics is being affected by this; unexpected finding that conventional farmers are increasingly interested in organic practices – driven by soil (microbial health) interests

Soil – sheep relationship enhanced by microbes in soil (one farmer informant); ‘I’m confident my bugs in the soil are working for me.’

Narratives of work/labor, but also narratives of care – in microbes

Domestication: are humans recruiting smaller and smaller forms of life, into capitalist labor?

New ethics of care in the chili fields as farmers work to protect the soil microbiome (additives to rebuild, till/no till methods) = a more complex relation of reciprocity than what we expect to see in domestication. See this as a process of co-evolution in multispecies relationship, rather than just human domination.

Symbiotic relations as the norm, not aberrations, in nature; individuals are not individual, at all. All organisms are complex assemblages; intimate and corporeal connections with the world around us challenge the nature/culture divide.

May yield symbiotic futures, where fates are all entwined.

Long term vision of farming + multigenerational vision (different from the short-term nitro shot on a chili plant for growth)

Another possible future in the making and one that is already underway.

DP REFLECTIONS:

Fascinating to center the chili plant, esp. as the species perhaps most associated with New Mexico, culturally, as heritage, distinction, flavor, and ristra. The chili occupies a certain space in the US (Southwest, and beyond) cultural imaginary, so making it grow/tending/caring for it is entangled in wider cultural webs of meaning, linked with Hispano and Pueblo identities, transborder trade routes, and distinctive cuisine (“green or red?”) So taking up the chili plant does more ‘work’ for this analysis, in deconstructing the nature/culture divide, given its force as cultural actor.

I am interested in how microbes not only mediate new organic practices among large-scale conventional farmers, but also how you are thinking about their mediation of bodies and landscapes, interiors (guts) and exteriors (soils), and thus showing the entanglement of human bodies with the ‘environments’ that we are, and in which we live. This body:soil analogy is conceptually rich, and could be pushed even farther. (See Farquhar on “life cultivation” to think about embodied practices that further dilute this self:world distinction).

QUESTIONS:

What about the ways in which (as you seem to be suggesting) microbes invite the participation or enrollment of other nonhuman species? You briefly mention one farmer discussing the relation

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between sheep & soil as also mediated by microbes; this offers a unique take on multispecies relations, since most of the multispecies literature still tends to include a human as one (of two, possibly three) central actors in the relationships. But might microbes further decenter the human, by drawing attention to other interspecies relations where humans only mediate from a distance (the soil enhancer, the sheep herder) but not directly? Can microbes do this work?

And for the conventional farmers adopting soil remediation and organic techniques, in the name of soil health, do they see a new ethics of care and conviviality emerging, or are they driven by better 'outcomes' in a market sense? What other actors in your network here share and exhibit some of the hopefulness that you sense, for new possible futures already underway?

Issue of temporality seems key: being able to resist the quick-shot boost to a single plant, in exchange for a long-term, multigenerational investment that soil health requires. How do microbes push us to rethink the temporality of these emergent, convivial futures, and what it might take to build them (together)?

Wild life and wild death: Conviviality and the necropolitics of rewilding

Edda Starck

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJ-i4Ub_Fc

Scottish landscapes – narratives are in collision: depleted or wild?

Rewilding is a potential solution for depletion; conservation practices aimed at ecological stability, often re-intros of extirpated species. Letting natural processes restore degraded landscapes, making space for nonhuman agencies to do the work – to heal the anthropocene's damages.

Rewilding Scotland:

1. Urban rewilding; tree planting, community outreach, to rewild an urban space
2. Bamff – 1/3 of land given to rewilding. Among first in Scotland to re-intro beavers to Scotland, to prove peaceful co-living.

Conviviality (Bird Rose and van Dooren)

Scientific frameworks of ecological relations – healthy environments involve overlapping co-productions among species

Re-intro of species not always possible: gaps exist.

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EG: wolves – Wolf Memorial Stones. (artwork by artist that juxtaposes the celebration and the grief/mourning of this species)

Rewilding involves an ethics of liberation from capitalism but also eco destruction needing to be mitigated. Futures are based on very specific understandings of enviro health on climate change and biodiversity loss; draws boundaries on who belongs in these futures, and who does not (“native” vs “invasive” species); prospering some involves the destruction of others; this is the “necropolitics of belonging” – death/killing is divided into good and bad orders, and into abetting or contradicting conviviality, into grieving (wolves) or desiring death (invasive trees).

Contradictory categorization:

1. of birches; eg, threatening bogs. Despite being a native species receiving care from rewilding, the birches moving into bog territory needed to be removed.
2. Boars; extirpated like wolves years ago; collaborators at Bamff accepted them, as forestry managers for wilding; but they got 3 but 6 pigs including a young male; but they shot the alpha, the young male bred the female, and then the population spiked: the boars brought in as managers now needed to be managed, and eventually had to be gotten rid of.

So a core conflict: Rewilding necropower.

Anxieties over enviro health = new regimes of control, with lethal strategies; killing is a condition for some forms of rewilding conviviality. Natives can be reframed as invasives, so they become killable and then no longer grievable.

Power implicated in death and killing (necropower) implicated in rewilding and conviviality, as care and control have become irresolvably entangled.

How have convivial pursuits also enabled a necropolitics; how death occurs and

Not just living well together, but interrogating how death occurs and what meanings are ascribed to it.

DP COMMENTS:

This paper creative, importantly upends general assumptions about rewilding as a “hands off” approach – to let “Nature” do her thing, by pointing to a calculated bio/necropolitics that shapes how certain species are rendered valuable and others, killable (not grievable). Grievability is key here, not just as an affective stance of mourning/remembrance, but as a whole ethical position around loss/not loss; or necessary loss (collateral damage, perhaps) in a ‘war’ against crisis. Stark implores us to take a more critical view of rewilding – as well as broader conservation strategies – as nonhumans are constantly being categorized, ordered, signified, and valued by humans. Importantly, this exposes a flaw in a great deal of “multispecies thinking” that celebrates species without carefully examining the externalized costs (deaths/killings) of those celebrations. The birch trees story tells this well. The boar story shows the all-too-human

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fallability of best-laid plans, and the vital matter of humans' need to control, even rewilding processes, revealing rewilding as fundamentally a cultural, rather than a natural, practice; as an ostensibly passive stance ("let nature do what she will") that masks calculated valuations and devaluations of life.

QUESTIONS:

If conviviality requires necropower, can "care" then be re-perceived as necropolitical? If care is not just 'making live' but also 'letting die' – then it is biopolitical; but does it become necropolitical when we accept that relationality/coproductions of futures also depends upon death? If death/dying/killing is central to conviviality, what does that imply for the role of the human (who, in all of your cases, is placing historically contingent values on various forms of life) in a multispecies ethic, where "grievability" is perhaps not only a human emotion? What I'm getting at, here, is that rewilding's necropower seems to rely on a very centered, powerful, controlling human (a species/land "manager," of sorts) so if we are to imagine worlds in which the human is decentered, how might other species enact a necropolitics (can they even do so?) when predation/eating and being eaten, or defending, is not calculated from a place of anxiety about the future?

DP OVERALL COMMENTS

This is a fantastic set of papers that illuminates elephants, chili peppers, wolves, birches, boars, cattle, sheep, microbes, and deities.

From this set of excellent papers, we learn that conviviality involves:

- Habitation
- Charisma
- A politics of encounter
- Understanding animals and plants, as political actors shaping their own as well as human worlds
- *feeding, living together, procreation, sharing of substance, and emotion*
- caring, that is much more than caregiving; it is entanglement in a cultural space
- fallen relationships, embodied companionships, relational care and knowing
- considerations of scale
- seen and unseen realms; appeals to forces not often considered "ecological"
- multispecies redefinitions of family and kinship
- symbiosis
- examination of value and meanings, in interspecies encounters
- a necropolitics of belonging; that is, an honest examination of the power to kill, in the name of life (*vivir*)

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A key lesson binding these papers is that conviviality – *con vivir*, to live together – requires death and dying; and perhaps in ways more complicated than Haraway’s call for us to examine “living and dying well together,” given the necropolitics that Starck names, and which the other presenters also suggest, are present in farmers, handlers/mahoots, conservationists, rewilders, and other humans investments in managing life and death, indeed in optimizing life and death, for a future flourishing.

One central distinction to be made among these projects, is domestication – wildlife and possibilities for rewilding versus crops and livestock; a conviviality ethics seems to be shaped by where and how humans categorize the other species; for instance, Gressier notes that for Australian heritage farmers, loving and killing are not at odds with one another; while Starck examines the necropower at work, in rewilding schemes, showing how loving one species often requires killing another. What Gressier notes as the “expendibility” of some species, in the capitalist logic of industrial meat production, is perhaps for Stark part and parcel of what rewilding demands: that some species must be expended for the survival of others. This is worth further discussion.

Gressier introduces scale, a core idea in conviviality, from llich; and Brause leaps bravely into this question, by posing the microbial health of soil as a place where we might look, to see new practices of attunement to bodily and landscape connections. The health of the human gut mirrors wider environmental vitality, suggesting – through New Mexico’s signature species, the chili pepper – that entire ecosystems can literally be rebuilt, from the ground up, as conventional farmers adopt organic techniques, precisely to pursue the proliferation of microbes.

Ni’am upends ‘care’ and ‘dwelling’ by showing the labor of elephant handlers, who defy bureaucratic roles as “conservation agents,” through their intimate work with captive elephants. Kopke tracks elephants, too, but in Sri Lanka, where they generate “landscapes of fear” for humans, and defy statist efforts to contain the two-way assaults. Both Kopke and Stark invite us to think about wolves – as Western Europe’s signature extirpated species, now at the center of movements to re-wild Europe, but with both scholars reminding us that wolves invoke deeper natural-cultural histories, and their re-introduction and possible flourishing will necessarily involve other kinds of deaths.

In conclusion, from start to finish, in this set of papers:

Stark takes Kopke’s “wolf politics” to a “necropolitics,” and Ni’am’s discussion of the roughness, even violence of “care” into the act of killing, with the possibility of enacting deaths that are not grievable. The death of one chili plant, in Brause’s image, gets recast if we re-examine the politics of encounter (Kopke) and expendibility (Gressier), across differently valued species.

From my careful listening of these papers, I would also note two more understated affinities across the projects, that we may all want to bring forward for discussion:

1. ***decentering which human?***: multispecies anthropology has been criticized for “decentering the human” without interrogating “which human?” (Cattelino, forthcoming)

or of flattening historically particular differences among humans, that makes “decentering” a politically provocative move. *How can conviviality theory and practice – and its multispecies projects – bring more-than-human worlds to the fore, without giving up anthropology’s critical analysis of power?*

2. **temporality:** conviviality theory brings certain assumptions about time – a past, present, and future, symbiotic or otherwise, and a sense of intergenerational commitments, as well as grief that often activates historical traumas and dystopian and utopian visions. (Stark’s “Wolf Memorial Stones” demonstrate this; as does Brause’s note about resisting the nitrogen-shot tonic to the chili, in favor of long term soil investment). *So this moves me to ask, what might be gained by engaging in conviviality theory and practice without a sense of linear time?* (One resource here is Kyle Whyte’s recent piece, “Time as Kinship,” which moves relationality/relatedness out of linear temporalities).
3. **Species valuations:** In all of these cases, humanity’s ‘other’ is a species whose future seems bound up in our own and thus, we want to engineer its survival (whether thru rewilding reintroductions, soil health, heritage blood lines, or caregiving protection); *what does a multispecies conviviality offer us, when facing viral threats like the current pandemic?* When a “living together” demands not only practices of human isolation and distancing, but a suspicion of vector species, and a demonization of unseen actors who are so clearly, political agents reshaping human life?
4. **Ethnography:** All of these papers are ethnographically rich, emphasizing the significance of attending to more-than-human worlds, as (albeit limited!) human interlocutors ourselves, in those worlds. *How does conviviality inflect multispecies ethnography, in particular?* What attunements does it bring into focus for us, but also, what occlusions (if any), might it create?