

Call for Papers

Living with the Wild

**Wildlife, Civilization,
and the Trouble of Coexistence**

1–3 March 2027

**University of Catania
Department of Political and Social Sciences**

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The final conference of the **WILD-CONNECT project**—“**Wildlife Circulation and the Enactment of Civilization in Diachronic Perspective**”—will explore how relations between the “wild” and the “civilized” have been shaped across historical, political, and cultural contexts. The project approaches these categories as historically produced and mutually constitutive. Their boundaries are continuously renegotiated through institutions, practices, imaginaries, and material forms of life.

The conference invites scholars working on wildlife circulation, control, transformation, and reintroduction to explore how these processes shape social, political, and ecological orders. It builds on three **central questions**:

1. How have changing relations with animals, plants, and other organisms shaped what counts as wild or civilized across different historical and cultural contexts?
2. How has the circulation of living beings reconfigured relations among people, other organisms, and environments, and with what consequences for social, political, and ecological orders?
3. How have encounters with the wild exposed the limits of control and generated conflicts over sovereignty, value, and the terms of coexistence?

Central to the discussion are the interconnected processes of dewilding and rewilding.

Dewilding refers to practices that seek to render living beings and their environments compatible with particular social, political, and economic orders by suppressing or redirecting qualities understood as wild. These practices may involve controlling movement and reproduction, transforming habitats, or imposing classifications that determine where and under what conditions particular forms of life can belong. Dewilding does not necessarily eliminate wildness: it may selectively accommodate some of its forms while excluding others.

Rewilding refers to practices that seek to restore or expand possibilities for living beings to inhabit, move through, and reshape environments from which they have been excluded or within which their activities have been constrained. These practices also redefine which forms of wildness are valued, encouraged, or tolerated, and under what conditions. Rather than a return to an original state of nature, rewilding is a selective and contested reconfiguration of relations among living beings, environments, and institutions.

Dewilding and rewilding can operate within the same intervention, as restoring some forms of wildness may entail controlling or excluding others. Their interplay reveals how competing understandings of nature and civilization are enacted and contested through decisions about which forms of life belong, where, and under what conditions.

These questions of belonging also concern the terms of **coexistence**. Practices of wildlife governance shape how people and other living beings share environments, bringing competing claims to authority and different understandings of value into everyday relations with the wild.

Possible lines of discussion include:

- Historical and contemporary entanglements of dewilding and rewilding, including domestication, conservation, and ecological restoration.
 - Colonial and postcolonial wildlife governance and competing projects of civilization.
 - Sovereignty, borders, and wildlife circulation, including trade, migration, and the spread of pathogens.
 - Everyday encounters with wildlife: care, livelihoods, health, and conflicts over shared spaces.
 - Scientific, legal, and economic practices that classify and value living beings as useful, harmful, protected, or disposable.
 - Unintended consequences of wildlife governance and the limits of control.
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Keynotes

The conference will feature **keynote** contributions from leading scholars in anthropology, history, and ecological economics whose work speaks directly to the central themes of wildlife circulation and the enactment of civilization.



Vanessa Manceron
(CNRS, Paris)

Vanessa Manceron is an anthropologist at the CNRS in Paris whose research explores how people observe, care for, and protect living beings. Her ethnography of amateur naturalists in England, *Les Veilleurs du vivant* (2022), translated as *Wild and Wonderful* (2025), examines how attention to wildlife shapes knowledge and human–non-human relations. Her current research in southern Italy investigates bird protection and the judicialization of nature. Her work illuminates how wildlife becomes an object of care, expertise, and dispute, connecting everyday encounters with living beings to broader questions of governance.



Marcy Norton
(University of Pennsylvania)

Marcy Norton is a historian at the University of Pennsylvania whose research explores relations between Indigenous peoples, Europeans, and non-human beings in the early modern Atlantic world. *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures* (2008) traces the Atlantic histories of tobacco and chocolate. *The Tame and the Wild: People and Animals after 1492* (2024) examines how human–animal relationships shaped colonization in the Americas. Combining cultural, ecological, and interspecies perspectives, her work challenges conventional accounts of the Columbian Exchange and reveals how competing understandings of domestication and wildness shaped colonial orders and ideas of civilization.



Erik Gómez-Baggethun
(Norwegian University of Life Sciences)

Erik Gómez-Baggethun is Professor of Environmental Governance at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Senior Scientific Advisor at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, and Senior Associate at the University of Oxford. His research spans environmental governance, biodiversity conservation, ecological economics, and sustainability science, exploring relations between societies and the natural world. He has served as President of the International Society for Ecological Economics and as a Lead Author of the IPBES assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem values. His work examines how valuation shapes conservation priorities and the governance of non-human life.

Workshop Aims and Publication

The conference will take the form of an intensive workshop combining keynote contributions with papers selected through this open call. Accepted papers will be circulated among participants before the meeting to encourage sustained discussion.

By bringing together historical, ethnographic, and political-ecological perspectives, the workshop aims to develop a shared conceptual vocabulary for understanding how wildlife circulation participates in the making, contestation, and transformation of models of civilization. Beyond presenting individual case studies, it will examine how contemporary ways of relating to, regulating, and managing the wild shape broader assumptions about order, sovereignty, value, and relations between human and non-human forms of life.

Contributions presented at the conference will be considered for inclusion in a **collective volume or special issue** in an international journal in environmental humanities.

Organizers

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Maria Olivella Rizza

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How to Apply

We invite submissions from scholars working across anthropology, history, political ecology, environmental humanities, and related fields whose research engages with the themes outlined above.

Interested participants are invited to submit the following:

- an abstract of 300–400 words outlining the proposed contribution;
- a short biographical note (100–150 words);
- institutional affiliation, if any, and contact details.

Please send abstracts and biographical notes to:
mara.benadusi@unict.it • lorenzo.coccoli@unict.it

 **Deadline: 30 November 2026**

 **Notification: 2 January 2027**

