



Ruling on Nature
Animals and the Environment before the Court
Programme ANR-19-CE03-0006
<https://rulnat.cnrs.fr>

Contentious Species. Rewilding Practices and Wildlife Urbanisation

November 17, 9.30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**PALOC meeting room, Bâtiment 51, Campus Buffon, MNHN
(take 'Allée des Crapauds', at the end turn right – see map below)
43 rue Buffon, Paris 5**



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**Organised by Daniela Berti (CNRS, PALOC) & Anthony Good (University of Edinburgh),
with the support of PALOC (MNHN, IRD, CNRS)**

9.30 a.m. Coffee

10.00 a.m.

**Aníbal Garcia Arregui, Social Anthropology, University of Barcelona:
*Pig-prototypes for the cities of tomorrow***

Discussant: Thorsten Gieser, Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences

**Nitin Bathla, Urban Geography, University of Zürich:
*Urban Leopards and Feral Life: Cohabitation in the Landscapes of Urban-Wild
Enmeshment***

Discussant: Ritwick Dutta, LIFE, Doughty Street Chambers

Noon: Buffet

2.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Kim Ward, Human Geography, University of Plymouth:

Relational Wildness: Affective, Material and Epistemic Entanglements in Rewilding Landscapes

Discussant: **Anthony Good**, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh

Monica Vasile, Environmental Historian and Anthropologist, University of Oulu:

Rethinking the Bison's Place in Europe: Contested Ecologies of Reintroduction

Discussant: **Pauline Chasseray-Peraldi**, SPIRAL Research Center, Université de Liège

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Inheriting Corsica's feral cows: on ambiguous belongings and environmental porosity

Discussant: **Matthieu Salpeteur**, IRD, PALOC

Abstracts

Anibal Garcia Arregui, Social Anthropology, University of Barcelona:

Pig-prototypes for the cities of tomorrow

Ecological, social, and sanitary crises reveal that current ways of living in modern cities may be becoming obsolete. As non-human animals, plants, microorganisms, and atmospheric phenomena unsettle conventional urban orderings, humans find themselves in need of new conceptual and practical framings of coexistence. In this presentation, I draw on the case of "urban" wild boars in Barcelona to show how, despite obvious difficulties and risks, the exposure of humans to pigs (and vice versa), triggers experimental forms of interaction that can be read as "relational prototypes." Far from being free of potential failure, these relational prototypes tell us about often-neglected possibilities for imagining the cities of tomorrow.

Nitin Bathla, Urban Geography, University of Zürich:

Urban Leopards and Feral Life: Cohabitation in the Landscapes of Urban-Wild Enmeshment

As urbanization attains an increasingly planetary reach, transforming agrarian landscapes and commons beyond the city-countryside divide, 'rewilding' is gaining increasing popularity as a protective countermovement. This countermovement, comprising of a patchwork of actors, including state-led agencies, philanthropic and citizen led groups, as well as environmental lawyers, seeks to counter unregulated urbanization and mitigate its impacts by restoring biodiversity and ecological processes in areas designated as "wilderness" or "pristine nature." However, these legally and culturally constructed boundaries between urban and wilderness frequently diminish and collapse as

species like leopards, wolves, and cougars transgress and repurpose these spaces. I shall explore the enmeshment of urban and wilderness through human-animal interactions, examining how the more-than-human ecology of extended urbanization is produced and inhabited. It explores the different strategies and modalities of rewilding that generate a mosaic of “wilderness” spaces, such as biodiversity parks, urban forests, safari reserves, abandoned quarries, waterfronts, and green corridors, amidst the extended urbanization of nature. I also examine the governance of these spaces, focusing on how legal and property boundaries are upheld and how these efforts are captured for further capital accumulation. While grounded in empirical research from the Northern Aravalli Region in India, this presentation provides comparative insights into the global challenges of urban-wild enmeshment and the complexities of planning for coexistence in the era of planetary urbanization.

Kim Ward, Human Geography, University of Plymouth:

Relational Wildness: Affective, Material and Epistemic Entanglements in Rewilding Landscapes

Beneath the promise of rewilding lies a deep ambiguity about what we mean by *wild*. I want to suggest that wildness is not a fixed state but a relational process that emerges through the material, affective, and epistemic entanglements that bind people and more-than-human life. This reframing allows us to see rewilding not as a withdrawal of human management but as a reconfiguration of relations between care and control, emotion and ecology, ownership and belonging. This idea of *relational wildness* builds on my earlier work on beaver reintroduction in Scotland, where we traced how farmers, landowners and ecologists negotiated the presence of a reintroducing beavers into the landscape. Beavers complicate any simple division between natural and human worlds: they flood fields, reshape rivers, create wetlands, and in doing so they also re-shape social relations, property boundaries, and emotional attachments. Recently Ferraro and Whitehead (2025) describe rewilding as a *relationship-centred process*, a deliberate effort to forge new relations among species, landscapes, and people and Burlingame (2025) argue for *co-wilding* as “vibrant care and lively collaboration.” My aim is to extend these ideas empirically to show, through the cases of beavers and herbivores, how wildness itself is produced through these relations.

Monica Vasile, Environmental Historian and Anthropologist, University of Oulu:

Rethinking the Bison's Place in Europe: Contested Ecologies of Reintroduction

I explore how the European bison has become a site of contest over what belonging means in conservation. Drawing on cases from Romania and Poland, and on long-standing scientific disputes over its ecological niche, I trace how scientists, managers, and local residents disagree on what kind of animal the bison is and where it should live. In Romania, reintroduced bison that wander into villages prompt conflicting responses about whether they should be guided back to forests or allowed to roam. In Poland, debates persist over whether they should be fed hay or left to forage freely. Within European bison science lies a deeper uncertainty: is it a forest refugee from the Pleistocene steppe, a grassland specialist, or a flexible generalist able to adapt to contemporary forests—an issue that exposes larger tensions in reintroduction and rewilding between historical fidelity and future thinking. By following these controversies, the talk examines how ideas of species, wilderness, control, and coexistence are negotiated through the lives of reintroduced bison.

Pauline Chasseray-Peraldi, SPIRAL Research Center, Université de Liège

Inheriting Corsica's feral cows: on ambiguous belongings and environmental porosity

In Pietrosella in South Corsica, a beach has been secured with barriers to prevent cows from accessing the sea shore due to increasing friction with tourists. Cows have become a controversial matter, reaching contentious dimensions especially in the case of feral cows such

as the one from Pietrosella. If free-roaming animals are of common use on the island, and contribute to the touristic landscape, they become a public issue facing increasing accidents and pressure on shared environments. These controversies and tensions have favored new forms of control which redefine the culture of traceability and the relationships to livestock animals in Corsica. Nevertheless, feral cows have no legal existence in France hence questioning their belongings. Though they belong somewhere, they belong to no one, raising questions about who inherits their lives and deaths. The agro-pastoral history of the island has been progressively transformed especially due to economic migration, social changes, and side effects of European Union subsidies. Tracing feral cows' existences on the island, this presentation explores the porosity between domestication and wilderness, and examines the frictions between Corsican agro-pastoral tradition and contemporary agricultural infrastructures.

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