

Wolf Management in Switzerland

Relations between the limits of neoliberal conservation and competing perceptions about nature

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This study examines wolf management in Switzerland by drawing on critical academic debates of neoliberal conservation and human-wildlife conflicts, using the theoretical framework of poststructural political ecology. It follows the question of what we can learn from Swiss environmental politics (entailing wolf management) about the relationships human has with nature in Switzerland, engaging with actors' nature perceptions and practices who define and influence nature and wolf management. Competing ideas about nature are addressed, which are entrenched in social and political-economic structures. This focus contributes to increased comprehension of the conflicts between wolf conservation and agriculture in Switzerland.

A grounded theory approach was used to conduct and analyse semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in wolf management and key actors in nature conservation in Switzerland. A snowball sampling allowed to follow an 'iterative strategy', creating an interplay between generating theory and collecting data.

It was revealed that the conflicts between agriculture and wolf conservation go far beyond competing perceptions about nature between farmers and conservationists. Instead, it was revealed that Swiss citizens' worldviews, values, and nature perceptions are subject to societal changes steered by political-economic structures, underlying a neoliberalisation of nature conservation and environmentalism. While Swiss citizens are supposed to be transformed into environmental-friendly consumers, following the principle of green consumerism, agriculture, ever since the end of the 20th century, was turned into the scapegoat for environmental destruction. The presentation of complex environmental issues as simple and manageable obscures direct relations between producers and consumers and finally struggles to propose ways for a co-existence between livestock farming and wolves, in which both are respected, valued, and recognised as co-constituting each other.

Dissolving the nature-human dualism entrenched in current wolf management approaches and understanding nature as social could enhance more just approaches in the sense that ways of co-existence and cohabitation with wolves are found for rural *and* urban populations.

Keywords: Wolf Management, Poststructural Political Ecology, Social Nature, Neoliberal Conservation, Human-Wildlife Conflicts

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