# 1. Introduction

## The return of the wolves to Germany

The last wolf in Germany was shot in the Lausitz region of eastern Germany in 1904, and since then wolves have been considered extinct in the whole country. In fact, wolves made attempts to return throughout the twentieth century. However, as society was unwilling to tolerate them, all wolves were killed (either by humans or in road traffic) shortly after their arrival. As late as the 1990s, six wolves were still being killed, but something had changed in the meantime: wolves had become a protected species. Then, in 2000, two wolves from western Poland had managed to find each other in the Oberlausitz military training area in Saxony and formed the first reproducing wolf pack in almost a hundred years. It took five years for a second pack to be established, and after another five years there were seven packs, seven pairs and six territorial solitary wolves, spread across the states of Saxony, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Hesse and Bavaria. By the 2020–21 monitoring year, the wolf population had increased to 159 packs, thirty-eight pairs, twenty-two territorial solitary wolves and 575 confirmed pups in ten of the sixteen federal states (most of them in Saxony, Brandenburg and Lower Saxony). Germany now has one of the largest wolf populations in Europe, and it continues to grow.[1]

But numbers alone give an incomplete picture. Unlike the return or reintroduction of other wildlife species, such as lynx or beavers, the return of

1 For the international status of the species wolf, Canis lupus, see https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/3746/144226239#population (accessed: 30.03.2024). For the status of the wolf in Germany, see https://www.dbb-wolf.de/ (accessed: 30.03.2024). In the last monitoring year, 2022/23, the population has grown to 184 packs, forty-eight pairs, and twenty-two territorial solitary wolves and 640 confirmed pups.

wolves seems to have a different quality. Conflicts overshadow the establishment of any kind of coexistence. Wolves enter our lives in many different ways. Wolves are being sighted in new places all the time. Videos and pictures of wolf sightings and encounters circulate on social media. Wolves are establishing new territories. Wolves cross roads and sometimes become victims of traffic accidents. Wolves attack sheep, sometimes horses and cows, overcoming herd protection measures. Wolves are occasionally found to have been illegally killed and buried. People take to the streets to protest against the return of wolves. Public meetings and lectures about wolves are held. People visit wolf exhibitions and wolf parks. In rare cases, wolves mate with dogs and produce hybrids. Sometimes wolves are officially declared 'problem wolves' (after long and heated debates) because they have repeatedly killed farm animals or shown 'unnatural' behaviour. There are media reports that a problem wolf has been killed, or that a wolf could not be killed despite efforts to do so, because it has mysteriously disappeared or moved to a neighbouring state where the original permit for its legal 'removal' (killing) is not valid. Animal rights activists are suing, or threatening to sue, individual politicians or institutions for issuing such permits.[2]

## Living with wolves: coexistence as an affective affair

We can see that the return of wolves to Germany is full of potential and real conflicts, and it is no wonder that it has created a highly emotional situation. The parties involved accuse the other side of being too emotional, while they themselves claim to be rational and generally call for a calming of emotions and more objectivity in the debate. And yet emotions always boil up. In parliamentary debates, public speeches and street protests, actors champion their causes and express indignation or outrage. Livestock owners are frustrated and express

2 For current attitudes and opinions on wolves in Germany, see Arbieu, Ugo et al.: 'Attitudes towards returning wolves (Canis lupus) in Germany: Exposure, information sources and trust matter', in: Biological Conservation 234 (2019), pp. 202–210, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.03.027; Lehnen, Lisa/Mueller, Thomas/Reinhardt, Ilka/Kaczensky, Petra/Arbieu, Ugo: 'Gesellschaftliche Einstellungen zur Rückkehr des Wolfs nach Deutschland', in: Natur und Landschaft 1/2021, pp. 27–33, https://doi.org/ 10.17433/1.2021.50153871.27-33. Pates, Rebecca/Leser, Julia: The wolves are coming back. The politics of fear in Eastern Germany, Manchester: Manchester University Press 2021.

their constant concern for their animals. Wolf critics and supporters meet online and offline and get angry or upset with each other. On the one hand, hatred of wolves has led to illegal killings. On the other hand, wolf supporters meet the return of wolves with love and fascination. Meanwhile, most people seem just a little uneasy and don't know what to make of this new situation. They want and need their concerns to be 'taken seriously', as a common phrase in Germany in recent years has gone – especially by politicians and official wolf managers.

The conflicts between humans and wolves are therefore far from being exhausted in the social scientific study of rational debates, the exchange of arguments, or in public knowledge, opinions and attitudes. There seems to be an implicit assumption shared by almost everyone involved that the conflicts can be resolved by 1) more knowledge, 2) more objective ways of dealing with it. Therefore, the role of science and scientific knowledge is paramount in the whole discourse on wolves.[3] While there is certainly a place for studies of knowledge and attitudes in the conflicts, it is clear that they leave significant dimensions of the conflicts unexamined. This is because human-wolf coexistence is not 'emotionally neutral': whether coexistence or conflict, the relationship is deeply emotional.[4] This insight, although often observed, has not yet led to a comprehensive study of the role of emotions in the human-wolf relationship. What is needed, then, is an approach that thinks through emotions in their various manifestations with a nuanced understanding. Two brief examples from my fieldwork give a preliminary idea of where such a perspective might lead.

One of the first hunters I interviewed in Lusatia was introduced to me by a research partner who described him as an opponent of wolves. On the phone, his first question to me was: "Are you one of those wolf fanatics?" He agreed to talk to me (without a recorder), and I visited him in his 'hunting room', which he had set up above his garage: wood-panelled walls hung with trophies and posters of game, and a sticker from the action alliance 'Wolf-Nein Danke!' on the door. At the end of the interview, as I was packing my things, I asked him

3 See von Essen, Erica: 'Whose Discourse is it Anyway? Understanding Resistance through the Rise of "Barstool Biology"' in Nature Conservation, in: Environmental Communication 11 (4) (2017), pp. 470–489, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2015.1042986.

4 Thorsten Gieser/von Essen, Erica: 'Wolves, ecologies of fear, and the affective challenges of coexistence', Society and Space, 6 September 2021, https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/wolves-ecologies-of-fear (accessed 18.06.2022).

one last question. Would he consider himself a strong opponent of wolves? "Nooo!" he shouted, visibly agitated and gesticulating wildly. "I just want more rationality in the debate!" An emotional outburst combined with a call for rationality may be paradoxical, but it reveals the characteristics of the public conflicts about human-wolf coexistence.

Although the 'order of discourse' in contemporary society dictates that debates should be conducted according to facts and reason, and that emotions are out of place as a disruptive factor or irritant, emotions cannot be so easily suppressed. This includes the fact that all participants in these debates claim objectivity and rationality for themselves and deny it to the other side. Accordingly, it is always the other side that is emotional. The only group that publicly claims emotionality (and even makes political capital out of it) are the livestock owners. In a public debate, for example, a young female professional shepherd from the Eifel region exclaimed:

> [Shepherd:] We live at the existential minimum, like most shepherds. This is a profession with a lot of idealism, and by the way, how are we supposed to enter the debate completely without emotions if the sheep are not wild like game, but they belong to us?
>
> [Moderator:] You don't have to. It's all right [...] Emotions. [loud applause from the audience].[5]

It seems that there is room in the public discourse for a 'justified', positively interpreted emotionality. For the shepherdess, it seems legitimate to express her emotions because they are interpreted as a sign of a positive relationship with her animals. This emotional relationship adds another dimension to the (rational) arguments about the 'ecosystem services' of grazing animals, which are usually presented as objective arguments. But why are shepherds allowed to claim emotions and express them in debates, while others (like hunters or wolf friends) are not? What kind of emotional relationship do they have with their animals? What is the role of the (deliberately played) 'emotional card' in relation to rational arguments in public discourse?

These and several other questions arise from two overarching questions that have guided my research: What role do emotions play in human-wolf relationships, and how are emotions mobilised, performed, encouraged, denied,

5 SWR wolf panel discussion, Daaden, 21.11.2019, author's minutes.

withheld, or disciplined in the course of human-wolf coexistence and practices? In this book I address these questions by opening up the concept of emotion to mean more than an internal, subjective and human experience, treating it instead as a phenomenon of more-than-human affect. Colloquially, affect refers to "a temporary excitement or surge of emotion caused by external events or internal psychic processes"[6], although the exact occasion is often unclear and remains undefined. Affect is also associated with an impulse to act that is difficult to control. The working definition used in this book differs somewhat from colloquial usage and is primarily informed by recent developments in interdisciplinary affect theory.[7] By *affectivity* in the broadest sense I mean here:

> […] a fundamental driving force of [more-than-] human coexistence. Affectivity is, on the one hand, very direct power, movement, intensity, liveliness, and, on the other hand, a thoroughly social, interpersonal event, a mode of being together, a lived and experienced being-in-relation, a multifaceted dynamic 'in-between'. [8]

*Affect touches, moves, concerns, influences, excites, irritates and agitates us. Affect thus describes one of the fundamental ways in which bodies are alive, responsive and sensitively engaged with the world. To be alive in this context is to have the capacity to affect and be affected.* This relational affective dynamic is also the basis for wolf-human coexistence.

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6 Wikipedia entry 'Affekt', https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affekt (translated by TG, accessed: 30.04.2024).

7 I refer for the most part to the extensive works of the Berlin Collaborative Research Centre SFB Affective Societies, see e.g. Slaby, Jan/Scheve, Christian v. (eds.): Affective societies. Key concepts (= Routledge studies in affective societies), London/New York: Routledge 2019 as a survey work, as well as the cultural geographer Ben Anderson, see Anderson, Ben: Encountering affect. Capacities, apparatuses, conditions (= An Ashgate Book), London/New York: Routledge 2016.

8 Slaby, Jan/Mühlhoff, Rainer/Wüschner, Philipp: 'Affektive Relationalität. Umrisse eines philosophischen Forschungsprogramms', in: Eberlein, Undine (ed.), Zwischenleiblichkeit und bewegtes Verstehen—Intercorporeity, Movement and Tacit Knowledge, Bielefeld: transcript 2016, pp. 69–108, here p. 69, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839435793-004.

My basic assumption is that when humans and wolves meet – directly or indirectly – something happens.[9] Individual actors are affectively moved and transformed in many ways: in their phenomenal experience, in their bodily behaviour, in their knowledge and in their values. In order to be able to analyse what is happening in detail, this book uses 'affect' rather loosely as an umbrella term for a variety of related phenomena that arise from such a definition of affect but can take different forms, from feelings and emotions to atmospheres, moods and sentiments. Understood in this way, the term allows us to encompass and bring together pre-subjective, subjective and also intersubjective experiences, spontaneous and sustained affects, stabilising and destabilising affects, human and animal affects. At a basic level, I distinguish between affect, feeling and emotion. In short, while *affect* refers to the interpersonal dynamics between actors, *feeling* refers to the subjective experience of being affected, and emotion refers to the socio-cultural structuring of feelings into categories that can be grasped in language (anger, indignation, envy, love, etc.).

This micro-level analysis of individual actors is complemented by a meso-level analysis in which affects, emotions and feelings are seen as expressions of broader socio-cultural and more-than-human affective structures such as atmospheres, moods and sentiments. In this context, I understand *atmosphere*[10] to be a spatially diffuse quality of feeling that is perceptible to those present, that grips them and affects them by colouring or attuning their momentary state of being according to the atmosphere. It is therefore a kind of 'space of possibility' for affecting and being affected, in which the experience of a certain quality of feeling is made possible without necessarily imposing itself. I understand *mood* as a special case of atmosphere. While not only people, but also spatial environments (architecture, landscape) and other living beings (plants,

9 On the importance of wolf encounters in general, see also Arbieu, Ugo et al.: 'The positive experience of encountering wolves in the wild', in: Conservation Science and Practice 2.5 (2020), article e184, https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.184; Eriksson, Max/Sandström, Camilla/Ericsson, Göran: 'Direct experience and attitude change towards bears and wolves', in: Wildlife Biology 21.3 (2015), pp. 131–137, https://doi.org/10.2981/wlb.00062Wam, Hilde Karine: Wolf behaviour towards people. the outcome of 125 monitored encounters. Cand. Scient. thesis. Norwegian Agriculture University, Ås 2002.

10 See Riedel, Friedlind: 'Atmosphere', in: J. Slaby/C. v. Scheve (eds.), Affective societies, pp. 85–95; Slaby, Jan: 'Atmospheres—Schmitz, Massumi and beyond', in: Friedlind Riedel/Juha Torvinen (eds.), Music as Atmosphere: Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds, London: Routledge 2019.

animals) can contribute to the latter, mood is primarily created by and for people in a social situation and thus requires an affective effort (hence the central role of intentionally creating or stirring up moods later). In this book, the term *sentiment* replaces other terms used in the social science literature on wolves, such as opinion or attitude. These terms all refer to primarily cognitive-rational processes, which are then usually supplemented by the separate category of emotion. Sentiments, on the other hand, assume that cognitive and emotional processes occur together. They are an 'evaluative regime of meaning as embedded in and coloured by affective and emotional dynamics'[11] and can find entry in vague emotional experiences as well as in opinions or value judgements.

Finally, these considerations are brought together at the macro level when wolf management regimes are considered as *affective arrangements*, a specific constellation of conditions in which the lives of people and wolves can be intertwined with each other and with broader socio-material forces: from the individual to the societal level, from local to global conditions, from practices to discourses, from ideas and values to the material environment.[12] As a Foucauldian *affective dispositif*, disciplinary regimes of wolf management create and mobilise frames of possible knowledge as well as possible practices, experiences and relations, while constraining and invalidating alternative frames.

Following the sociologist Norbert Elias, this affective dispositif can also be seen as a (social) "order of interweaving human impulses and strivings"[13] that underlies a civilising process, by which he means "how the regulation of the whole instinctual and affective life by steady self-control became more and more stable, more even and more all-embracing"[14]. Each society, then, is endowed with its own particular affective order, which becomes more and more rigorous, more and more regulative, more and more controlled, both by social means and by internalised self-control. The more differentiated a society becomes, the more we rely on more and more people in their various functions and roles in our everyday lives, the greater the need to behave in an affectively restrained manner (as exemplified in particular by norms and rules of behaviour, politeness, manners).

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11 Bens, Jonas/Zenker, Olaf: 'Sentiment', in: J. Slaby/C. v. Scheve (eds.), Affective societies, p. 96.

12 Slaby, Jan/Mühlhoff, Rainer/Wüschner, Philipp: 'Affective Arrangements', in: Emotion Review 11.1 (2019), pp. 3–12, p. 5, https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073917722214.

13 Elias, Norbert: The Civilising Process, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, p. 366.

14 Ibid: p. 265.

Elias develops his ideas on the civilising process through an examination of German and French history, so it is not surprising to find that Germany is very 'civilised' in terms of norms and rules of affect regulation in public. As one of the leading nations in the development of Enlightenment ideas and the hegemony of reason, it is perhaps not surprising that Germany has a reputation for being a very rational and affect-regulated society. Whether this stereotype was ever true is, of course, debatable. What seems certain, however, is that on the one hand, there has been an increase in even stricter affect regulation in contemporary German society, a new moral sensitivity, especially with regard to discrimination, inequality, racism, classism, etc.[15]

On the other hand, in recent years social scientists have increasingly diagnosed a rise in unregulated public affect. As early as the 1980s, international observers coined the term 'German Angst' to diagnose post-war German society's heightened sensitivity to fear and anxiety.[16] More recently, Germany has been described by various scholars as "the irritated society"[17], "the fear/anxiety society"[18], "the upset society"[19], "the disgruntled democracy"[20], "the agitated Republic" with its *Wutbürger* (enraged citizens)[21]. But it still seems unclear though what is behind these recent changes: is it the rise of social media, the decline of 'traditional' media, a crisis of political parties, economic decline and growing social inequalities?

Whatever the reasons, these paradoxical affective trends form the background to the return of wolves to Germany. In comparison to other European countries, it has been suggested that "despite strong pressure for policy

15 Flaßpöhler, Svenja: Sensibel. Über moderne Empfindlichkeit und die Grenzen des Zumutbaren, Leipzig: Lagato Verlag 2021.

16 Pates/Leser: The wolves are coming back, p. 137.

17 Pörksen, Bernhard: Die große Gereiztheit. Wege aus der kollektiven Erregung, Carl Hanser Verlag GmbH & Co. KG 2018.

18 Lübke, Christiane/Delhey, Jan (eds.): Diagnose Angstgesellschaft? Was wir wirklich über die Gefühlslage der Menschen wissen (= Band 51), Bielefeld, Germany: transcript Verlag 2019.

19 Hübl, Philipp: Die aufgeregte Gesellschaft. Wie Emotionen unsere Moral prägen und die Polarisierung verstärken (= Onleihe. E-Book), München: C. Bertelsmann Verlag 2019.

20 Braun, Stephan/Geisler, Alexander (eds.): Die verstimmte Demokratie. Moderne Volksherrschaft zwischen Aufbruch und Frustration (= SpringerLink Bücher), Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften; Imprint: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2012.

21 Bussemer, Thymian: Die erregte Republik: Wutbürger und die Macht der Medien. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 2014.

change, wolf governance has remained very stable and dominated by a vision of wolves as an adaptive, self-regulating species that can be accommodated in cultural landscapes with very limited lethal control."[22] In contrast to many Eastern European countries with wolf populations, the wolf is a highly politicised issue and stakeholders have been challenging the protected status of the wolf for years. But unlike in the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland), these challenges and public battles over the wolf have not yet led to major changes in wolf policy and management. As it turns out, the 'path dependency' of policies and laws created and institutionalised by Germany when it signed the EU Habitats Directive before the actual return of wolves has withstood all attacks, despite several critical events in the last twenty years (petitions, protests, illegal killings, changes in the derogations). The question, however, is whether this path-dependency will hold up against growing publicly vented anger and resentment, and increasingly organised and professionalised protest and lobbying by anti-wolf activists. Germany now seems to be at a crossroads.

## Living with wolves: an etho-ethnological approach

This book is thus an ethnography of the affective dimensions of human-wolf coexistence in Germany at the beginning of the twenty-first century, combining perspectives from anthropology, cultural geography, philosophy, and (wolf) biology. Based on almost three years of ethnographic fieldwork, I examine in particular how wolves actively shape this coexistence and how their lives and actions directly and indirectly affect humans. These are fundamentally ecological questions – provided that ecology is understood as more than the quantitative study of energy and material exchange processes. Jens Soentgen points out that ecology as a relational science has unfortunately largely degenerated into an ecology of objects and has lost sight of the subjects, i.e. it fails to take into account that ecological relationships are lived and experienced by subjects with consciousness and feelings. He therefore argues that a humanistic-hermeneu-

22 Niedziałkowski, Krzysztof: 'Between Europeanisation and politicisation: wolf policy and politics in Germany'. Environmental Politics, 32 (2023), 793–814. Here p. 3, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2022.2127646.

tic methodology should be added to the scientific methodology to complement the 'traditional' ecological concern with such an ecology of subjects.[23]

In environmental anthropology, Tim Ingold in particular has developed an ecological approach to life over the last thirty years that unites ecological relations between organisms and socio-cultural relations between 'persons'.[24] For Ingold, both humans and wolves would be considered ecologically situated living beings inhabiting a common lifeworld, which they come to know through practical and habitual interaction with the components of their inanimate environment as well as through encounters with their fellow inhabitants. Such a *dwelling perspective* operates implicitly with what Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert called a '*hesitant* anthropomorphism', i.e. "speculating that some animals may have some qualities akin to humans *alongside* much that will be different, other and unavailable to human ken".[25] What they have in common is that they are sentient and affective beings: "Both humans and non-humans […] conduct themselves skilfully in and through their surroundings, deploying capacities of attention and response that have been developmentally embodied through practice and experience".[26]

Thus, if we understand both humans and wolves as living beings mutually affecting and being affected by each other through their actions and behaviours in a common, shared lifeworld, then we must also place an ethological approach (broadly defined) alongside an ethnological/anthropological approach and combine both into an etho-ethnological approach. This would assume that humans and wolves share a common lifeworld,[27] in hybrid communities consisting of a multiplicity of human and non-human beings, that is, in a

23 Soentgen, Jens: Ökologie der Angst (= Fröhliche Wissenschaft, vol. 117), Berlin: Matthes und Seitz 2018.

24 Ingold, Tim: The perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill, London/New York: Routledge 2000; Tim Ingold: Being Alive. Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description, London: Routledge 2011.

25 Philo, Chris/Wilbert, Chris (eds.): Animal spaces, beastly places. New geographies of human-animal relations (= Critical geographies, Vol. 10), London/New York: Routledge 2000, p. 23 (emphasis added); see also Ingold, Tim: What is an animal? (= One World archaeology, vol. 1), Milton Park et al: Routledge 1994.

26 T. Ingold: Being Alive, p. 11.

27 Ohrem, Dominik: '(In)VulnerAbilities: Postanthropozentrische Perspektiven auf Verwundbarkeit, Handlungsmacht und die Ontologie des Körpers', in: S. Wirth et al. (eds.), Das Handeln der Tiere, pp. 67–92, here p. 78, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839432266-002.

'multispecies world'[28] or a 'nature-culture',[29] in which becoming is always a becoming-with, life is always a living-together. With Dominique Lestel, Florence Brunois, and Florence Gaunet, we can summarise the coexistence of humans and wolves as follows:

> Some human societies may upon occasion interact with wolf societies, for example, but ethologists and ethnologists generally and implicitly consider that human societies and wolf societies are two different kinds of thing with separate dynamics, even if the two may interact from time to time. The idea that a wolf society and a human society occupying the same ecosystem might eventually make up a 'lupo-human' society which should be studied in itself is generally not regarded as an option to be envisaged. Yet that is precisely what we want to do. It is therefore no longer a question of considering one as external to the other but of regarding the two societies, human and wolf, as the two poles of a global system that needs to be understood as such and its dynamics described, to which should no doubt be added societies of dogs and of sheep.[30]

*Living with wolves* therefore refers to a way of life that is lived in the co-presence of the other and in which both parties shape their lives in the awareness of this coexistence. It is important to note that this coexistence does not only consist of direct encounters. On the contrary, wolves usually keep to themselves and encounters with humans are rare. However, their bodies linger after they have

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28 Ameli, Katharina: Multispecies Ethnography, Bielefeld: transcript 2021, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839455326; Hartigan Jr, John: 'Knowing Animals: Multispecies Ethnography and the Scope of Anthropology', in: American Anthropologist 123.4 (2021), pp. 846–860, https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13631; Kirksey, Eben/Helmreich, Stefan: 'The emergence of multispecies ethnography', in: Cultural Anthropology 25.4 (2010), pp. 545–576, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01069.x.

29 Gesing, Friederike et al. (eds.): NaturenKulturen. Denkräume und Werkzeuge für neue politische Ökologien (= Edition Kulturwissenschaft, Vol. 146), Bielefeld: transcript 2019, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839440070.

30 Lestel, Dominique/Brunois, Florence/Gaunet, Florence: 'Etho-etnology and ethno-ethology', in: Social Science Information 45.2 (2006), pp. 155–177, here p. 157, https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018406063633; Lestel, Dominique/Bussolini, Jeffrey/Chrulew, Matthew: 'The Phenomenology of Animal Life', in: Environmental Humanities 5.1 (2014), pp. 125–148, https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615442; Lescureux, Nicolas: 'Towards the necessity of a new interactive approach integrating ethnology, ecology in the study of the relationship between Kyrgyz stockbreeders and wolves', in: Social Science Information 45 (2006), pp. 463–478, https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018406066536.

moved on. They leave scent trails as they move through their territory, they leave hair behind as they pass through vegetation, they mark their territory with urine and scat, their howling echoes through the twilight. Likewise, their physical actions and movements inscribe themselves on the landscape when they press tracks into the ground with their paws, when they dig dens, when they scratch the ground and mark their territory, or when they leave the remains of killed animals for others to find.[31] In an affective sense, wolves thus create a potentially *felt presence* that extends their immediate physical location both geographically (across the landscape) and temporally. They are—affectively understood—"territorial engineers".[32]

Humans also create such felt presences through their bodies and bodily actions when they walk, hike, cycle, or drive through a landscape—a landscape that is shaped by its roads, paths, buildings, villages, and towns. At the same time, such presences do not always appear unambiguously, but can present themselves quite differently to different actors. Fences or livestock guarding dogs, for example, are evidence of a human presence to wolves, but evidence of a wolf presence to humans.

Of course, these human and non-human presences are not necessarily perceived by everyone; it depends on people's sensitivity to wolves and their motivation to perceive them. There is also the option of ignoring such presences – unless they force themselves upon you, as is the case if you are a shepherd whose sheep are being killed by wolves. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the presence of wolves, as both their population size and geographical distribution increase. Most importantly, the wolf's presence also changes register, moving on in different forms through processes of "transduction", as Stefan Helmreich calls the reshaping and transformation of signals through media.[33] The affective intensities and forces of the physical presence of wolves can be transformed into narratives, social media postings, pho-

31 These bodily signs in the landscape can be read as a form of interspecies communication, see Boonman-Berson, S.; Turnhout, E.; Carolan, M.: 'Common sensing: Human-black bear cohabitation practices in Colorado', in: Geoforum 2016, 74, 192–201, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.06.010.

32 Hastrup, Kirsten: 'Dogs among others. Inughuit companions in Northwest Greenland', in: Robert J. Losey/Robert P. Wishart/Jan P. L. Loovers (eds.), Dogs in the North. Stories of cooperation and co-domestication, London and New York: Routledge 2018, pp. 212–232, here p. 214.

33 Helmreich, Stefan: 'Listening against Soundscapes', in: Anthropology News 51.9 (2010), p. 10, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-3502.2010.51910.x.

tographs, artworks, etc., where they leave *affective traces* that move the recipients in certain ways and thus gain access to cultural memory. This study differs from others in that it does not start its investigation of the coexistence of humans and wolves with these affective traces—in the terrain commonly called the cultural (human) sphere—but with what humans and wolves *do* in a common 'lupo-human' society.

## Methodology: an ethnographic approach to human-wolf coexistence

This lupo-human society is complex. It involves different actors, many institutions at different levels (from local to national to international), different types of legislation, a range of opinions and attitudes as well as representations, experiences, narratives, knowledge and practices. To add to the complexity, Germany's federal political system frames these relationships differently at the state level. Each state has its own wolf management plan, legislation, institutions, etc., so situations can vary greatly even between neighbouring states. Nevertheless, incidents in other states – and even other countries – feed into the human-wolf relationship, as everything related to wolves circulates in the (social) media and becomes entangled with local situations. Finally, the wolves themselves are unevenly distributed across the country, being newcomers in some places and established in others. Pack culture varies between different packs, and even individual wolves – as seen in the lives of the so-called problem wolves – act and behave in their own individual ways, rather than conforming to a supposed standard of 'species-typical behaviour'. In short, this high level of complexity cannot be addressed with a single-method study, but requires a multi-method approach: ethnography.

Ethnography is a qualitative empirical research strategy that aims to explore socio-cultural life where and as it happens, using a variety of methods in a flexible way according to the needs of the field.[34] This multi-method approach allows for the collection, production and interpretation of multiple types of data (field notes, interview transcripts, images and videos, social media postings, official documents, press releases, 'grey literature', etc.) over an extended period of time, which can complement and comment on each other, increasing the complexity of phenomena and thus deepening interpretations and understanding. Although several methods are used (participant observation, inter-

34 Pink, Sarah: Doing Sensory Ethnography, London: Sage 2009.

views, textual analysis, visual analysis), there is a strong focus on participant observation, tracing socio-cultural processes of meaning making as, when and where they occur. Ethnographic fieldwork thus enables the researcher to capture the rich complexity of lived reality, rather than reducing it to a particular dimension (such as opinions or attitudes) or perspective (such as that of hunters or animal rights activists). It is underpinned by the ethnographer's experience of continuous engagement and immersion in the field, which enables them to see connections between data and to evaluate them against a range of other data through a recursive research design. Finally, in this process, data production, collection and interpretation alternate constantly, complementing and developing the hermeneutic process of understanding. Following Stefan Hirschauer and Klaus Amann, this ethnographic approach relies "on a 'soft' concept of method, but a 'hard' concept of empiricism".[35] In other words, methods must be flexible and adapted so that the researcher is best able to explore the phenomenon, rather than prioritising a rigid set of methods even when realising that they are ill-suited to grasp the phenomenon in question.

If the aim is to study the coexistence of wolves and humans, the question arises as to where the anthropologist's 'field' actually is. The usual approach of defining the field in terms of a central location is of limited help here. Nevertheless, I have chosen two geographical areas as the focus of my research, without limiting myself to them. The first, Lusatia in Saxony (and southern Brandenburg), close to the German-Polish border, was the first region in Germany to be colonised by wolves in 2000. Since then, it has become "the largest contiguous area inhabited by wolves in this [Central European] population".[36] In contrast to Lusatia, the Westerwald region of Rhineland-Palatinate only had its first wolf territory at the start of the project. The situation was new for the local communities and the process of learning to live with wolves was just beginning. This constellation of established wolf territory and new wolf territory gave me the opportunity to investigate many different aspects of coexistence.

But my 'field' went far beyond specific locations because my maxim was: follow the wolves! Following the wolves wherever they appeared in my research

35 Amann, Klaus/Hirschauer, Stefan: Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur. Ein Programm, in: Amann, Klaus/Hirschauer, Stefan. (eds.), Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur: Zur ethnographischen Herausforderung soziologischer Empirie, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1997, pp. 7–52, here p. 9.

36 Federal Documentation and Advisory Centre on Wolves (DBBW): Wölfe in Deutschland—Statusbericht 2019/2020, p. 1–34, here p. 2.

areas and where their presence 'made a difference' to people meant expanding my field site into a network of social situations linked by the presence and traces of wolves. In this way, my research became multilocal, a "multi-sited ethnography".[37] I accompanied *Rissgutachter* ('wolf kill assessors') in their work, a dead wolf as it was brought to the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research for pathological examination, and biologists and *Großkarnivorenbeauftragte* ('large carnivore commissioners') on monitoring excursions. I also took part in many events: a four-day tourist wolf seminar; many public wolf lectures and discussions; an anti-wolf demonstration of shepherds; wolf exhibitions in Güls, Bonn, Winsen, and Rietschen; an 'open pasture day'; a 'herd protection day'; driven hunts on ungulates in the wolf area; and howling evenings in the Eagle and Wolf Park Kasselburg/Eifel. I observed interactions between visitors and wolves in the Wolf Centre in Dörverden for several days, and I visited and walked through the Westerwald wolf territory on many weekends to familiarise myself with the landscape and fauna favoured by wolves and to engage in conversation with people I met along the way, learning more about what it is like to live with wolves in the neighbourhood.

I also followed the wolves literally. In the credo of etho-ethnological research, I finally had to deal with how I myself (as an anthropologist) could incorporate the life and actions of wolves into my research process.[38] However, I was aware that wolves are one of the most difficult animals to study because they are very mobile, shy and live mostly in dense forests (at least in Germany).

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37 Marcus, George E.: 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', in: Annual Review of Anthropology 24 (1995), pp. 95–117, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523.

38 See Barua, Maan: 'Bio-Geo-Graphy: Landscape, Dwelling, and the Political Ecology of Human-Elephant Relations', in: Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 32.5 (2014), pp. 915–934, https://doi.org/10.1068/d4213; Locke, Piers: 'Elephants as persons, affective apprenticeship, and fieldwork with nonhuman informants in Nepal', in: HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 7.1 (2017), pp. 353–376; O'Mahony, Kieran/Corradini, Andrea/Gazzola, Andrea: 'Lupine Becomings – Tracking and Assembling Romanian Wolves through Multi-Sensory Fieldwork', in: Society & Animals 26.2 (2018), pp. 107–129, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341501; Schröder, Verena: 'Learning to Understand Animal Lifeworlds? Perspectives of more-than-human ethnographies', in: Christian Steiner et al. (eds.), More-than-human geographies: key concepts, relationships and methodologies, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2022, pp. 317–339; Frank, Elisa: 'Follow the wolves: reflections on ethnographic tracing and tracking', in: Marlis Heyer/Susanne Hose (eds.), Encounters with Wolves: Dynamics and Futures, Bautzen: Sorbisches Institut 2020, pp. 99–114.

So I had little hope of seeing wolves at all. However, through my research partners in Lusatia, I was able to get to know some places where the chances of seeing wolves were at least not impossible. And so I spent a total of ninety-eight days on the lookout (about three hours a day at dawn or dusk) and was actually able to observe wolves fifteen times. These disjointed few (and mostly short) observations over more than two years could hardly be called a 'behavioural study'. But as I explain in the next chapter, even single episodes can be worth telling and provide valuable insights into the lives of wolves.

I kept abreast of developments and news (from local to international) using Google Alerts, the local/regional press, Facebook groups that I followed regularly, and the official websites of wolf organisations, associations (e.g. hunting or shepherds' associations), ministries and the DBBW (Documentation and Advisory Centre for the Wolf). The latter provides official news and facts on wolf management and monitoring.

I conducted informal conversations and more than forty semi-structured interviews with hunters and foresters, (wolf) biologists, official state wolf managers, NABU wolf ambassadors, wolf kill assessors, wolf friends, vets, shepherds and other livestock keepers, mayors and people who happened to live in a wolf area.

I also collected and familiarised myself with a range of popular science, journalistic and scientific books (and films) on wolves, focusing on (but not limited to) literature recommended by research participants and typically found on the bookshelves of wolf critics or supporters.

The whole research process unfortunately had to adapt spontaneously to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. After the first six months of research went according to plan, public life was put on hold for two months in March 2020, so that neither participant observation of events and practices nor face-to-face interviews were possible, and meetings had to be postponed or switched to telephone interviews. The same was true for the long lockdown from November 2020 to spring 2021. Fortunately, I was still able to use the summer of 2020 for research visits to Saxony, where the incidence of coronavirus was low at the time and public life was still largely intact. Nevertheless, I extended the research process until 2022 to compensate for cancelled events and meetings and to achieve a better dovetailing of research and writing. I reflect on the results I achieved in the next section.

## Plan of the book

As this ethnography is the first on the recent return of wolves to Germany, it made sense to write a predominantly descriptive book focusing on the phenomenon (the coexistence of wolves and humans) rather than an overly theoretical, more abstract discussion. To cite Stefan Hirschauer and Klaus Amann again: "If one works out an observational relationship to one's own culture, the cognitive achievement in 'othering' one's own does not lie primarily in explaining or understanding: it lies in explication".[39] Nevertheless, this book is theoretically informed, guided and appropriately structured throughout. Everything described here is selected and guided by the book's key concepts, which revolve around different manifestations of affectivity. These concepts, however, are only indicative and do not replace an examination of the phenomenon itself. Following Clifford Geertz, I have tried to embed these 'big', rather abstract concepts in local, manageable contexts in order to make them more vivid and understandable.[40]

I have chosen a narrative style as the form of engagement. Accordingly, this ethnography consists of an ensemble of stories. The stories are told with the help of (affect) concepts or are at least linked in an interpretive way, and thus become part of a narrative argumentation whose relevance can go beyond what is directly narrated. However, this ethnography of wolf-human coexistence is neither complete nor exhaustive. Rather, what this book offers is what I call, following Tim Ingold, an ethnographic *sketch*. In his call for a graphic anthropology, Ingold notes that many ethnographies seem to be imbued with a painterly aesthetic.[41] With holism as the guiding paradigm, ethnographers – like oil painters – would feel the need (or aspire) to fill in all the blanks to create a complete picture of a phenomenon. To achieve this totality and depth, layers and layers of context are essentially added. This book departs from such ethnographies. As an ethnographic sketch it seeks to capture situations in a few lines but with much expression. Rather than asking what a phenomenon means and offering a context in response, I follow the trajectories of affective impulses in their flows and transformations wherever they erupt within the

39 K. Amann/S. Hirschauer: Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur, p. 13, translated by TG.

40 Geertz, Clifford: The interpretation of cultures. Selected essays, New York: Basic Books 1973, p. 21.

41 T. Ingold: Being Alive, p. 222.

complex shared life of humans and wolves.[42] It is also characteristic of such an ethnographic sketch that it is not made after leaving the field, but during fieldwork. Analogous to sketching as a form of drawing, ethnographic sketching is an example of a mode of description that has not yet detached itself from observation.[43] The writing of this book was constantly inspired and challenged by new events, interviews and observations. Rather than turning away from the field to write and reflect, I have chosen to write and reflect from my position in the field, without losing sight of the wolves.[44] In this sense, this book represents a case of *writing-with-wolves*. The following chapters are structured accordingly and present sketches of the most relevant and meaningful affective structures that shape the coexistence of humans and wolves in Germany today.

In Chapter 2, I introduce the reader to the affective life of wolves and show in detail what it means at a bodily level to affect and be affected. While classical ethological accounts are said to reduce the rich and complex lives of animals to behaviours, which in turn are seen as merely acting out instincts, this chapter proposes a lively style of narrative description that emphasises the agency of animals and the dynamism, ambiguity and openness of encounters. Through descriptions of different situations – a wolf playing with ravens; a wolf hunting wild boar; two wolves encountering two hunters – I show how wolves are sensitive and responsive to other bodies in encounters, even across species boundaries. This form of ethno-ethological storytelling offers a new perspective on what it might mean to coexist with wolves at the most basic level.

Chapter 3 places wolf agency in a broader context: it shows how wolves, as affective agents, trigger social processes in a shared, hybrid, multi-species lifeworld. It traces the recent arrival of wolves in the Westerwald, describing how a region has been transformed into a new wolf territory for the first time since wolves were extirpated more than a hundred years ago. I follow the actions, presence and traces of the wolves (in combination with those of other wolves in other parts of Rhineland-Palatinate and in other parts of Germany), as well as the human responses at local and regional levels, ranging from news on social media, to public events and discussions among hunters, to changes

42 See Ogden, Laura: Swamplife. People, gators, and mangroves entangled in the Everglades, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2011.

43 T. Ingold: Being Alive, p. 224.

44 See C. Geertz: The interpretation of cultures; T. Ingold: Being Alive, p. 223.

in ministerial wolf management. Rather than looking for linear chains of causation, this chapter shows how wolf actions provide multidirectional affective impulses that entangle a variety of human and non-human actors in complex affective arrangements.

Knowing that wolves are complex and active affective agents that can affect a region by their very presence, Chapter 4 zooms into the middle of a wolf territory to examine the coexistence of local residents with a wolf pack. Based on a central idea from the behavioural ecology of predators, namely that wolves create landscapes of fear in relation to their prey, I try to understand the lifeworld of the residents of Rosenthal in Lusatia who feel threatened and frightened by the presence of wolves. In a double step, I conceptualise Rosenthal as a landscape of fear and the landscape of fear as an animal atmosphere. What contributes to the creation of such an atmosphere in the eyes of the locals and how do wolves play a role in its dynamic development? Is fear enough to characterise this atmosphere, or is it also shaped by other emotions? And besides the wolves and the locals, who else might be involved? Ultimately, wolf atmospheres turn out to be processes of affective intensities generated by more-than-human entanglements.

While the fourth chapter deals with wolf atmospheres, spatially extended feelings that fill a landscape, chapter 5 turns to three categories of people who are particularly affected by wolves in one way or another: shepherds, hunters and wolf friends. Rather than trying to understand their attitudes towards wolves, their opinions and knowledge, I look at the affective dimensions of their relationships with wolves. How exactly are they affected by wolves? What feelings and sentiments shape their relationships? And how do these relate to more enduring affective structures that result from what it means to live the life of a shepherd, hunter or wolf friend today?

With these insights into different dimensions of human-wolf affect, Chapter 6 continues with an examination of wolf management regimes as a form of affect management. While it has often been emphasised how wolf management can be understood as a disciplinary regime of power that establishes and seeks to maintain a (semiotic) cultural order of meaning, here I focus on wolf management as a way of disciplining, regulating and mobilising both human and wolf affects. Fundamental to the disciplining of affects is the guiding principle of 'rationality' used by all actors involved. On the part of official wolf management and politicians, this is complemented (if not counteracted) by the affective practice of taking worries and concerns seriously. Other actors rely more on the practice of creating or stirring up moods, which in turn is coun-

tered by spaces for letting off steam. In the following excursus, I examine the so-called problem wolves to see how management regimes, based on classical-ethological ideas of habituation and conditioning, attempt to extend a human, cultural order to the lives of wolves. In doing so, the 'natural' or 'unnatural' affects of wolves must be made controllable in the sense of being conducive to successful coexistence.

The threads of the previous chapters are brought together for the epilogue in Chapter 7 and reconsidered one last time. My method of following affective traces inevitably focused the book on the conflictual situations of living with wolves. Moreover, the fragmented geographical and temporal distribution of the return of wolves to different regions leads to a constant affective fire that can easily be misinterpreted as the normal state of coexistence. Therefore, in the epilogue, I use a final ethnographic example from Lusatia to trace the resting pulse of coexistence resulting from years of living with wolves. I conclude with a plea for an affect-guided way of thinking about the human-wolf relationship, a 'thinking-with-affect' that offers a reflective alternative to the affect-denying call for objectivity and rationality on the one hand, and the therapeutic approach of taking affects seriously on the other.