

Relationship between humans and predators in mountain regions in the Alps and Central Asia - Anthropological and climate research perspectives

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How do humans, livestock and big carnivores relate in the Eastern Alps? Old patterns, new challenges and forms of adaptation. Ethnographic explorations on cultures that go deep.

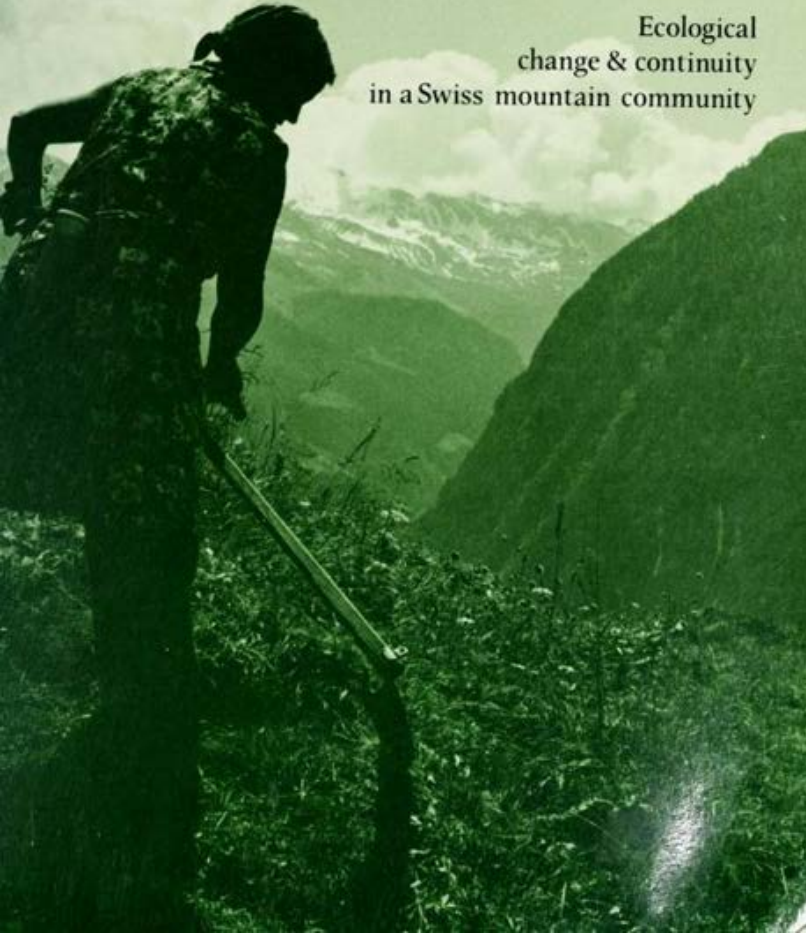
South Tyrol spring 2021: Small livestock farmers in Stilfs near Prad, in Villnöss and in Colfosco (Val Badia) are desperate and helpless. A wolf or more wolves have killed sheep. To be able to bring their sheep to the alpine pastures, it would be ideal if they would join forces with other alpine pastures to be able to pay well-trained shepherds, but – "the heads have to come together, and they are hard ". (comment of a pioneering shepherd)

The media and the farmers' association continue to engage in verbal "wolf hunting" and advocate the shooting of the wolf.

ROBERT McC. NETTING

Balancing on an Alp

Ecological
change & continuity
in a Swiss mountain community



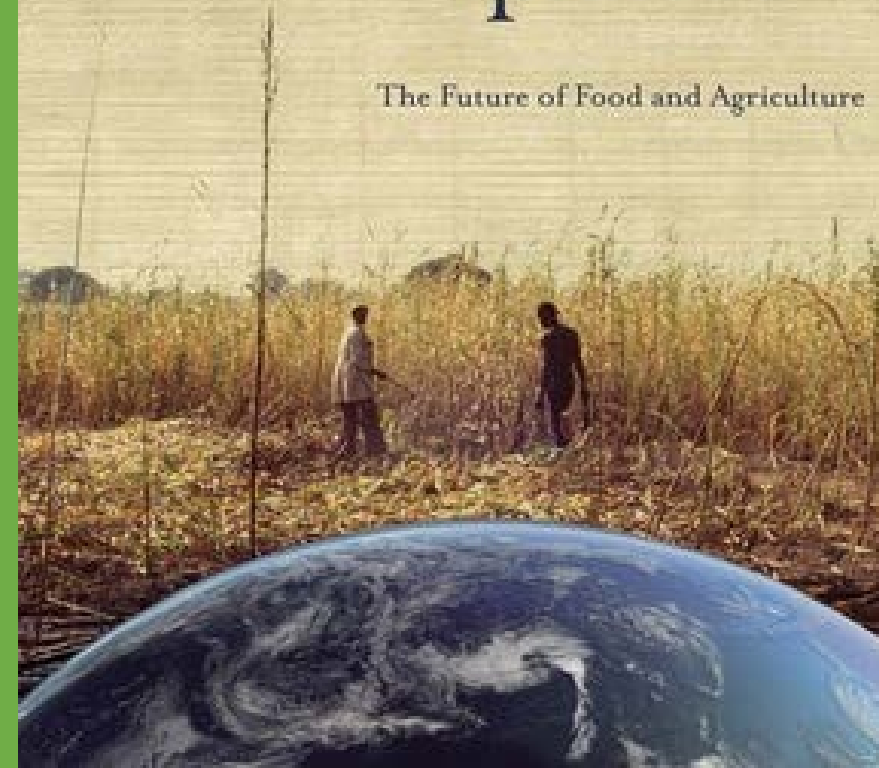
“Agrarian ecology” (Netting 1974): Focusing on the effects of population growth on land tenure and agricultural use, Netting championed the cause of the smallholder—the peasant farmer who intensifies production on a small plot of land by using household labor to achieve an energy-efficient, low-input, successful adaptation. Managing the household patrimony wisely and sustainably, smallholders can achieve yearlong use of their land with minimal ecological damage. They can make a decent and honorable living in farming without experiencing the marked instabilities and inequalities that plague capitalistic (or for that matter also collectivistic) export-oriented farming enterprises elsewhere in the world.

David Cleveland (2013) argues that combining selected aspects of small-scale traditional agriculture with modern scientific agriculture can help balance our biological need for food with its environmental impact—and continue to fulfill cultural, social, and psychological needs related to food.

DAVID A. CLEVELAND

balancing on a planet

The Future of Food and Agriculture



THE HIDDEN FRONTIER



Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley

JOHN W. COLE and
ERIC R. WOLF

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION

„Alpine studies‘ as magnificent laboratory (Eric Wolf) for ethnic-linguistic diversity and cultural-ecologic adaptation.

Research of Cole and Wolf focuses on historically changing dialectical interplay of macrocosm and microcosm, of village and state, ecology and social relations, of self-sufficiency and an expanding market.

This connection of ecology, politics and economy is characterised with the guiding concept of a historically oriented 'political economy'.

In their comparative study between the two villages of St. Felix (South Tyrol) and Tret (Trentino), it was found that while the division in cultural ideals between the villages was clear, in reality the lands in both communities were kept at the same optimised sizes, showing that while the cultural differences - in effect that between Germanic Europe and Romance Europe along the southern, alpine boundary of German-speaking Europe - persisted for centuries even in close proximity and significantly influenced the political sphere, the necessities of environmental conditions nevertheless dictated the same strategies for both communities.

The concentration or diffusion of power at the level of the domestic group is influenced by the political system and in turn affects it.

Family organisation in Tret – **segmental** -> flexible network of kinship relations constantly creates new social ties in and of itself, **this network has no connection to the political sphere**. **Political pressure** does not provoke a common reaction, but is transmitted through this network and **is either accepted, rejected or circumvented by the individual members**.

Family organisation in St. Felix – **hierarchical and closed** -> in St. Felix, the “Bauer” has a double role: he is the **head of the household** and thus also **represents externally an organisational unit within the community**. In other words, **his private status in the social and economic sphere gives him a certain role in the juridico-political sphere**. In this sense, there is no such thing as exclusively private action in St. Felix. **All actions find their echo in the public sphere and are tested for the identity of the actor as a true Tyrolean**.

The return of large predators to the region

Trentino: In Trentino, last spring a dozen or so farms got together to have their say on the wolf issue and to try to change long-established working habits. After just a few months, the companies have joined forces and, together, have launched projects to defend themselves from the predator, starting with the use of guard dogs (Piemeonte Parchi, Emanuela Celona 2018).

"It takes commitment and effort. You have to learn to plant fences properly and raise good guard dogs. **We shepherds can't say yes to the wolf, but it is possible to live with it and all Trentino breeders should learn that.**"

"The wolves follow us and are cunning but with dogs and fences we can beat them. Shooting doesn't help." Bruno Viola, Shepherd in Trentino)

Bruno Viola (shepherd in Trentino) maintains that coexistence between man and wolf is difficult but possible, because: 'With desire and commitment, results come. Every little move is important, but there has to be a "shepherd with a capital P (Pastore), not a shepherd boy. You have to learn to think with your own head, with that of your dogs, with that of the people you meet on the trails, and with that of the wolf. Yes, because according to Bruno, 'the wolf does not kill sheep, but selects the farmers': those who are not committed, who are not willing to carry out their activity in a different way, have no future in a territory colonised by the predator.

According to the Trentino shepherd, the wolf is an opportunity to increase the biodiversity of our land, which does not belong to the wolf alone, but neither does it belong to man alone. It belongs to everyone, and for this very reason we must learn to live with it (Piemeonte Parchi, Emanuela Celona 2018).



A South Tyrolean shepherd who takes a new path – for this presentation he remains anonymous. He is one of the pioneers of the new pasture culture in South Tyrol and works with fences and herding dogs.



Thank you!