



CONVIVA

Convivial Conservation

How Political Economy Shapes Human-Wildlife Interaction



From conflict to coexistence

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) in and around conservation areas is a growing problem in many parts of the world. This can create challenges for conservation because such conflict often makes local residents less positive about wildlife. Much attention is therefore given to the important question of how to transform HWC into sustainable coexistence. Evidence from our ongoing [global research project](#) points towards important political economic factors in making coexistence work in policy and practice.

From local to global

Most current efforts to mitigate HWC focus on the local level. While this is vital, [growing evidence](#) shows we must also consider the broader political and economic processes driving local conflict. For instance, in Brazil's Atlantic Forest, conflict between residents and jaguars has been stoked by the region's transformation into a key site of agricultural production for export to global markets. This produces rapid land use change that forces smallholder farmers and jaguars to compete for resources within the shrinking spaces in between large monocultural plots.

From technical to political

Current efforts to address HWC usually favour technical over political solutions. This takes two forms. First, modification of animals' behaviour or eradicating them altogether; second, prevention of activities that overlap in space (by erecting fences, zoning, relocation, and so forth). Yet, because broader political and economic processes also shape HWC, directly acknowledging and confronting these processes will be critically important for such interventions to address HWC to succeed, especially in the long term.

From separation to connection

All of this also demonstrates the importance of attending to how different cases of human-wildlife interaction are connected across space and time. For example, mitigation of conflict between people and grey wolves in Eastern Finland has been inadvertently facilitated by displacement of agricultural production to other countries including Brazil, thereby increasing space for wolves to roam and reducing competition between them and local residents. Meanwhile, this same displacement increases land use change and exacerbates competition between people and jaguars in Brazil itself.



Towards a political economy analysis of human-wildlife conflict and coexistence

In transforming HWC into coexistence, we advocate a clear and explicit focus on overarching political economic contexts and processes and their interconnection across spaces and scales. We understand these dynamics are difficult to influence and take into account in conservation planning. But we believe there is no other choice. Since these processes are so influential in shaping local HWI, choosing not to engage with them may fatally compromise interventions.

We therefore encourage researchers, policymakers and conservation planners to build on and further develop the perspective proposed here to illuminate key factors hindering human-wildlife coexistence in their own work. Achieving this will be critical in finding effective and convivial modes of biodiversity conservation moving forward.

“WE ENCOURAGE RESEARCHERS, POLICY-MAKERS AND CONSERVATION PLANNERS TO BUILD ON AND FURTHER DEVELOP THE PERSPECTIVE PROPOSED HERE TO ILLUMINATE KEY FACTORS HINDERING HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE IN THEIR OWN WORK”





About the project

The CONVIVA - convivial conservation - research project develops new convivial (literally: 'living with') approaches to understanding and practising environmental conservation, with a particular focus on bears, jaguars, wolves and lions. It aims to establish a truly transformational approach to conservation that benefits both wildlife and humans, and that combines structural change with grassroots solutions to promote co-existence, (cultural and bio)diversity and justice. It is funded by the generous support of NORFACE/Belmont Forum. All views expressed are those of the authors, not the funding body or other organizations.

 www.conviva-research.com  [@convivconserv](https://twitter.com/convivconserv)