

## ***Multispecies Conviviality – Relations Between Humans and ‘Animals-as-Food’***

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Based on multispecies ethnographic research on a Swiss goat alp, this research project will gain insights into the notions and ambivalences underlying people’s conceptualizations and treatment of nonhuman ‘animals-as-food’ (Staples, Klein 2017) and the possibilities and limits of looking at animal-rearing as a form of human-animal conviviality.

Based on the Latin roots for ‘with’ and ‘living,’ ‘conviviality’ offers a way to conceptually think about everyday coexistence with difference (Manzi 2020). While initially used to describe living together with difference among humans, the concept has more recently also been used to examine interspecies conviviality: a more-than-human perspective on how humans exist together with animals as other living beings, not as objects like in the alienated settings of the animal-industrial complex. Existing research examining human-animal relations under the umbrella of conviviality often focuses on relations between humans and so-called wild animals (Jacobs 2021; Pettersson et al. 2022; Toncheva, Fletcher 2021). Studying conviviality between humans and ‘animals-as-food,’ I propose, adds a further layer, namely the fact that the animals in focus are ultimately slaughtered. What happens to notions of conviviality when applied to human-animal relations in which the animals in question are what is commonly called livestock, and are bred and kept to eventually be killed and eaten? Looking at animal agriculture and farms as sites for “convivial world-making” (Donati 2019, 120), I ask: What are the possibilities, ruptures, and limits of ‘conviviality’ across species lines in understanding the relationship between humans and ‘animals-as-food’? Examining conviviality across species boundaries poses a way to acknowledge the entanglement of human and nonhuman life and the agency, desires, and well-being of nonhuman animals.

Human and nonhuman life on the researched Swiss goat alp is strongly shaped by the biological rhythms of the goats—the moving of the herd from the valley to the alp is dependent on the age of the kids, whereas the days on the alp are structured by the goats’ dietary rhythms. As ruminants, they spend a large part of their days grazing and digesting, always accompanied by the herders who function as protection from potential wolf attacks and keep the goats from grazing on cow pastures. Yet, the convivial rhythms are also disrupted by the planned slaughter of some goats at the end of the alp season. And despite strong efforts of the alp to contribute to more caring, sustainable local food systems in opposition to the animal-industrial complex, the planned slaughter poses a rupture in multispecies conviviality.

This research project will explore how the relationship between the involved humans and goats entails a fine balance between proximity and conviviality on the one hand, and a certain distance on the other. Kelly Donati alludes to such distancing when writing that “convivial intimacies of affection and care sit uncomfortably alongside the reality of slaughter. It is precisely the act of killing that shifts the multispecies relations of conviviality from the arena of agriculture to the realm of gastronomy” (Donati 2019, 126). This transformation from animals to food through the deliberate act of killing is inherent even in the otherwise most caring, considerate, convivial of settings involving animal husbandry. If interspecies conviviality—as living together well also across species boundaries—is a way to acknowledge the entanglement of human and nonhuman life and the agency, desires, and well-being of nonhuman animals, then how can slaughter be part of this relation, both for animals and for humans?