

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Reversible pigs

## An infraspecies ethnography of wild boars in Barcelona

Aníbal G. Arregui<sup>1,2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Anthropology, University of Barcelona

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences

### Correspondence

Email: [anibal\\_garcia\\_arregui@ub.edu](mailto:anibal_garcia_arregui@ub.edu)

### Funding information

H2020 European Research Council, Grant/Award Number: Grant agreement ID: 866350

### Abstract

The idea of “species” is the main unit for representing ecological relations. But what would an ecology look like if we started by tracing its relations from below the species threshold? By deploying an *infraspecies* ethnography, I show how, in suburban Barcelona, human and wild boar individuals relate in personal, creative ways, and how in doing so, they also reshape their quotidian ecologies from the bottom up. Departing from species-level imaginaries of wildlife managers, suburban residents cope with wild boars not only as idiosyncratic specimens but also as reversible beings: pigs that are simultaneously “wild” and “tame,” “rural” and “urban,” “pest” and “neighbor.” Shifting the attention from relations between coherent species to the situated encounters between singular specimens unveils how individuals weave reversible relations, remake ecologies, and navigate the uncertainty of emerging human-animal intimacies.

### KEYWORDS

Barcelona, ecology, infraspecies, multispecies ethnography, reversibility, wild boars

Manolo was a peculiar neighbor. In the spring evenings of 2015, as the sun faded, Manolo would take solitary walks in Les Planes, a peripheral neighborhood of Barcelona. Eulalia, a woman in her 50s, often observed Manolo eating the dogberries that he picked from bushes nearby her house.<sup>1</sup> No one knew exactly where Manolo lived, but many in Les Planes agreed that he was “curious” and a “friendly neighbor.” Manolo was corpulent and apparently self-sufficient, but this did not prevent Eulalia from offering him bread and “scratching his back” whenever she had the chance.

In August 2016 a wild boar approached a 71-year-old woman in the same district. Attracted by the food she was carrying in a plastic bag, the animal jumped on her several times. After dropping the bag and escaping, the woman told her neighbors the assaulter was the pig named Manolo. In the weeks leading up to the event, several other wild boar-related incidents had been reported and accompanied by descriptions of an animal—“big,” “dark fur,” “crooked tusk,” rather “cheeky” in its approaches to people—that could well have been a portrait of Manolo. The episode made it into a local newspaper (Fernández Poveda, 2016).

Neighbors of Les Planes and adjacent districts disagreed on whether Manolo was to blame for the attacks. For many, it seemed unlikely that such a “peaceful” neighbor could have

accosted anyone. Others, however, maintained that Manolo’s violent drift was proof that wild boars become too “confident” and even “aggressive” when humans feed them. Amid the confusion around the social skills of these porcine neighbors, the pig in question suddenly vanished. Eulalia could not determine whether Manolo had been killed by a hunter or went back to the mountains. Despite Manolo’s bad press, Eulalia confessed that she regretted the loss, because she “had just become so fond of him.”

A year later, another wild boar came to visit Eulalia’s street (see Figure 1). “This one reminds me of Manolo,” she said, adding, “He could be his son.”

Ever since this new visitor’s appearance, Eulalia had awaited Manolo’s return.

In the eyes of some, Manolo was a “wild” and “aggressive critter” (*un bicho salvaje, agresivo*). Some even depicted him as a “cheeky” (*descarado*) representative of “the wild boar pest” (*plaga del jabalí*). Yet there was also another version of Manolo. In his encounters with Eulalia and other inhabitants of the urban periphery, this controversial pig appeared surprisingly “tame” (*manso*) and “sympathetic” (*simpático*), and even to be “a friendly neighbor” (*un vecino amigable*). Furthermore, the duplicities of Manolo were not a single case. In suburban Barcelona, wild boars, in

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2023 The Author. *American Ethnologist* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of American Anthropological Association.



**FIGURE 1** Becoming intimate with a wild boar on the periphery of Barcelona, 2017. (Emilio Sánchez) [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

general, can switch between reversible qualities, such as wild/tame, rural/urban, and pest/neighbor. These everyday words indicate how particular pigs and particular persons position themselves in a daily relational spectrum that (quite radically) oscillates between symbiotic and agonistic forms of engagement.

Concerned that wild boars can cause traffic accidents, environmental disturbances, and zoonotic diseases, conservation biologists and above all veterinarians work in partnership with local authorities to keep the animals confined to the forested hillside (known as Collserola Natural Park). They often perform this task by capturing and euthanizing the wild boars that enter the city. In the imaginaries of conservation, wild boars are not an urban species and must therefore be removed from the city. Many suburban residents, however, cannot merely rely on state-sponsored, lethal measures for managing urban wildlife. Encountering wild boars regularly, citizens have learned to cope with relational uncertainty, and as a consequence, these animals are not approached “as a species” with already-known habitat and behavior. Rather, wild boars feature as *individuals* who, as Manolo does, have unique aspects and must be dealt with according to their own idiosyncrasies. As a result of these contrasting strategies, significant tensions emerge between technical or institutional sanctions of urban biodiversity and the more practical, intimate, and yet risky arrangements that orient particular humans’ and particular boars’ daily coexistence.

Following how Eulalia, Manolo, and many others negotiate and repurpose their everyday relations in the periphery of Barcelona, I ask, what does an ecology look like if one does not assume “species” as the main relational unit? What “ecological” features and processes come into view if one first attends to

the more intimate, quotidian, and shifting encounters between individuals?

## ETHNOGRAPHY BELOW THE SPECIES THRESHOLD

Barcelona is my hometown, but it has only been since 2017 that I have been conducting fieldwork in the suburban areas that adjoin the Collserola Natural Park. Part of my ethnography emerges from accompanying a group of veterinary scientists from the Autonomous University of Barcelona in their interventions for the management of wild boars in the city.<sup>2</sup> Further, I have followed the everyday activity and debates among hunters, animal rights activists, local authorities, and, especially, suburban dwellers. I have also had plenty of encounters with these smart, ubiquitous, and observant wild pigs, which have always instilled my ethnographic experience with a sense of being both subject and object of sharp scrutiny.<sup>3</sup>

My argument unfolds through two interrelated ethnographic themes. First, I show how human individuals are exposed to coping with *reversible pigs* in an increasingly troubled suburban landscape. In recent decades, multispecies ethnographers have traced how different species contend with humans, sometimes turning upside-down entire ecologies and debasing anthropocentric rationales that attempt to master the environment. This is present in works concerning the historical and cultural agency of nonhumans (Dooren et al., 2016; Hathaway, 2016; Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010), as well as in accounts of how the wild turns domestic (Cassidy & Mullin, 2007), the domestic turns feral (Tsing et al., 2020), and even how the “natural” turns “cultural”—or vice versa—in this unsettling epoch that some call the Anthropocene (Chua & Fair, 2019). Thinking from

beneath the troubled ecological and ontological schemes of our time, here I suggest that living organisms do not necessarily produce environmental reversals “as species.” At times, living beings can also *individually* switch between different corporeal forms, affective dispositions, and behavioral habits, in order to attune to the most mundane contexts and forms of relation.

Pigs, in particular, are among those beings that most astoundingly shift habitats, morphology, or ethology, often reversing themselves into wild, domestic, or feral forms (Rowley-Conwy et al., 2006; Wehr, 2021). With an even more radical take on porcine reversibility, here I contend that in Barcelona, as illustrated by Manolo and others, the same pig can be *simultaneously* wild *and* tame, rural *and* urban, pest *and* neighbor. Although such porcine duplicities respond to environmental disturbances (Podgórski et al., 2013; Vetter et al., 2015), they also result from strategies that particular humans and particular pigs develop to address the relational uncertainty that arises from these transformations. With a stronger focus on these local strategies, my ethnography traces how suburban citizens develop situated forms of practical “attunement” (Despret, 2004; Stewart, 2011) to wild boars’ reversibility. Driven by reciprocal forms of habituation and oscillating affects, these attunements materialize as a pragmatic yet tentative back-and-forth that orients encounters with unique wild boar specimens in a changing landscape.

The second and central argument posits that porcine reversibility, as well as the coping mechanisms that humans develop in response to it, emerge from below the species threshold, that is, from what I will call an *infraspecies* dimension of human-animal relations. By shifting the focus from the species level toward more situated forms of change and reversibility, I engage with work that draws attention to how nonhuman individuals feature in multispecies settings. For instance, following an octopus named Angelica, Bear (2011, p. 297) criticizes “animal geographers’ tendency to speak of collectivities such as ‘animals,’ ‘species’ and ‘herds,’ while speaking less of individual creatures”; in a study of urban cockatoos and their feeders, Kirksey et al. (2018, pp. 609–14) note how the different degrees of “friendship” with particular birds (that were “wild” and “tame” at the same time) configure “fleeting forms of association” in the city; Parreñas (2012) describes the affective interface emerging between specific orangutans and caregivers; Despret (2004) reveals how Hans the horse attuned to certain individuals’ corporeality; and Haraway (2008), too, has famously written about her intimate relations with her dog Cayenne. Many examples testify to an already-existing “infraspecies sensibility” in the multispecies scholarship. Yet there is still ample room to *explicitly* theorize the potential of fragmenting the “multi” and “inter”-species ethnographic ventures in a more fine-grained scale of analysis.

The idea of species is fluid and contentious, and it has always been the focus of complex biological debates (Wilkins, 2009).<sup>4</sup> Species are indeed useful relational units around which humans organize specific forms of thinking, acting, and relating in the environment. Yet far from being preexisting natural entities, taxonomic practices themselves show us that species “come into existence at the intersection of entangled practices of knowing and being” (Kirksey, 2015b, p. 776). As objects of scientific inquiry, species need to be historically considered in

their own corporal and relational “indeterminacy” (Tsing, 2015, pp. 46–55). Species can only be approached, in other words, as “an occurrence of coherence situated amid ever-transforming divisions and connections” (Yates-Doerr, 2015, p. 310).

Building on these and other anthropological engagements with the relational transformations of species (see also Cruzada, 2022; Haraway, 2008; Ingold, 2013), the outlook I present here is unconcerned with what organisms *are*, as if their qualities and capabilities were detachable from specific social or practical circumstances. Focusing not on the stable qualities of beings but on their *situated and generative relations*, the *infraspecies* lens draws attention to transformations that are both experienced and produced by “singular animals ... whose competences cannot be reduced to those of a species they belong to” (Lestel, 2011, p. 88).

Conventional ecological rationales often describe relations between different organisms at the level of a species whose genetics, morphology, and behavior change only in long-term, evolutionary temporalities (Wilkins, 2009). Here, I do not highlight evolutive transformations of the *Sus scrofa* (wild boar) but changes in particular populations of wild boars (and humans) that are accelerated by local, sociohistorical factors. With that aim, I unpack the mundane, practical, and often-reversible relational dispositions that crucially intervene in how “specimens,” rather than “species,” infuse change in themselves and in their environments. Disclosing the generative tensions between individuals (specimens), collectives (species), and contexts (ecosystems), the prefix *infra* underscores the bottom-up and ecologically generative logic of the relations between situated humans and wild boars. From this angle, then, Manolo, Eulalia, and others appear in my ethnography not as the *actors in* but as the *makers of* an oscillating suburban ecology.

Crucially, I do not propose an *infraspecies* outlook as a celebration of intimate or embodied encounters between humans and wild boars. In a planetary moment when humans interlink with nonhumans on so many scales (Cassidy, 2012), the case indeed resonates with the call to consider the problematic forms of “abundance” that, along with species loss, constitute the Anthropocene and yet that become blurred when scholars rejoice in “multispecies intimacies and entanglements” (Giraud et al., 2019, p. 360). Instead, the responses to the urbanization of wild boars showcase the complex intermingling of violence and compassion in conservation practices (Smith, 2020), and the need to better articulate the diversity of human and wild animals’ lifeworlds in the city (Barua & Sinha, 2019). Far from being a local problem, these tensions attest to the difficult articulation between local knowledge practices, bureaucratic rationales, and science-based forms of animal governance (Chua et al., 2020; Mathur, 2021).

Wild boars’ movement into “human” contexts involves complex ethical, sanitary, and ecological issues (Broz et al., 2021). Here, I simply explore the potential of an *infraspecies* ethnography for capturing from the ground up what is actually happening in a context such as that in Barcelona. Most peri-urban residents are, in fact, *exposed* to wild boars, and vice versa. As conservationists try to (unsuccessfully) keep the pigs at bay, for some locals it becomes urgent to temporarily stabilize their relations with wild boars by negotiating their everyday gestures and uses of urban space. Coping with



**FIGURE 2** An urban wild boar enjoys the garbage in Vallvidrera District, Barcelona, 2021. (Anibal Arregui) [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

reversible pigs in an infraspecies scenario is, for many, the only available option.

In what follows I show, historically and ethnographically, how the urbanization of wild boars (which is a global phenomenon) destabilizes species-level imaginaries of conservation. The entry of wild pigs into the city reveals the need to carefully consider how species behavior, ecological relations, and even habitats are being reworked by individuals in “unconventional” multispecies communities. This involves, as Maan Barua and Anindya Sinha observe, not simply “registering the presence of animals in cities” but seeing “how the very fabric of urbanicity, from its infrastructure to material environment, metabolic intensities to ways of reproducing everyday life, is forged with other-than-human life” (Barua & Sinha, 2022). Next, I offer an infraspecies prism to capture how particular humans and wild boars both “forge” and “cope with” the virtues and pitfalls of new forms of life in the city.

## PIGS IN THE CITY

It was in the early years of the new century that wild boars became visible as unexpected neighbors in suburban Barcelona. Back then, nobody thought they would also soon be exploring the city’s central districts. Today, incursions into the urban hub are still anecdotal. Wild boars’ movement, however, increasingly challenges conservationists and local authorities who try to reverse the situation by removing wild boars from the city. In the suburban areas that adjoin the Collserola Natural Park, the situation is more unsettling. In the last two decades, the periphery’s ever-growing residential areas have only amplified the material effects of a felicitous combination: that of acorn-rich suburban forests, household garbage, lawns, water resources, and human feeders. Together, these have created an ecological heaven for new forms of porcine life (see Figure 2).

Enclosed by Barcelona on the seaside, and by smaller cities on the other side, the Collserola Natural Park is a semiurbanized area that features a mountain range as well as thriving Mediterranean pine and holm oak forests. Both the region’s biological features and the socioeconomic transformations of the last few centuries have played a central role in wild boar demography. The transition from agrarian to industrial economy led to a progressive depopulation of the Collserola area, followed by reforestation and the end of the buffer zone of farmers’ plots and fences; this in turn facilitated the circulation of local fauna throughout the park (Cahill & Llimona, 2004).

At the turn of the 20th century, the Big Barcelona planning project annexed peripheral villages to the city (Gras, 2002). The result was a steady urbanization of the Collserola Natural Park, a process that has been accelerated in the last decades by the spatial and economic pressure of inflationary dynamics in real estate. In recent years, depopulated agrarian villages have become cherished residential districts. Trash, lawns, and pet-feeding points are today crucial anthropogenic resources for local wild boar populations, which have dramatically increased. While conservationists suggest an ideal “carrying capacity” of about 500 wild boars for the whole Collserola Natural Park, recent years’ estimates still put the number at well over 1000 individuals in the peri-urban area alone (Mitjà Soto, 2019).

But Barcelona is not an isolated case. Other cities, such as Berlin, Hong Kong, and Rome, among others, are facing comparable challenges. Wild boars are found on five continents, proving, like humans, to be highly adaptive to diverse environmental niches and local climates. Today, wild boar and feral pig proliferation and mobility raise environmental, sanitary, and biosecurity concerns of critical importance (Broz et al., 2021; O’Mahony, 2020; Stoetzer, 2020). Owing to the uneasy intimacies that these animals cultivate with humans, both in the city and in rural areas (Govindrajana, 2018; Kowalewska, 2019), wild boars are also becoming a major zoonotic concern

in human-animal epidemiology (Castillo-Contreras, 2019; Ruiz-Fons, 2017).

Moreover, it turns out that global warming is an anthropogenic condition in which wild boar populations thrive. Studies of wild boar demography in Europe show that one of the causes of their proliferation might be higher reproductive rates and less mortality, thanks to the milder average temperatures during winter (Vetter et al., 2015). Other studies describe the larger spatial movements and increased densities of wild boars in urban areas as a response to more local impacts of human activity (Podgórski et al., 2013). In a sense, wild boars' movement into different cities bespeaks an inexorable reconfiguration of the relations between humans and some wild species in the context of growing anthropogenic stressors and climate change (Cassidy, 2012).

It is, however, nothing new that pigs can colonize different habitats, adapt, and reverse themselves into different subspecific forms. In evolutionary biology, genetics, and archaeology, pigs are known for very plastically going back and forth from "wild" to "domestic" to "feral" states (Rowley-Conwy et al., 2006; Wehr, 2021). These processes are often accompanied by striking behavioral and corporeal transformations, which are traceable in physical changes of particular animal individuals (Fleischman, 2020, pp. 162–63).<sup>5</sup> While most scientific approaches frame pigs' reversibility as a response to environmental constraints, here I inquire into more local and endogenous forces that factor in the transformations that these animals undergo as they become ever more present in urban areas.

In contemporary Barcelona, both scientific and vernacular discourses reckon with an ongoing process of differentiation between the so-called wild wild boar (*jabalí salvaje*) and the emerging variety of "urban wild boar" (*jabalí urbano*; Claverol, 2016). Like wild boars in other cities (Ikeda et al., 2019; Stillfried et al., 2017), Barcelona's porcine neighbors exhibit a strategic knowledge of urban infrastructures and some distinctive corporeal traits, such as a bigger and heavier body than their "rural" counterparts (Cahill et al., 2012; Castillo-Contreras et al., 2021). In contradistinction to the "truly wild" variety, the urban wild boars are said to be increasingly "habituated," meaning that some individuals show an inclination to come close to people (mainly looking for food), while others display rather a cultivated "detachment" (as a familiar form of indifference) toward human presence (Candea, 2010). In this context, however, habituation is not an exclusively wild boar issue but a *reciprocal* process (Despret, 2015), one that also entails citizens' creative attunement to the animals' spatial behavior, gestures, and demands.

These "unexpected neighbors" are fostering new, contentious, and recalcitrant forms of life at the edges of urban infrastructure (Stoetzer, 2018, p. 298). In this context, humans must deal with beings that can be simultaneously "wild" and "tame," "urban" and "rural," "pest" and "neighbor." Expressing key personal positions on the legitimacy or inadequacy of consenting to living with urban wild boars, these contrasted conceptualizations are accompanied, as I show next, by equally differentiated *practical* dispositions toward the animal neighbors.

## COPING WITH REVERSIBLE BEINGS

When I saw Juanjo for the first time, the 68-year-old man was leaning over a farrow of piglets that cautiously but excitedly ate acorns and maize from his hands. We were on a street in Barcelona's Vallvidrera District. With an eye on me and another on a vigilant sow, which was rooting a few meters away, Juanjo invited me to approach and observe "how smart" the piglets were. This sweet scene could hardly foreshadow what I learned afterward: Juanjo was a hunter.

Asked about his 180-degree shift in relating to these animals, the man said he had "always loved wild boars, even if it was to eat them." As I approached him and the pigs, Juanjo advised me to be careful because these pigs were only "apparently tame" (*parecen mansos*), noting also that if I "made the wrong gesture," I would see "how wild [*salvaje*] the sow can be." As if it were an embodied proof of these pigs' potential to become wild at any moment, Juanjo showed me a four-centimeter scar on the back of his hand, a wound inflicted months earlier by another, younger sow. That reddish and zigzagging trace was, to the man, a "souvenir of the moment we are in."

Though it was open to interpretation, I read Juanjo's "the moment we are in" as a call for a corporeal attention toward the fragility of current human–wild boar relations. While the schemes of conservation orient the reversal of the urban ecology back to the moment when wild boars were not present in the city, in Juanjo's words the urbanization of wild boars was "just happening because everything around is a mess." With his lifelong experience in dealing with wild boars, Juanjo affirmed that, "before all this [the neighborhood] became full of people, wild boars [*jabalís*] were just wild wild boars [*jabalís salvajes*]. Now they seem tame [*mansos*], but they can be wild [*salvajes*] at any moment, as they were before." In a sense, the entwined histories of local wild boars and this suburban neighborhood had complicated the relation between the wild and the tame, but had not effaced any of these potentials in the animals.

The scar on Juanjo's hand evoked a historical and ecological "moment" that differed substantially from the one that operates in the imaginaries of urban planning and conservation. Juanjo's ecological awareness was oriented by a body-to-body, gestural negotiation of what is wild (or potentially hostile) and what is tame (or eminently peaceful). And all this was happening against the backdrop of troubling social and environmental disturbances. In my conversations with the hunter, it became apparent that it was intimate corporeal contact and a direct experience of each animal that allowed him to attune to the extreme lability of human–wild boar relations. In his own words:

You first need to get to know each wild boar. You learn his gestures, and you see what he likes. Then you can also see what he is drawn to and what he dislikes. I tell you! There are some that you really don't want to have problems with. [...] It is the same when I have the gun and am out there [in the forest]. You know they are all wild boars, but you know they are all different, right? As if each had a personality ... you know what I mean? This,

you only realize by getting close to them and having contact. ... These creatures are really smart. They'll surprise you every second. [...] Boy, my legs still tremble when I remember the first time a wild boar ran past me, and, all of a sudden, the son of a bitch stopped, turned around, and ran toward me!

Biographically, Juanjo had been confronted with porcine reversibility in two radically different settings: first, by hunting wild boars that had different “personalities” and displayed different degrees of combativeness. According to the hunter, some of the pigs could sharply shift from prey to predator as soon as they felt threatened. Second, the possibility of a porcine reversal also oriented Juanjo's habit of feeding urban wild boars. Though these pigs were seen as eminently peaceful, they still retained the potential to shift from “tame” to “wild” whenever the human's gestures could be interpreted as a threat. For him, it was the misunderstanding of “the people of the city” (of which I was a clear representative) to believe that urban wild boars could be approached as “domestic animals” (*animales domésticos*). It was precisely the “smartness” (*inteligencia*) and “freedom” (*libertad*) of these pigs that made him wary of their potential to show at any moment “their other [wild] side” (*su otra cara*).

Juanjo's experience resonates with other ethnographic accounts that have framed the “wildness” of pigs “not as a stable state of being but as a tendency, a desire that is latent in all (porcine) beings” (Govindrajana, 2018, p. 131). In other ethnographies of human-animal relations, too, the wild, the domestic, and the tame appear as fluid and contingent potentials that reflect not inherent qualities of species' bodies and habitats, but rather cosmological positions and hierarchies (Broz, 2007; Viveiros de Castro, 1998; Willerslev et al., 2015), or affective articulations of multispecies relatedness (Clark, 2007; Hustak & Myers, 2012; Parreñas, 2012).

The infraspecies analytic I put forth here not only signals that wildness, domesticity, and tameness are potentials, but also that these are, at least in the case of pigs, reversible qualities. The reversibility of perspectives between human-animal or predator-prey has been a widely discussed topic in the anthropology of animist ontologies (e.g., Fausto, 2007; Kohn, 2007; Viveiros de Castro, 1998; Willerslev, 2004). Likewise, reversibility as relational ambivalence underlies ethnographic accounts of everyday engagements with nonhumans beyond wild-domestic dichotomies (e.g., Arregui, 2020a; Descola, 2005, pp. 649–53; Marvin, 2005; Simon, 2015).<sup>6</sup> Looking at human-animal engagements through ambivalence and relational inversions is useful because it shows how humans and nonhumans “reciprocally capture” one another in relations that are far from set (Stengers, 2011). Reversibility means contrast and uncertainty, but it also implies individuals' potential to navigate these contrasts and uncertainties by repurposing their relations in the practice.

Juanjo's ambivalence toward wild boars illustrates this logic of relation that resists fixation along the parameters of what are supposed to be the behavior and habitat of wild, domestic, or tame beings. The human-pig interface seems, in general,

a particularly shifty domain of relation and classification. For instance, in accompanying the ambivalent relationships between Central Himalayan villagers and feral boars, Govindrajana (2018, p. 136) identifies as an “otherwild” the unsettling and “liminal” status of these pigs vis-à-vis human worlds:

Pigs, by their very nature, lead lives that are simultaneously entangled with and yet unrestrained by humans. Rather than making them taboo, as Mary Douglas has argued, the liminal position of pigs in this case frees them from the confines of a colonial wildness, allowing them to move deftly in and out of multiple, overlapping worlds. This liminal status is perfectly summed up by Mohan's term *paltu-jungli* [domestic-wild]. They seek immersion in human spaces but also claim freedom from human expectation.

In this infraspecies ethnography, too, ambivalent human-wild boar engagements reflect a degree of freedom and relational maneuverability at the city's margins. And even if apparently paradoxical, it is this personal agency for defining relational positions in precarious situations that binds city dwellers and wild boars in suburban Barcelona in the first place. As exemplified with Juanjo, individuals seem to “trap” one another in their potential to shift: “now predator, now prey; now host, now guest” (Corsín Jiménez, 2018, pp. 55–56). These switching positions not only orient the forms of physical contact, but also produce a mutualization of asymmetric forms of vulnerability (Parreñas, 2012). In this context, humans and pigs seem to weave not only intimate and hazardous forms of attachment, but also the texture of an ecology whose internal logic allows for situated forms of relational reversibility. Juanjo, the pig feeder and hunter, might be a daring interlocutor, but, as I show next, many others are similarly attuning to the fluctuating, newly emerging forms of infraspecies relatedness.

## CREATIVE ATTUNEMENTS

Marta, a 30-year-old woman who used to jog with her dog on the forestry paths around the district of La Floresta, had to change her usual routes for fear of encountering a sow that frequented the area. Marta was worried the wild boar would attack Rufo, her spirited fox terrier. After accidentally crossing the same sow on another path, Marta realized that both animals were less defensive when the dog was not on its leash. “She [the sow] just let him pass,” commented Marta. As further encounters took place, Marta and Rufo even became attached to the sow:

Rufo always barked but did nothing else. He just wanted to attract her attention, you know? At first, I was scared when I had to walk past the wild boar. But, I don't know—at some point, my eyes connected with the black and sad gaze of this boar, and I kind of suddenly fell in love with her. [...] From then on, we encountered her and her piglets more

and more often, just over there. We got acquainted and even spent some time staring at one another. Rufo got it too. And then—it's weird—all that started to feel normal, you know?

Attuning to wild boars' presence in the periphery of Barcelona requires setting limits, making concessions, and rethinking everyday movements and activities. As illustrated by Marta's testimony, these practical arrangements can lead people to experience the emerging porcine ecology as "normal." By contrast, Pau, a veterinary scientist involved in managing local wild boars, explained to me that his major concern was not wild boars' habituation to urban contexts, but something he identified as the growing "habituation of *certain* people to the habituation of *certain* wild boars." This "reciprocal habituation" was seen as particularly troubling when it was exhibited by those human dwellers of the periphery who tolerated and even liked the close presence of wild boars, with all the potential conflicts that such coexistence entails.

While habituation of urban wild boars has been described in Barcelona and other cities (Cahill et al., 2012; Ikeda et al., 2019; Stillfried et al., 2017), research on human habituation toward wild boars remains scarce. In a pilot study on the "social perception of wild boars," conducted by veterinary scientists in the district of La Floresta, 93 percent of respondents affirmed that they "like to see wild boars around"; 31 percent purported feeling a sense of "friendship" when encountering the animals; and only 13 percent expressed the need to return wild boars to the forest (Conejero et al., 2019). The study gives a quantified measure of something that became apparent from the onset of my fieldwork: although standard knowledge about the species biology, ecology, and ethology advises keeping a safe distance from these wild animals, the habituation and affects expressed by people who encounter wild boars in their daily activities often work in the opposite direction.

The language of animal "habituation" comes from ethology and biology, and to a lesser extent it has also been employed and deconstructed from philosophical and anthropological perspectives (e.g., Alcayna-Stevens, 2016; Candea, 2013; Despret, 2015). As illustrated in these works, an ethnographic account of habituation can include the human side of the relation and capture the mutual aspects of the process. In Barcelona, the reciprocal processes of habituation of humans and wild boars emerges from a relational "attunement" between individuals, one that responds not only to instincts, stimuli, and sensoria but also to socially mediated and affective forms of relation (Despret, 2004; Stewart, 2011). While individuals scrutinize and attune to their respective activities in public spaces (mostly rooting and foraging on the side of wild boars, often filming or taking pictures on the side of humans), personal arrangements are usually expressed in maintaining a respectful distance. On other occasions the relations can take the form of hand feeding, playful engagement, or even petting. Also, some interactions are driven by intimidation: such is the case with the barking of dogs or with the locals who yell at the pigs whenever they are in their way.

Still, for the most "reciprocally habituated" or "attuned" neighbors and wild boars, most of the time they spend together

seems to be driven by a familiar form of indifference (see Figure 3). While some locals stop to greet specific herds that they recognize and identify as this or that "family," many neighbors just keep them in their peripheral vision as they go about their daily activity. This can be framed as a form of "interpatience," a concept that has been proposed to reflect these forms of human-animal relations that involve being attentively together without interacting (Candea, 2010). As a cultivated form of indifference, interpatience shows that "in a world of potential threats and predators, learning to ignore another living being is a contingent and revocable achievement, one in which engagement and detachment are inextricably entwined" (Candea, 2010, p. 249). Human-wild boar relations in suburban Barcelona are also marked by differing forms of engaging with and detaching from members of the other species. While individuals tend to adopt one or the other attitude as a practical orientation, in these peripheral neighborhoods, engagement and detachment become necessarily articulated as a collective strategy for holding the reversible in abeyance.

Sharing spaces with reversible pigs is far from a passive form of attunement: on the contrary, it often requires creative and pragmatic forms of steering conflict, negotiating habits, and enabling copresence without violence. I witnessed one of these improvised and yet ingenuous reframings of the public space in spring of 2018, when a father and his toddler were encroached on by a group of wild boars in a park called Mina Grott (Vallvidrera). That day, as two juvenile boars began to quarrel over leftover food, the man decided to move with his son into a fenced playground. Minutes later, a sow sniffed around the fence and repeatedly tried to push open the playground door. Finally, when the sow gave up and joined the other pigs, which were grazing away, father and son came out of the fenced playground. Coming toward me with wide-open eyes and the excited child on his arms, the man commented, "Did you see that? We swapped roles. They were out! And we were in! That was quite an experience!"

If switching the positions of humans and pigs over a fence made for a remarkable situation, it was even more bewildering, for this observer, that both could face the event with the fascination of "experiencing" the other from the two sides of a material boundary. Other forms of boundary-crossing I could witness during this ethnography were driven, as described above, by a more intimate logic: such was the case in Manolo's double-sided relations with suburban neighbors, in Juanjo's risky involvements with boars inside and outside the forest, or in the engaging encounters between a sow, Marta, and her dog. These personal arrangements call for a situated analysis, but they also invite reflection beyond immediacy. As I show next, the ongoing attunements of humans and wild boars are not only rearranging the daily activity of suburban neighbors, but they are also destabilizing the rationale that takes "species" as the core unit to imagine and manage human-animal relations in the city.

## A CLASH BETWEEN SPECIES?

There is a large reservoir at the periphery of Barcelona called Pantà de Vallvidrera. The spot, which is surrounded by grassy



**FIGURE 3** The very process of fieldwork has led to attunement and even indifference between wild boars and members of the anthropologist's family, Pantà de Vallvidrera, Barcelona, 2019. (Anibal Arregui) [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

slopes, shaded by large trees, and dotted with stone picnic tables, is popular among city dwellers and wild boars alike. I was at the Pantà de Vallvidrera during a sunny weekend in October 2019 when a herd of wild boars arrived. At first the boars approached the groups of people with their quivering bodies and exploratory snouts, insisting on being fed picnic leftovers. Many of the people stood up nervously, stampeded away, or jumped on the stone tables, leaving behind food containers, bread, and bags of chips, much to the joy of the boars. By contrast, some groups of people, who turned out to be locals, remained quiet and mostly indifferent to the animals. After a while, some of the visitors noticed that the boars were neither seeking direct physical contact nor attacking. Drawn by curiosity, visitors started to get closer. Some took pictures. Others threw pieces of food to the animals. Children mimicked the porcine gestures and snorted.

Later on, a woman yelled “Go away!” several times, trying to frighten away a sow that was sniffing around the blanket that she and her dog were sitting on. The scene, which I video-recorded,<sup>7</sup> led to a bitter quarrel: on the opposite side of the reservoir, another person scolded the woman for pushing the wild boar away. “What are you doing?” the man said reproachfully. “She is just peaceful,” he added, referring to the boar. He went on to vehemently insist, several times, that “she,” the wild boar, was “at home.” The woman, meanwhile, retorted that the animal was “dangerous,” cynically asking if it was *they* [humans] “who should leave the place.” Finally, a third voice chimed in from the distance: “The danger here is us [humans], not them [wild boars]!” This was met with applause, and the discussion was closed.

For the residents of and visitors to suburban Barcelona, it is difficult to agree on “who” is “at home” when think-

ing of the urban periphery as a habitat. The event at the Vallvidrera reservoir sparked a tense situation among some humans and some wild boars. Such tension, however, became more complex after a conflict broke out among humans, one triggered by contentions unfolding *within* our species.

Interestingly, these internal contentions are quite often flattened out in national and international mainstream journalism, which depicts the dynamics of wild boar proliferation and urbanization as a “war” between species (e.g., Warner, 2019). The focus on human–wild boar conflict as a clash of collectives also drives conservation practices and imaginaries. This came to the fore after a wild boar hunt on the edges of Barcelona, which I attended along with a group of veterinarians who were testing the hunted specimens for disease. These hunts, which take place on the weekends from September to February, are jointly organized by hunting associations, veterinary scientists, and the City Council, with the goal of curbing the wild boar population in peri-urban areas. In conversation with Javi, a hunter, and Pedro, one of the veterinary scientists, it became crystal clear that, from their perspective, wild boars *are not* an urban species, and that their entrance into the city needs to be urgently reversed to avoid unfortunate incidents:

ME, *pointing to the carcasses of hunted wild boars*. Were these presenting any danger to people?

JAVI. [Laughs.] Well, here, they are only a danger to us, but over there [*pointing toward the city*], there it's all a different story.

ME. So, you know for sure that these visit the city?

PEDRO. Oh, yes they do! But are these urban animals at all?

JAVI, *shaking his head*. For God's sake, this is a wild species, I tell you.

PEDRO. Aníbal, if a wild boar crosses over there, you never know what can happen. Plus, if you knew what they have inside—we are finding these have high levels of rodenticide in their tissues. [...] These guys ransack and feed on literally everything.

Conservation scientists have good reasons to be wary. Besides the traffic accidents, infrastructural damage, and potential conflicts with humans and pets, experts and local authorities worry about biodiversity and zoonotic diseases. In the semi-forested urban periphery, wild boars can prey on native species, and their intensive rooting can disrupt the local vegetation composition and regeneration patterns (Massei & Genov, 2004).

Zoonotic transmission of pathogens is also a major concern (Brown & Nading, 2019). There are several worrisome diseases that wild swine can transmit to humans, including respiratory viruses (Ruiz-Fons, 2017). The scientists who monitor wild boar urbanization in Barcelona are particularly concerned about pathogens already present in the area that could jump from wild boar to human bodies. Among the most alarming pathogens are hepatitis E virus, influenza A virus, and antibiotic-resistant bacteria (Castillo-Contreras, 2019). In scientific models of human-wild boar epidemiology, some peri-urban areas are becoming zoonotic “hot spots” where the animals could transmit these pathogens to humans via ticks; through contact with feces, blood, or carcasses; or in more direct interactions through saliva or aerosols (González-Crespo, 2021).

Given the potential zoonosis, human-animal conflicts, and loss in biodiversity, the city does not have room for the wild boars, according to conservationists. The latter thus believe that wild boars, as a nonurban species, should remain in their “natural” habitat, that is, in nonurban forests. With that aim, local authorities and conservation experts have in recent years implemented a set of measures to prevent wild pigs from drifting into Barcelona. Among these measures are hunting raids, sterilization programs, veterinary traps and captures, and campaigns of environmental education that seek to dissuade people from directly interacting with wild boars (Claverol, 2016). In addition, some infrastructural improvements have been undertaken to address the damage caused by the animals. These material interventions include the provisioning of trash containers, the deeper fencing of some areas, and the closing off of grassy areas that pigs conscientiously and unabashedly dig up.

Unfortunately, almost all these measures are undermined at some point, either by human or nonhuman agents. While trash

containers and deeper fences do their job on the outskirts of the city, the remaining private gardens and feeding points for stray-cat colonies—which is a tradition in Barcelona—continue to attract the pigs. Sterilization programs have also been troubled by strong objections from hunters' associations, who argue that the vaccines make the wild boars more aggressive. Some scientists also maintain that sterilization alone is ineffective because it needs to be accompanied by the targeted hunting of females and piglets (González-Crespo et al., 2018)—something that many local hunters dislike.

It seems to be an urgent task, then, to understand how technical and bureaucratic conservation measures articulate with more “embodied,” “localized,” and “momentary” forms of knowing the animal Other (Mathur, 2021, p. 177). In Barcelona, this articulation appears to be paradigmatically challenging, since the measures implemented by conservation agents become unsettled in practice. Even the “soft power” of the City Council's environmental education agenda, which campaigns in the news media against human-wild boar interaction, has limited impact. The prospect of restoring a wild boar-free Barcelona is recalcitrantly dismantled by those who are driven by a different idea of what kinds of more-than-human collectives belong to the city. As I was told by Javi, the hunter, “It doesn't matter what you do to fight the wild boar pest. In this city, there will always be someone who will help them to stay.”

## FLIPPING SPACES

The hunting of wild boars is an ever-transforming and experimental field of practice (Keil, 2021; Von Essen, 2020). In the city, bowhunting has recently emerged as one of the most audacious technical interventions to curb wild boar incursions into the urban space. In February 2011, the Barcelona City Council approved the killing of urban wild pigs with arrows. At night, archers would hide on tree stands, awaiting their prey. Initially, the measure was deemed “ecological” since it was “respectful” of the urban environment and effective for its alleged lethality; most crucially, it circumvented the legal prohibition on shooting a firearm in the city. Despite these promises, public outcry over bowhunting spread rapidly, and the measure had to be withdrawn within a few days. Months after that episode, the media circulated a picture of a wild boar perambulating in a street with an arrow stuck in its head (Madridejos, 2011). Many commentators vehemently expressed their indignation. But hunters' arrows are still found sporadically on the city's outskirts.

In August 2018, the return to these pristine hunting traditions was a topic of conversation among Juanjo, his neighbor Marcos—who was not a hunter—and me:

MARCOS. I think, if the guy knows how to use the bow, then why not do it?

ME. But remember that picture with the arrow-pierced boar in the Arrabassada [a street of Barcelona], did you see it?

JUANJO. Sure, it's not that easy to shoot the animal with an arrow.

MARCOS. But then what? What are these people [local authorities] doing now with the wild boar? This is a pest, man. They're all over the place again!

JUANJO, *talking to me*. Look, this is the problem. People judge without knowing, but we *live* here. For the people of the city, it is all black *or* white. They don't understand the logic of the mountain. Here, it's more complex. We have everything, wild boars, cars, bowhunters. We like it that way, and we need to adapt. Just as you adapt to your neighbors.

That conversation took place on the street where my interlocutors lived, in the neighborhood of Vallvidrera. The “logic of the mountain” was, in fact, ascribed to a place that is administratively part of Barcelona. As the words of Marcos and Juanjo attest, the presence of recalcitrant wild boars in peripheral districts, and the “complex” ways of dealing with them, were taken to contest the “urban” status of some parts of the city. In a sense, wild boars were summoned as the palpable proof of suburban idiosyncrasies.

Despite bowhunting experiments, wild boars are today seen as “neighbors” (*vecinos*), and stable groups or herds are described as specific “families” (*familias*). As was the case with Manolo, the cheeky hog of Les Planes, the ultimate expression of urban boars' social character is that some of these animals have names. Such is also the case of Chanclas, a “graceful” (*gracioso*) juvenile male who regularly visited the same backyard. There is also Lily, a “sweet” sow whose surprisingly “long eyelashes” seduced the young couple who often meet “her” while walking their dogs. Many other pigs have no name, but they are likewise presented as part of the neighborhood's social fabric. As is the case with any other social context, though, there are also irredeemable frictions among neighbors. Thus, a particular wild boar can be disliked by people who will scorn the animal as “aggressive” (*agresivo*), “untrustworthy” (*no es de fiar*), “filthy” (*guarro*), and even “a bastard” (*un cabrón*).

Beyond these personal characterizations, wild boars have motivated diverse symbolic expressions that assert the other-than-urban values of the outskirts: the wild boar is now an unavoidable icon for promoting local festivals, a logo for sports and cultural associations, a sticker for cars, or a label for suburban products and merchandise. Local folklore also reflects the trend. Since 2012, for instance, the outer district of Montbau has been represented in local festivals by a giant statue of a woman holding a baby boar: the piglet wears a typical regional hat, and a pacifier dangles from the woman's hand (see Figure 4).

In my conversations with locals, it became apparent that the statue does not represent the domestication of the species as a whole. Rather, the figure expresses suburban residents' ability to tame and coexist with specific wild boar individuals. “This



**FIGURE 4** Gegant de Montbau, a statue of a woman holding a “pacified” baby wild boar, Barcelona, 2019. (Anibal Arregui) [This figure appears in color in the online issue]

shows we can cope with our wild boars,” I was told by a woman, a resident of Montbau, who was participating in a folkloric exhibition. The “we” and the “our” in her comment asserted important distinctions between the city center and the periphery. Since the peripheral districts were annexed at the end of the 19th century, many residents from the outskirts at the Collserola hills have identified with rural lifestyles (Gras, 2002). Today, the contrasting qualities of the “people of the mountain” and the “people of the city” are still evoked to mark the difference between the districts at the hills and the city center (Doñate & Márquez, 2020). Thus, the phrase “we can cope with *our* wild boars” implied an infraspecies logic of relation coupled with a neighborhood-level differentiation. In many conversations with locals, the “wild” quality of these animals was still an inextricable value for most suburban dwellers: even if “tame” in their attitude toward certain persons (*mansos*, *tranquilos*), the urban boars of any peripheral district were proudly described by locals as wild animals (*animales salvajes*) or forest animals (*animales silvestres*), often implying that “people from the city” simply don't know how to deal with them.

Another peculiarity of the suburban way of life was, according to Juanjo, that in the outskirts not everything is “black or white.” Suburban stories of wild boars switching dispositions (now more friendly, now more hostile) are first understood as personal experiences of encounter, but these stories soon become inscribed in local narratives that foster an ambivalent experience of the landscape itself. As Parreñas (2012, p. 883)

has it, the human-animal interface “has implications beyond those specific to the bodies and subjects interfacing each other.” In this context, the arrangements that orient daily encounters not only have a practical expression of reversibility (feeding or killing, ignoring or petting, yelling or taming), but they are also actions undertaken by individuals who continually move between the forest and the urban infrastructure and relate to one another in ways that enable the “shifting [of] physical and conceptual spaces themselves” (Govindraj, 2018, p. 8).

Materialized in movements and practices across spatial and species boundaries, the reversible involvements of humans and pigs inculcate a black *and* white, urban *and* rural, oscillating quality into the places they navigate. In Barcelona, wild boars carry with them an “atmosphere” that may start in the immediate animal’s *Umwelt*, but it then builds outward, “situating the animal in its social, ecological and material circumstances” (Lorimer et al., 2019, p. 33). As a result, pigs and humans coexist in ambivalent, hazardous urban textures, which constantly shift between the usual features of “wild and domestic settings” (p. 26). This fluctuating quality of the human–wild boar interface signals the lability of the current ecological moment, and at the same time, it seems to be bringing about symbolic, political, and practical forms of reimagining life in the city from its vanishing limits.

## INFRA SPECIES ECOLOGIES

The proliferation of wild boars all over the planet and their entry into cities is due in part to large-scale environmental processes, such as global warming (Vetter et al., 2015) and other anthropogenic impacts (Podgórski et al., 2013). With a more localized and socially oriented frame of analysis, I have shown how parks, squares, streets, and backyards have come to be shared by Manolo, Eulalia, Juanjo, and many other human and nonhuman neighbors. These local stories are, crucially, part and parcel of a broader change. If this is an ethnography of “unexpected neighbors” in the refurbishing interzones of the city (Stoetzer, 2018, p. 298), it can also be seen as a proxy for the larger and undesired environmental processes that are transforming our relations with wild animals on a planetary scale (Cassidy, 2012).

Barcelona, in particular, can be approached as an ecosystem whose legitimate “species,” as core units of relation, interact in consonance with their known attributes in terms of spatial behavior, nutrition, predation, reproduction, habitat, and the like. The consonance between species classifications and individuals’ forms of dwelling in the urban environment orient the imaginaries of conservationists and local authorities. The reality is, however, that allocating species and safeguarding tidy ecological boundaries is a difficult task. This article has shown that, despite the technical measures of urban biodiversity, suburban dwellers and wild boars are still physically exposed to one another and must therefore coexist amid the precariousness of that situation.

Daily, humans encounter pigs that behave and are characterized as “wild” and “tame,” “urban” and “rural,” “pest” and “neighbor.” From this perspective, habitat and ethologi-

cal features, as well as the distribution of organisms along the wild-domestic dichotomy, do not necessarily appear as subject to species hallmarks. Rather, relational attributes become shifting qualities that signal relational ambivalence, temporary stabilizations, and practical arrangements between individuals, which can transform the larger collectives they belong or relate to. By contrast with species-level contentions over the urban ecosystem—pigs coming in, conservationists pushing back—my ethnography unpacks an intimate human–wild boar interface that is marked by the need to cope with situated, quotidian, and individual forms of reversibility.

My argument has expanded on anthropological analyses that approach “species” as a relational category (e.g., Cruzada, 2022; Haraway, 2008; Ingold, 2013; Kirksey, 2015b; Lestel, 2011; Tsing, 2015). As Yates-Doerr (2015, p. 320) claims, “the ‘multi’ of multispecies ethnography should be taken as an incitement to study the multiplicity of ways in which relations emerge—and not the pluralist addition of yet more (given) species to the ethnographic canon.” To trace these relational emergences, the “infraspecies” focus may then account for how *individuals* or *specimens*, in the first place, foster their own ways of engaging with or disengaging from other organisms in quotidian encounters.

The infraspecies outlook indicates, in a sense, that human–wild boar relations can be as idiosyncratic, unsettling, and personally contingent as relations among human neighbors. Following individuals that move between the forest and the city, I have described practical and reversible forms of human–wild boar attunement that can be seen as an intimate scale of ecology making. Because many species-level projects of domestication and conservation seem obsolete for addressing the sanitary and ecological uncertainties we are facing today (Arregui, 2020b), it is necessary to acknowledge how situated organisms intervene, often in pragmatic ways, in the forging of always-“emergent” multispecies communities (Kirksey, 2015a). As exemplified in suburban Barcelona, infraspecies relations can crucially affect their surrounding environment from the bottom up: in this case, particular specimens are turning the urban ecology into a shifty relational texture, one that attests to “the *becoming urban* of the wild” (Barua & Sinha, 2022; see also Gabrys, 2012), while also laying bare the *becoming wild* of the urban.

The example of wild boars in the city sets the stage for some of the zoonotic and environmental hazards prompted by those human-animal intimacies that grow in the Anthropocene (Brown & Nading, 2019; Giraud et al., 2019). This is a moment when a wide range of “intercorporeal encounters” and “wild spaces of conviviality are emerging in multispecies cities where improvisation, risk, and accountability are all in play” (Kirksey et al., 2018, p. 617). Far from celebrating embodied encounters, the case discloses what happens on the ground when scientific rationales and institutional interventions fail to steer the behavior and habitat of unconventional multispecies collectives. In Barcelona, particular humans and wild boars are exposed to one another, and yet they still quite virtuously cope with mutual risks, relational uncertainty, and asymmetric forms of vulnerability. On a practical level, these mutual attunements orchestrate different alternatives for urban coexistence, with different scales for considering what might be reversible, and

making room for the emergence of individual experiences and strategies from below the species hallmarks. In this infraspecies ethnography, the reversibility of pigs—from “rural” to “urban” settings, from “wild” to “tame” positionings, and all the way around—calls for a nonlinear history of the environment, one that comes to terms with the countless times that singular organisms go back and forth bodily, spatially, and relationally, to navigate mutual damages and recompose everyday ecologies.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is the result of many conversations with colleagues who participated in the project “Veterinarization of Europe? Hunting for Wild Boar Futures in the Time of African Swine Fever” (<https://www.wildboar.cz/>). I am grateful to all members of the team and especially to Luděk Brož, who made this research possible. I also want to thank my scientific collaborators in the field, in particular the members of the Servicio de Ecopatología de Fauna Salvaje (Autonomous University of Barcelona) and the scientists at Estació Biològica Can Balasc (Collserola, Barcelona). Five reviewers and two editorial teams of *American Ethnologist* have generously and crucially helped me to improve these arguments. Finally, I am deeply indebted to all my interlocutors in the districts of Vallvidrera, Les Planes, and La Floresta (Barcelona), for their kindness and inspiring guidance. This article is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 866350). The content developed on this article reflects only the authors’ view. The ERC is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

## ORCID

Aníbal G. Arregui  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6040-1269>

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> All names of my human interlocutors have been pseudonymized.
- <sup>2</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in Spanish and Catalan. All translations are mine.
- <sup>3</sup> Even those who deal with pigs in the industrial sector shiver when they realize that these extremely smart animals are “always watching you” (Blanchette, 2020, p. xviii).
- <sup>4</sup> In his historical and philosophical overview, Wilkins (2009, p. 195) suggests that there has always been (even before Darwin) a “generative” idea of species, that is, a perception that species are part of a *process* of biological descent and change, not stable entities.
- <sup>5</sup> Fleischman (2020, p. 163) describes the bodily transformations undergone by farm pigs that become feral as follows: “If a young pig is exposed to hardship shortly after birth, and a series of transformations take hold—its skull and legs will grow longer, its ears will stand erect, and bristly hair and spiked mane will burst from the crest of its skull to its tail.”
- <sup>6</sup> Simon (2015, p. 697) observes that “a conceptual divide between ‘wild’ and ‘domesticated’ fails to explain the diversity of human-animal relations uncovered by multispecies ethnography.” Elsewhere, I have engaged with the cosmological, practical, and theoretical effects of considering relations with wild animals beyond this dichotomy (Arregui, 2020a).
- <sup>7</sup> “Afectos y desafectos del jabalí en Barcelona.” YouTube video, 1:23, uploaded by Aníbal Arregui, June 26, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOIgxPPjwE>.

## REFERENCES

Alcayna-Stevens, Lys. 2016. “Habituating Field Scientists.” *Social Studies of Science* 46 (6): 833–53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26107055>.

- Arregui, Aníbal G. 2020a. “Positional Wildness: Amazonian *Ribeirinhos*, Pink Dolphins and Interspecies Affections.” *Ethnos* 85 (5): 819–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2019.1619606>.
- Arregui, Aníbal G. 2020b. “Viralscapes: The Bodies of Others after Covid-19.” *Allegralab*, March 31, 2020. <https://allegralaboratory.net/viralscapes-the-bodies-of-others-after-covid-19/>.
- Barua, Maan, and Anindya Sinha. 2019. “Animating the Urban: An Ethnological and Geographical Conversation.” *Social and Cultural Geography* 20 (8): 1160–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1409908>.
- Barua, Maan, and Anindya Sinha. 2022. “Cultivated, Feral, Wild: The Urban as an Ecological Formation.” *Urban Geography*. Published ahead of print, April 25, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2022.2055924>.
- Bear, Christopher. 2011. “Being Angelica? Exploring Individual Animal Geographies.” *Area* 43 (3): 297–304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2011.01019.x>.
- Blanchette, Alex. 2020. *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Brown, Hannah, and Alex M. Nading. 2019. “Introduction: Human Animal Health in Medical Anthropology.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 33 (1): 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/maq.12488>.
- Broz, Ludek. 2007. “Pastoral Perspectivism: A View from Altai.” *Inner Asia* 9 (2): 291–310. <https://doi.org/10.1163/146481707793646566>.
- Broz, Ludek, Aníbal G. Arregui, and Kieran O’Mahony. 2021. “Wild Boar Events and the Veterinarization of Multispecies Coexistence.” *Frontiers in Conservation Science* 2: 711299. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcsc.2021.711299>.
- Cahill, Sean, and Francesc Llimona. 2004. “Demographic Aspects of a Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa* Linnaeus, 1758) Population in a Metropolitan Park in Barcelona.” *Galemys* 16 (special issue): 37–52. <https://www.secem.es/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Galemys-16-NE-003-Cahill-37-52.pdf>.
- Cahill, Sean, Francesc Llimona, Lluís Cabañeros, and Fernando Calomardo. 2012. “Characteristics of Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) Habituation to Urban Areas in the Collserola Natural Park (Barcelona) and Comparison with Other Locations.” *Animal Biodiversity and Conservation* 35 (2): 221–33. <https://doi.org/10.32800/abc.2012.35.0221>.
- Candea, Matei. 2010. “‘I Fell in Love with Carlos the Meerkat’: Engagement and Detachment in Human-Animal Relations.” *American Ethnologist* 37 (2): 241–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01253.x>.
- Candea, Matei. 2013. “Habituating Meerkats and Redescribing Animal Behaviour Science.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 30 (7–8): 105–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276413501204>.
- Cassidy, Rebecca. 2012. “Lives with Others: Climate Change and Human-Animal Relations.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41:21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-092611-145706>.
- Cassidy, Rebecca, and Molly Mullin, eds. 2007. *Where the Wild Things Are Now: Domestication Reconsidered*. Oxford: Berg.
- Castillo-Contreras, Raquel. 2019. “Urban Wild Boar: Drivers of Presence, Phenotypic Responses and Health Concerns.” PhD diss., Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.
- Castillo-Contreras, Raquel, Gregorio Mentaberre, Xavier Fernández-Aguilar, Carles Conejero, Andreu Colom-Cadena, Airán Ráez-Bravo, Carlos González-Crespo, et al. 2021. “Wild Boar in the City: Phenotypic Responses to Urbanisation.” *Science of the Total Environment* 773: 145593. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.145593>.
- Chua, Liana, and Hannah Fair. 2019. “Anthropocene.” In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, January 8, 2019. <http://doi.org/10.29164/19anthro>.
- Chua, Liana, Mark E. Harrison, Hannah Fair, Sol Milne, Alexandra Palmer, June Rubis, Paul Thung, et al. 2020. “Conservation and the Social Sciences: Beyond Critique and Co-optation. A Case Study from Orangutan Conservation.” *People and Nature* 2 (1): 42–60. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10072>.
- Clark, Nigel. 2007. “Animal Interface: The Generosity of Domestication.” In *Where the Wild Things Are Now: Domestication Reconsidered*, edited by Rebecca Cassidy and Molly Mullin, 49–70. Oxford: Berg.
- Claverol, Cristina. 2016. “La proliferación del jabalí urbano.” *El Periódico*, February 16, 2016. <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/graficos/barcelona/proliferacion-jabali-barcelona-14590/>.

- Conejero, Carles, Raquel Castillo-Contreras, Carlos González-Crespo, Emmanuel Serrano, Gregorio Mentaberre, Santiago Lavín, and Jorge Ramón López-Olvera. 2019. "Past Experiences Drive Citizen Perception of Wild Boar in Urban Areas." *Mammalian Biology* 96 (May): 68–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mambio.2019.04.002>.
- Corsín Jiménez, Alberto. 2018. "Spiderweb Anthropologies." In *A World of Many Worlds*, edited by Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser, 53–82. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Cruzada, Santiago M. 2022. "Reflexiones virales sobre la noción de especie en las antropologías posthumanas." In *Vitalidades: Etnografías en los límites de lo humano*, edited by Juan Martín Dabezies and Aníbal G. Arregui, 87–108. Madrid: Nola.
- Descola, Philippe. 2005. *Par-delà nature et culture*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Despret, Vinciane. 2004. "The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthropozoo-genesis." *Body and Society* 10 (2–3): 111–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034x04042938>.
- Despret, Vinciane. 2015. "Thinking like a Rat." *Angelaki* 20 (2): 121–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2015.1039849>.
- Doñate, Miguel, and Raul Márquez. 2020. *Baixar a Barcelona: La ciutat i la comunitat recreada a Sarrià*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya.
- Dooren, Thom van, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster. 2016. "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness." *Environmental Humanities* 8 (1): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3527695>.
- Fausto, Carlos. 2007. "Feasting on People: Eating Animals and Humans in Amazonia." *Current Anthropology* 48 (4): 497–530. <https://doi.org/10.1086/518298>.
- Fernández Poveda, Pere. 2016. "Una altra veina de Les Planes atacada per un senglar." *Tot Sant Cugat*, September 5, 2016. [https://www.totsantcugat.cat/actualitat/societat/una-altra-veina-de-les-planes-atacada-per-un-senglar\\_163038102.html](https://www.totsantcugat.cat/actualitat/societat/una-altra-veina-de-les-planes-atacada-per-un-senglar_163038102.html).
- Fleischman, Thomas. 2020. *Communist Pigs: An Animal History of East Germany's Rise and Fall*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Gabrys, Jennifer. 2012. "Becoming Urban: Sitework from a Moss-Eye View." *Environment and Planning A* 44 (12): 2922–39. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a44671>.
- Giraud, Eva, Eleanor Hadley Kershaw, Richard Helliwell, and Gregory Hollin. 2019. "Abundance in the Anthropocene." *Sociological Review* 67 (2): 357–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119830907>.
- González-Crespo, Carlos. 2021. "The Synurbization of Wild Boar in the City of Barcelona, Spain." PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
- González-Crespo, Carlos, Emmanuel Serrano, Sean Cahill, Raquel Castillo-Contreras, Lluís Cabañeros, Josep María López-Martín, Joan Roldan, et al. 2018. "Stochastic Assessment of Management Strategies for a Mediterranean Peri-urban Wild Boar Population." *PLOS One* 13 (8): e0202289. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202289>.
- Govindrajana, Radhika. 2018. *Animal Intimacies. Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gras, Jaume. 2002. *L'annexió de Sarrià a Barcelona*. Vilamòs, Spain: El Mirador.
- Haraway, Donna. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hathaway, Michael. 2016. "Animals as Historical Actors? Southwest China's Wild Elephants and the Worlds They Shape." In *Methodological Challenges in Nature-Culture and Environmental History Research*, edited by Jocelyn Thorpe, Stephanie Rutherford, and L. Anders Sandberg, 55–65. New York: Routledge.
- Hustak, Carla, and Natasha Myers. 2012. "Involuntary Momentum: Affective Ecologies and the Sciences of Plant/Insect Encounters." *Differences* 23 (3): 74–118. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-1892907>.
- Ikedo, Takashi, Naotoshi Kuninaga, Takaaki Suzuki, Shiori Ikushima, and Masatsugu Suzukibet. 2019. "Tourist-Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) Interactions in Urban Wildlife Management." *Global Ecology and Conservation* 18 (April): e00617. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2019.e00617>.
- Ingold, Tim. 2013. "Anthropology beyond Humanity." *Suomen Antropologi/Journal of the Finnish Anthropology Society* 38 (3): 15–23.
- Keil, Paul G. 2021. "Rank Atmospheres: The More-Than-Human Scentspace and Aesthetic of a Pigdogging Hunt." *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 32:96–113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/taja.12382>.
- Kirksey, Eben. 2015a. *Emergent Ecologies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kirksey, Eben. 2015b. "Species: A Praxiographic Study." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21 (4): 758–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12286>.
- Kirksey, Eben, and Stefan Helmreich. 2010. "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography." *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (4): 545–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01069.x>.
- Kirksey, Eben, Paul Munro, Thom van Dooren, Dan Emery, Anne Maree Kreller, Jeffrey Kwok, Ken Lau, et al. 2018. "Feeding the Flock: Wild Cockatoos and Their Facebook Friends." *Environment and Planning E* 1 (4): 602–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848618799294>.
- Kohn, Eduardo. 2007. "How Dogs Dream: Amazonian Natures and the Politics of Trans-species Engagement." *American Ethnologist* 34 (1): 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.1.3>.
- Kowalewska, Agata. 2019. "Feral Urban Wild Boars: Managing Spaces of Conflict with Care and Attention." *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy* 4 (42): 524–38. <https://doi.org/10.4467/20843860PK.19.027.11923>.
- Lestel, Dominique. 2011. "What Capabilities for the Animal?" *Biosemiotics* 4 (April): 83–102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-010-9109-6>.
- Lorimer, Jamie, Timothy Hodgetts, and Maan Barua. 2019. "Animals' Atmospheres." *Progress in Human Geography* 43 (1): 26–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132517731254>.
- Madridejos, Antonio. 2011. "Un jabalí deambula herido por Collserola." *El Periódico*, July 16, 2011. <https://www.pressreader.com/spain/el-periodico-de-catalunya-castellano/20110716/286014758532533>.
- Marvin, Garry. 2005. "Disciplined Affection: The Making of a Pack of Foxhounds." In *Animals in Person: Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Intimacy*, edited by John Knight, 61–77. Oxford: Berg.
- Massei, Giovanna, and Peter Genov. 2004. "The Environmental Impact of Wild Boar." *Galemys* 16 (special issue): 135–45. <https://www.secem.es/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Galemys-16-NE-011-Massei-135-145.pdf>
- Mathur, Nayanika. 2021. "Beastly Identification in India: The Government of Big Cats in the Anthropocene." *American Ethnologist* 48 (2): 167–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13021>.
- Mitjà Soto, Ferran. 2019. "Xifres, conseqüències i polèmiques de la caça i l'esterilització de senglars a Collserola." *Tot Sant Cugat*, January 19, 2019. [https://www.totsantcugat.cat/actualitat/medi-ambient/xifres-conseqüències-i-polemiques-de-la-caca-i-l-esterilitzacio-de-senglars-a-collserola\\_207058102.html](https://www.totsantcugat.cat/actualitat/medi-ambient/xifres-conseqüències-i-polemiques-de-la-caca-i-l-esterilitzacio-de-senglars-a-collserola_207058102.html).
- O'Mahony, Kieran. 2020. "Blurring Boundaries: Feral Rewilding, Biosecurity and Contested Wild Boar Belonging in England." *Conservation and Society* 18 (2): 114–25. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26937286>.
- Parreñas, Rheana "Juno" S. 2012. "Producing Affect: Transnational Volunteerism in a Malaysian Orangutan Rehabilitation Center." *American Ethnologist* 39 (4): 673–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2012.01387.x>.
- Podgórski, Tomasz, Grzegorz Baś, Bogumiła Jędrzejewska, Leif Sönnichsen, Stanisław Śnieżko, Włodzimierz Jędrzejewski, and Henryk Okarma. 2013. "Spatiotemporal Behavioral Plasticity of Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) under Contrasting Conditions of Human Pressure: Primeval Forest and Metropolitan Area." *Journal of Mammalogy* 94 (1): 109–19. <https://doi.org/10.1644/12-MAMM-A-038.1>.
- Rowley-Conwy, Peter, Keith Dobney, Umberto Albarella, and Melinda A. Zeder. 2006. "The Domestication of the Pig (*Sus scrofa*): New Challenges and Approaches." In *Documenting Domestication: New Genetic and Archaeological Paradigms*, edited by Melinda A. Zeder, Daniel Bradley, Eve Emshwiller, and Bruce D. Smith, 209–27. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ruiz-Fons, José Francisco. 2017. "A Review of the Current Status of Relevant Zoonotic Pathogens in Wild Swine (*Sus scrofa*) Populations: Changes Modulating the Risk of Transmission to Humans." *Transboundary and Emerging Diseases* 64 (1): 68–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tbed.12369>.
- Simon, Scott. 2015. "Real People, Real Dogs, and Pigs for the Ancestors: The Moral Universe of 'Domestication' in Indigenous Taiwan." *American Anthropologist* 117 (4): 695–709. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12350>.
- Smith, Will. 2020. "Beyond Loving Nature: Affective Conservation and Human-Pig Violence in the Philippines." *Ethnos* 87 (5): 874–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2020.1828970>.

- Stengers, Isabelle. 2011. *Cosmopolitics II*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2011. "Atmospheric Attunements." *Environment and Planning D* 29 (3): 445–53. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d9109>.
- Stillfried, Milena, Pierre Gras, Matthias Busch, Konstantin Börner, Stephanie Kramer-Schadt, and Sylvia Ortmann. 2017. "Wild Inside: Urban Wild Boar Select Natural, Not Anthropogenic Food Resources." *PLOS One* 12 (4): e0175127. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0175127>.
- Stoetzer, Bettina. 2018. "Ruderal Ecologies: Rethinking Nature, Migration, and the Urban Landscape in Berlin." *Cultural Anthropology* 33 (2): 295–323. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca33.2.09>.
- Stoetzer, Bettina. 2020. "Pigs, Viruses, and Humans Co-evolve in a Deadly Dance." In *Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene*, edited by Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. <https://feralatlascupdigital.org/poster/pigs-viruses-and-humans-co-evolve-in-a-deadly-dance>.
- Tsing, Anna. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tsing, Anna L., Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou. 2020. *Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. <https://feralatlascup.org/>.
- Vetter, Sebastian, Thomas Ruf, Claudia Bieber, and Walter Arnold. 2015. "What Is a Mild Winter? Regional Differences in Within-Species Responses to Climate Change." *PLOS One* 10 (7): e0132178. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0132178>.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (3): 469–88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3034157>.
- von Essen, Erica. 2020. "How Wild Boar Hunting Is Becoming a Battleground." *Leisure Sciences* 42 (5–6): 552–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2018.1550456>.
- Warner, Bernhard. 2019. "Boar Wars: How Wild Hogs Are Trashing European Cities." *Guardian*, July 30, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/30/boar-wars-how-wild-hogs-are-trashing-european-cities>.
- Wehr, Nathaniel H. 2021. "Historical Range Expansion and Biological Changes of *Sus Scrofa* Corresponding to Domestication and Feralization." *Mammal Research* 66 (January): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13364-020-00534-7>.
- Wilkins, John S. 2009. *Species: A History of the Idea*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Willerslev, Rane. 2004. "Not Animal, Not Not-Animal: Hunting, Imitation and Empathetic Knowledge among the Siberian Yukaghirs." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (3): 629–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2004.00205.x>.
- Willerslev, Rane, Piers Vitebsky, and Anatoly Alekseyev. 2015. "Sacrifice as the Ideal Hunt: A Cosmological Explanation for the Origin of Reindeer Domestication." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21 (1): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12142>.
- Yates-Doerr, Emily. 2015. "Does Meat Come from Animals? A Multi-species Approach to Classification and Belonging in Highland Guatemala." *American Ethnologist* 42 (2): 309–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12132>.

**How to cite this article:** Arregui, Aníbal G. 2023. "Reversible pigs." *American Ethnologist* 50: 115–128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13114>