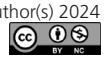
Check for updates

Article

CMC

Crime Media Culture
1–16
© The Author(s) 2024

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/17416590241292070
journals.sagepub.com/home/cmc

Human control and 'management' of nonhuman animals: New research directions for green criminology

Anna Di Ronco
University of Essex, UK

Abstract

This article enriches and invigorates the green criminological scholarship concerned with nonhuman animals by proposing two research directions centred around the critical analysis of human control and 'management' of wild animals. While the first of these directions considers the control of animals in the city, the second draws on green cultural criminology to deconstruct and unravel cultural, mediated and political dynamics surrounding nonhuman animal 'management'. The article concludes by contending that, following these lines of research, green criminologists can contribute to reducing human-animal conflicts in the city and beyond, while also offering new ways of imagining human living alongside other species, rather than in spite of them.

Keywords

Affect, affective atmospheres, city, governance, green criminology, green cultural criminology, neoliberalism, nonhuman animals, senses

Introduction

'What, then, does criminology teach us about animals and, in particular, about animal abuse? The short answer is: not very much at all'. Writing in 2007 (p. 61), Beirne was not at all impressed with the then-state of the art of criminology with respect to nonhuman animals and their suffering. As Beirne further argued in the same publication, criminology had, until then, viewed nonhuman animals largely as: private property of humans; prototypes of (or metaphors for) criminality in humans; and, especially when abused by humans, as signifiers of inter-human violence (see also Beirne, 1995; Wyatt, 2022). Much has happened within green criminology ever since, with the (sub)field – also called by Cazaux (1999, 2007), Beirne (1995, 1999, 2018) and Sollund (2017), 'non-speciesist' criminology – now boasting a very rich literature addressing harms and crimes against nonhuman animals.

Anna Di Ronco is also affiliated with University of Bologna, Italy

Corresponding author:
Anna Di Ronco, Department of Legal Studies, University of Bologna, via Zamboni 27, 40126 Bologna, IT, and Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK.
Email: a.dironco@essex.ac.uk

This article aims to further invigorate the field by proposing two research directions centred around the critical analysis of human control and 'management' of wild nonhuman animals, which have been rather under-addressed in green criminology thus far. The first of these directions considers human control of nonhuman animals in the city – a space which tends to be imagined and governed as if 'we' (humans) were its only legitimate users and exclusive inhabitants, with the right to 'manage' all other living beings who dare to annoy us or threaten our interests. In the first part of this article, I suggest new ways of thinking about human governance on nonhuman animals in the city by drawing on the literature in urban studies and the scholarship on the governance of urban space, as well as by using examples from Europe and North America. The second research line focuses on green cultural criminology, an approach which has so far seldom been applied to nonhuman animal control by humans. In particular, I use the example of the (mis)'management' of brown bears in Trentino, a province in the north-east of Italy, in the heart of Italian Alps, to show how this approach can fruitfully be applied to deconstruct and unravel cultural, mediated and political dynamics surrounding nonhuman animals and their 'management' by humans.

The focus in this paper is on wildlife, yet more specifically on wild (nonhuman) animals. As Nurse and Wyatt (2021: 4 and 5) rightly pointed out, the concept of 'wildlife' is broad(er) and includes '*all non-human animals, plants and fungi which form part of a country's natural environment or which are visitors in a wild or captured state*' and 'which are not *routinely* under human control' (emphasis in the original). The focus of this paper is not, broadly, on wildlife, but more specifically on wild animals, a category which not only includes animals who – like bears and wolves – tend to avoid human settlements and conduct an independent life from that of humans, but also synanthropes or 'liminal animals', that is, animals such as rats and pigeons who live alongside (and often, despite) humans in cities, taking advantage of their affordances (for useful animal categorisations and associated suggested animal rights, see Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011). In doing so, I recognise that this paper is skewed towards specific wild and synanthropic animals (mostly, bears and birds, respectively), and that it mostly draws on cases in Europe and North America, and call on future work in this area to make a better effort at including a wider number of animal species and wildlife in general.

Before I begin, a note on the used terminology. Much of the terminology used to address nonhuman animals (including, e.g. 'pet', 'animal' and 'wildlife') cast humans aside and above, constructing them as superior to other living beings (see e.g. Beirne, 2007; Maher, 2021; Sollund, 2016, 2017, 2020) – something that also legitimises nonhuman animal abuse, 'management', 'poaching' and 'killing',[1] to ensure that human interests are safeguarded and even maximised. In this paper, I try as much as possible to avoid such anthropocentric language by using terms which – though with their own limitations – have been considered less oppressive and discriminatory towards nonhuman animals. Among these terms, there is, indeed, that of 'nonhuman animals' which recognises that humans are, of course, animals as well (for criticism of this term, see, however, Sollund, 2016, 2017). For simplicity and word count considerations, henceforth I use the abbreviation 'animals' for nonhuman animals and juxtapose it to 'humans' (in line with Beirne, 2007, 2018). For simplicity, I also use the terms 'wildlife' and 'wild animals'. I am aware that these solutions fail to escape the speciesist trap, but found them most satisfactory among the equally limited solutions provided by the literature so far (the issue of speciesist language is, indeed, a real conundrum which is far from being resolved). To accord animals an equal recognition as beings,

moreover, it also means avoiding referring to them as 'it' (when addressed in singular form) or as 'animals which' – when possible regarding them as 'she' or 'he' and as animals 'who', something that I also try to do in this work (see also e.g. Beirne 2018; Sollund, 2016, among others).

Two research directions

Empirical studies focused on animals in green criminology have addressed several instances of animal abuse and wildlife trafficking, with the latter being recently regarded 'a hot topic, attracting both scholarly attention and some grant funding' (Nurse and Wyatt, 2021: 1). Animal abuse has been analysed in several spaces, including: the home (Sollund, 2011), the cage (both in the home and in scientific laboratories, see e.g. Goyes, 2015, Sollund, 2011), the 'fortress farm' (Goodall, 2023), fisheries, aquariums, zoos and circuses (Nurse and Wyatt, 2021), slaughterhouses (Beirne, 2014, 2018) and the natural habitats where animals are hunted, murdered or abducted for the international wildlife trade (Sollund, 2011, 2016, 2020; for examples on many of these spaces, see also Maher et al., 2017). Quite surprising is the absence in this literature of consideration for the very mundane spaces where more than half of the human population currently lives, and which humans have imagined and shaped according to their very anthropogenic needs – cities.

In the green criminological literature addressing animals, indeed, references to urban spaces are scant, tending to be mainly historical and focused on domesticated animals. Bernie (2014, 2018), for example, noted that in 1700 in London, people lived with, or in close proximity with, domesticated animals, whose presence and even killing on the streets made the city rather noisy and smelly – a circumstance that led to the displacement of slaughterhouses in rural areas. But considerations of animal inclusion and exclusion in the city are still relevant today and not only in relation to domesticated or companion animals. As we all know, companion animals, such as dogs, are relatively welcome in public, open city spaces, so long as their owners follow the rules and, for example, pick up after them. By contrast, other animals, such as synanthropes, are unwelcome and highly disciplined in public spaces. This is the case, for example, of rats, foxes, boars, seagulls and pigeons who are, indeed, frequently Othered as 'pest', or 'nuisance', and 'managed' in several ways in result. The next section opens the criminological discussion in this area by drawing on the literature in urban studies and the scholarship on the governance of urban space, as well as on examples from North America and Europe (Italy, in particular).

Human control of wild animals – in the city as elsewhere – often engages cultural, mediated and political dynamics which are worth exploring. In the second substantive section below, I suggest doing so through the lenses of green cultural criminology. Developed by Brisman and South (2013: 115), the approach of green cultural criminology aims to build bridges between cultural and green criminology by 'seek[ing] to incorporate a concern with the cultural significance of the environment, environmental crime, and environmental harm into the green criminological enterprise'. As outlined by its proponents (Brisman and South, 2013, 2014), this approach encompasses three main areas, involving: (1) mediated representations of environmental crime, harm and risk, in several mediums (press and TV news, literature, cinema, etc.); (2) the commodification and marketing of nature, and the underlying patterns of constructed (conspicuous) consumption; and (3) resistance to environmental harms, for example through every-day, playful protest and other activist practices.

Studies using this approach have noted, for example, how animals have been turned into stories' characters to pass on important messages about environmental harm and destruction (Brisman, 2019; Brisman and South, 2014; see also Kennedy, 2021). So far, however, they have failed to examine how animal control by humans has been represented in media and popular cultural forms, and how harms against animals have been contested in the media (including social media) as well as on the streets.[2] Drawing on an example taken from the northern Italian province of Trentino, which has recently struggled to 'manage' brown bears, I show how the approach of green cultural criminology can be a fruitful point of departure for critical analyses of mediated discourses and practices that perpetrate harms to animals, while also looking at resistance against these harms. Although my attention in this paper mostly covers mediated discourses around bears and their 'management', I also touch upon all three areas of green cultural criminology – including the elements of commodification and resistance, which, along with others (such as the importance of images, meaning and power), are of key importance to cultural criminology. My invitation for green and green cultural criminologists is, therefore, to broaden the use of this approach to include the mediated, political and cultural dynamics underpinning conflicts between human and nonhuman animals.

Controlling animals in the city

We share the city with other animals (along with plants and fungi). If usually ignored or 'unseen', the presence of animals in the city has become rather obvious to most of us during the first stages of the COVID-19 health crisis: with the streets left deserted, animals were able to move freely and thrive. If we remained in Venice during the pandemic, for example, we would have observed a massive improvement in the quality and clarity of the waters, which led to the return of the cormorants and of duck's nests in the city's usually extremely busy and polluted canals.[3] I will go back to the case of Venice and its governance of wild birds later in this section. For now, I want to emphasise that contrary to modern European epistemologies which promoted a culture-nature divide which shaped our imagination of the city as 'our' place – where we, humans, exclusively belong and have a right to be – cities are in fact more-than-human and animals are active participants to urban social life (Brighenti and Pavoni, 2021).

The types and numbers of animal species in cities can, however, vary and be shaped by urbanisation, exploitation of land through, for example, intensive farming and agriculture, and – most importantly – human-driven climate change. While these phenomena have driven some animals out of the city, they have increasingly forced many others into the city and/or forced them to adapt to new urban conditions, often in spite of our efforts to 'manage' them (Van Patter, 2021). Yet, little criminological attention has so far been paid to mechanisms of animal control in these spaces. Free-born animals, however, live in the city alongside us and, like humans (and sometimes with striking parallels), are subject to discipline, control, governance, sanction and exclusion, as I show below.

To understand the ways we 'manage' our fellow animals in the city requires an understanding of the dynamics that shape the contemporary neoliberal city itself and human experiences within it. To this end, the urban studies literature and scholarship on the governance of urban space are helpful. Importantly, this scholarship approaches urban space not as a simple geographical background, but rather as a phenomenological place where the senses, affect and emotions come to

play a key role in shaping place (see e.g. Hayward, 2012). This way of thinking about space has important implications for its governance. In particular, when it comes to governing city spaces, it is often the sensory and affective preferences of the powerful (middle class folks, holding political capital in a given community) that which contribute to defining 'problems' and shaping 'solutions' (Peršak and Di Ronco, 2021, 2024) – against 'problem' humans and animals alike.

These sensory and affective preferences tend to be enforced, among others, in 'spaces of consumption and pleasure' (Hayward, 2004), which are inner-city spaces offering shopping, leisure and entertainment opportunities to (better-off) residents and visitors. Impelled by a global competition between cities and the desire for a stable and growing accumulation of capital (Harvey, 1989), cities all over the world have embraced a consumption ethos for their inner-city districts, which has fundamentally shaped their looks and governance. Through redevelopment projects, indeed, inner-city spaces have been planned, engineered and governed carefully to promote individual consumption (see, e.g. Schuilenburg and Peeters, 2018).

In such city spaces, the presence of some 'disorderly' individuals, or the occurrence of 'uncivil' behaviour, is often considered an affront to the senses of the better-off and, relatedly, also incompatible with the mantra of consumption (Bannister et al., 2006). 'Nuisance' behaviour or people in public spaces can, indeed, annoy or offend the wealthier while undermining their consumption experience (in turn negatively affecting local business profits). This is what led local authorities in many Western countries to target, among others, the homeless, street-based sex workers, young people skateboarding or hanging about, in various punitive ways, including through fines, place bans, technologies affecting the senses and hostile architecture (Peršak, 2017; Peršak and Di Ronco, 2021, 2024). The latter usually entails spikes, fences, studs, metal bars and rods to dissuade the homeless from taking shelter or rest, and young people from skateboarding, on specific surfaces. Such anti-incivility measures embrace a narrow, contrived vision of public space which reflects the economic interests as well as the sensory and affective registers of the powerful to the detriment of the powerless. Anti-incivility measures have also been used in gentrification, a process of urban regeneration which displaces long-time, lower-income residents to accommodate the wealthier middle classes (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020).

This dominant 'cultural space' (Ferrell, 1997), or mainstream social construction of space, is also an 'animal space' (Philo and Wilbert, 2000) – one where the 'management', control and sometimes even killing of animals is deemed necessary to safeguard anthropogenic needs and interests. This, however, does not mean that all animals are targeted and 'managed' in the same way in the city. Some of them, who are culturally valued or considered 'charismatic', are often enrolled in urban redevelopment and 'green gentrification' projects to maximise human profit (Hubbard and Brooks, 2021). As Hubbard and Brooks (2021: 1496) have put it: '[f]ar from being figured as a nuisance, [select] species are being encouraged to (re)colonise specific neighbourhoods through deliberative human provisioning of nesting and feeding sites, such as insect hotels, beehives, hedgehog boxes and bird-feeders designed to accommodate desired species'. This conceptualisation of (some) animals as 'agents of environmental remediation and sustainability' (Hubbard and Brooks, 2021: 1496), rather than as a nuisance, is grounded in an economic argument: green projects increase the property value of the surrounding neighbourhoods making them more attractive to the middle classes. These projects, therefore, commodify animals for profit through exploiting them as a means for (further) gentrification and associated change, with the latter including the displacement of long-time residents, as noted

above, and the 'management' of animals deemed unworthy from an economic or commercial standpoint.

Indeed, not all animals are valued for their inadvertent services to capital accumulation. Other animals are Othered and considered a 'nuisance', a 'pest' and deemed 'out of place' – all labels that lead to animal displacement and human 'management' in result. There are different ways through which 'nuisance' animals are managed in our cities, especially in Europe and North America, and for different reasons. The presence of birds such as pigeons, crows and seagulls, for example, can be highly regulated or 'managed' in cities for, among others, health concerns: bird droppings can pose health risks to humans and spread several diseases. Birds are, however, also controlled for aesthetic/sensory and related economic considerations. For example, bird droppings can damage art, monuments and buildings, including historic ones of high heritage and touristic value, and cost money to clean. Before focusing on animal control mechanisms, let me point out that many of these reasons or 'value judgments' (Millie, 2011) are often also invoked to penalise humans in the public space, often the most vulnerable among us. Humans, and their behaviour, can, indeed, be constructed as: a health risk to others (e.g. in the case of people using drugs and sex workers); a threat to economic interests (such as with so-called 'disorderly' people whose presence or behaviour in 'key' city spaces is deemed to impair others' consumption experience); and/or generally an affront to the mainstream aesthetic or broader sensory orders (see, e.g. McClanahan and South, 2020; Millie, 2023; Peršak and Di Ronco, 2021, 2024). For all these reasons, vulnerable humans can be targeted through punitive and exclusionary measures – including the anti-incivility measures I mentioned above.

According to APEX (2023), a UK 'professional pest control company that specialises solely in bird control mainly across Berkshire and Hampshire', effective bird control solutions are varied. They include elements of hostile architecture, such as anti-bird netting, spikes and wires, but also devices affecting the senses that reproduce predator sounds or visuals showing predators.[4] According to other bird control companies, bird control solutions also include other, more or less harmful, mechanisms, such as: electric tracks delivering a small shock to birds when they land on the protected surface, in this way deterring them from landing again; bird-proof litter bins; in North America, the use of Avitrol, a pesticide that makes birds act erratically and sometime die, signalling danger to the others[5]; egg and nest removal; bird capture through cages or mist netting; and, ultimately, also bird killing, through poison or 'drowning or breaking their necks', which University Termite & Pest Control Inc., a US 'pest' control company, regards as 'the most humane way of dispatching the harvested birds'.[6]

These bird control solutions do not exhaust the many mechanisms used by humans to control 'nuisance' birds. Among others, I would like to mention the anti-incivility regulations which have been enacted in, for example, many Italian cities – including Venice – envisaging fines for people feeding pigeons and even banishing orders (in Venice, for example, fines range from EUR25 to 500, and place bans can be issued to prohibit rule-breakers from accessing certain city spaces). As mentioned above, these regulations are usually justified on several grounds – not only health-related concerns, but also sensory/aesthetic and related economic considerations: bird droppings can ruin the many historic buildings and compromise the overall beauty and cleanliness of the historic area, in this way damaging the city's reputation and the local tourism-based economy.

Similar arguments were recently made in the city of Rome to address the problem of wild boars in the inner-city, which were attracted by uncollected garbage on the streets. In addition to public

health concerns, aesthetic and sensory aspects were also brought to the fore. In the press, for example, the presence of overflowing garbage dumpsters and garbage on the streets, as well as of scavenging wild animals, was described as visibly and olfactory offensive and hence 'clash[ing] with people's social construction of that space (Peršak and Di Ronco 2018) as "beautiful" and "odourless"' (Peršak and Di Ronco, 2021: 113). The negative publicity this has caused – and the fear it will have negative effects on tourism – led to the drastic and draconian measure of hunting and killing wild boars by the police and licensed hunters alike, including in urban and protected areas and outside the hunting season. Here, I do not want to dismiss the nuisance caused by animals to humans, which I recognise to be extremely serious at times. My intent is to point out the mechanisms and discourses that we use to govern, discipline and displace animals in the city – which are often very similar to the ones we use to control and exclude the more vulnerable humans among us (on this point, see also Cazaux, 2007; Hubbard and Brooks, 2021; Shingne, 2022). Such mechanisms, I believe, have a distinctive criminological dimension which urgently require our criminological attention.

My contention, here, is that green criminologists can contribute to the multi-disciplinary debates around the governance of animals in the city, for example, by examining the dominant social/sensory orders which construct certain humans and animals as a 'nuisance' and exclude or displace them (or even kill them, in the case of nonhuman animals) in result. Ultimately, as I illustrated previously, these orders are consolidated or reinforced by neoliberal capitalism, which justifies the devaluing and exclusion of *some* humans and animals when they are believed not to make any valuable (economic or commercial) contribution. But green criminology concerned with animals in the city and their 'management' can even go further than this.

As the sensory and affective turns in (among others) urban studies and urban criminology tell us, the senses and affect play a key role in shaping spatial governance (as well as social control more broadly, punishment and justice). In criminology, this recognition led, for example, to the introduction of the concept of 'affective atmospheres' – which can be defined as a '"combinatorial force field" of human and non-human elements (Amin and Thrift, 2017: 16)' which 'connect[s] people and place in a shared experience' (Fraser and Matthews, 2021: 456). In essence, the street (Di Ronco, 2023; Fraser and Matthews, 2021), or the lockdown city (Young, 2021), can emanate a distinctive 'atmosphere of control' and discipline, which can be felt by those inhabiting it – including at its margins and when the atmosphere is disrupted, for example, by a protest event and its associated atmosphere (Di Ronco, 2023; Fraser and Matthews, 2021 – see chapter 3 in particular).

Although most work on affective atmospheres considered the more-than-human only in relation to human perceptions, some recent scholarship tried to think of it in more active/agentic terms (see e.g. Lundberg, 2022). Drawing on Indigenous epistemologies, Lundberg et al. (2024), for example, suggested using a 'volumetric imaginary' while thinking about *justice* and spatiality, hence moving beyond discussions on spatial governance alone. For them, having a volumetric imaginary means thinking about the city as 'height and depth instead of surfaces, three dimensions instead of areas' (Elden, 2013 in Lundberg et al., 2024: 7). While such volumetric imaginary (also) includes human senses and affect, it goes well beyond human perceptions up to covering the more-than-human inhabiting the city alongside us, who is viewed as 'an active participant in the world' (Lundberg et al., 2024: 8). Importantly, such imaginary allows us to think of new ways of living with and caring for others in the city – where 'others' are *all others*, including unprivileged humans or animals alike –, ultimately striving to achieve a more-than-spatial justice in the city.

By thinking about the role of affect and senses in urban governance, as well as about more-than-spatial justice in the city (Lundberg et al., 2024), green criminologists can work towards reducing human-animal conflict in the urban space and also help us move towards a multi-species city – a Zoopolis (Van Patter, 2021; Wolch, 1996; Wolch et al., 1995). Such a city is a lively and inclusive space (Owens and Wolch, 2015) centred on multi-species cohabitation and tolerance, and grounded on an ethics of care and compassion towards our fellow animals (all of them, not only the most liked or popular ones).

A green cultural criminology of animals: A case study

Trentino is a province located in the north-east of Italy, in the heart of Italian Alps. This province was historically populated by brown bears; however, by the end of the 1980s, the number of bears living in it had declined because of intensive hunting. In the 1990s, to 'save the small nucleus of surviving bears from inevitable extinction',[7] the Adamello Brenta Park, the province and the (now-called) National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research initiated the so-called *Life Ursus* re-wilding project, which – with EU funding – introduced 10 free-born bears originally from Slovenia. The conservationist aim of the project was to achieve a population of around 40–60 bears in a few decades. Until very recently, the project was considered a success: the bears that were introduced were found to adapt well to the territory, and also gave birth to several cubs over time. This also led the Adamello Brenta Park to undertake a re-branding operation centred on bears, who have been commodified as a result: today, the symbol of the Park is still a brown bear, an image that appears on signposts and sculptures all around the Park and at its entrances, and on T-shirts and other paraphernalia sold in local shops (and online), as well as on its dedicated website(s).[8]

The project, however, has come under attack for a series of episodes where bears and humans have come into conflict in rural areas (around mountain villages, in particular), which culminated in the death of a young man, Andrea Papi, in April 2023. This event put the spotlight on the *Life Ursus* project, revealing the presence of a much higher number of bears in the region than originally intended, and probably desired. In the remainder of this section, I focus on the mediated discourses around bear 'management' in the province through an analysis of the frontpages of the local daily newspaper *L'Adige* (https://www.ladige.it/) since the death of Papi (from April 2023 until February 2024).[9] This analysis is supplemented by that of 33 full news articles published by *L'Adige* in 'key periods' (e.g. after the death of Papi, in April 2023, and after the ordered killing of bear M90 by the province, in February 2024). The resulting analysis does not pretend to be a systematic account of media representations of local bear 'management' in the considered time frame; rather, it is a preliminary analysis of an interesting case which helps me illustrate the many ways through which green cultural criminology can be applied to unravel human and nonhuman animal conflicts, as (re)produced in and through mediated discourses.

Overall, in the considered sample, the dominant voices were those of the provincial right-wing government (from the League party), which – after Papi's death in April 2023 – tended to appeal to emotions and be vengeance-seeking. The content of these messages was overwhelmingly focused on the killing of all the 'problematic' bears in the region,[10] starting with JJ4, the female bear who was eventually identified as Papi's 'killer' through a DNA test. This position was widely supported by mayors of villages and towns in the proximity of bear-populated forests, with letters

written or interviews given to the newspaper, where they presented bears as a risk to human interests – and to farming and tourism, in particular. Consider for example the following headlines on the frontpages of *L'Adige*, which well illustrate mayors' and farmers' position on bears and their 'management':

> 'People of Trentino first, only then the bear': more than 1,500 people protested yesterday, with many mayors in the front row (21 May 2023).[11]

> Too many attacks [to animals in farms]: farmers are ready to protest in Pinzolo (18 July 2023).

> Let's save mountain pastures. Farmers: 'it's either us or bears and wolves' (14 July 2023).

> Mayors of Giudicarie and Val di Sole [two valleys in Trentino]: we need a law that facilitates [bears'] killing (27 August 2023).

To note here that for a bear to become 'dangerous', he or she does not need to attack, seriously harm or even kill a human, but simply show confident behaviour and, for example, come too close to humans or their settlements, to scavenge or prey on farmed animals. Such events or encounters – and the fear they have engendered in the population after Papi's death, also likely augmented by sensationalistic media narratives and moral panics (see also Hallsworth, 2011) – have regularly been reported by the press, and were also mobilised by politicians to support drastic and draconian solutions to bear 'management'. Consider for example the following headlines from the paper's frontpages:

> They see a bear a few meters from their home (12 June 2023).

> A bear on a stroll through the streets of [the town of] Arco. The animal was seen at dawn. The residents: 'We are afraid' (14 June 2023).

> The sightings continue: bears near the houses in [the villages of] Dimaro and Stenico. The mayor Mattevi: 'we are terrorised' (18 June 2023).

> The bear attacks the mountain hut (3 July 2023).

> Fear is back in Val di Sole [. . .] a couple followed by a bear: they are safe (29 January 2024).

A mainstream dislike for bears was also expressed in a local annual festival (Feste Vigiliane) held in the summer 2023 in Trento (the province's capital city), which was also covered in the paper. One of the typical festival's initiatives involves a trial against a notorious individual who, over the past year, has earned people's dislike. The chosen person, who is put on trial and regularly found guilty, is burdened not only with their own sins but also with all other problems affecting the city and the province in general, at that specific time. The trial, called 'Tonca', was inspired by a form of punishment used in the region against blasphemers in the late Middle Ages: it begins with the chosen person being put in a small cage over a bridge crossing the Adige river, which, after the guilty

verdict, is slowly dropped into the river until the person's feet touch the water.[12] In June 2023, that person ended up being the 'atoning bear' (orso espiatorio; obviously, no actual bear was put in a cage and dropped in the water, although a number of bears were and still are in fact held in captivity not that far away). Although the trial against the bear only happened symbolically at a local festival, one cannot help it but think of the important symbolic dimension of the trial, which blames the bear for all the bad things that had recently happened in the region, as well as of the animal trials which were once widespread in medieval Europe (Beirne, 2011, 2018).

But let us now return to the case of JJ4, renamed 'Gaia' by environmental and anti-speciesism groups, who killed Papi in April 2023. Gaia had attacked two humans in the past already, leading to a killing order by the province in 2020, which was later suspended by administrative courts on initiative of various environmental groups. The same happened for the killing order issued against Gaia by the Governor of the province after Papi's death: it was suspended by the administrative courts, with the result that Gaia, who was hunted and captured through a tube trap in the night between 17 and 18 April 2023, is currently still held in captivity in the so-called 'Casteller' wildlife centre. Noteworthy is the press representation of her capture in April 2023, which followed the 'intense hunting' for her (*L'Adige*, 9 April 2023) very closely: for example, the paper reported on the 40 Forest Police officers deployed (with dogs) to follow her tracks and prepare the traps which eventually led to her capture.

The newspaper also represented Gaia's capture through very graphic images. These images included a large-size photo of the tube trap, showing a bear lying seemingly unconscious in it and five Forest Guard officers sealing the trap for transport (on the *L'Adige* frontpage of 19 April 2023), and another photo inside the trap, showing a bear in state of distress with blood around her ears (on the *L'Adige*'s 20 April 2023 frontpage). This second image was often used by the paper also in the following months when addressing Gaia's case. Such graphic images (and also language) were probably chosen to appeal to and please those readers who, mostly living in rural/mountainy areas, sought vengeance for Papi's death, and who – not unlike farmers dealing with the re-introduction of other predators in rural areas (see e.g. Drenthen, 2021) – perceived bears as an ontological threat to their way of life. Such readership is, generally speaking, also the 'typical' electorate of the right-wing populist League party, which was elected in and currently runs the Trentino province.

The case of Gaia is only one of the many cases of 'problematic' bears addressed in the news and targeted by the provincial government: the bears F36 and MJ5 were also considered dangerous for having attacked humans. Also against them, the province issued two killing orders, which – similar to the case of Gaia – were suspended by administrative courts, which only authorised their capture. Both bears, which were regarded as 'wanted' (see e.g. *L'Adige*'s frontpages of 24 June and 29 September 2023), were eventually found dead – allegedly from poisoning (MJ5) and shooting (F36). MJ5 and F36 are, unfortunately, only two of the many bears found dead over the considered period: I counted at least seven in the news, but other news outlets and social media posts reported many more.[13] Even if some of these bears died of natural causes, others are suspected to have been killed by poachers-vigilantes in an effort to reclaim the forest for residents and tourists while also addressing people's fears.

Another 'problem' bear, whose case recently caused a commotion, is that M90, also known as 'Sonny' to environmental groups. Sonny was targeted through a killing order after following a couple for around 800 m, and being spotted closed to human settlements. On 7 February 2024,

L'Adige reported the killing of Sonny by the Forest Police, who were able to locate him thanks to the radio-collar he was wearing. The killing occurred only a few hours after the issuance of the killing order by the province Governor, admittedly to reduce the risk of the order being challenged in court.[14]

Sonny's killing led two polarised reactions: while residents were reported in the news to feel safer now, environmental and anti-speciesism groups voiced their shock and outrage at the actions of the local government. The latter groups, in particular, reacted via a series of actions which included: social media storms against the Governor of the province who ordered the killing (who was also called an 'assassin' and targeted with insults, which led the police to set up a police escort for his protection); freedom of information requests, lawsuits and reports to the relevant public prosecutor's office; email-bombing of the Ministry of Environment to exhort it to intervene; banners and flyers on the province Palace and Casteller 'prison' put up overnight; and, finally, street protests, including one organised on 10 February 2024. During the days preceding the latter protest, the newspaper *L'Adige* reported a 'high temperature' and the increasing of tensions, which led the local police to adopt 'intensified' security measures (9 February 2024) involving the 'seal[ing] off' of the city centre through barriers, cordons and the massive presence of police forces (10 February 2024). The protest on 10 February was considered a success by protesters: 1000 people marched to show their indignation for the killing of Sonny and the province's mis-'management' of predators, with many banners calling the province Governor a 'criminal'. After the protest, however, the local press and social media posts by anti-speciesism groups reported the banning of some activists from the city by the local police.

This analysis of *L'Adige*'s frontpages and articles reveals the incandescent climate around bear 'management' in Trentino, featuring extremely polarised views which have resulted in the marginalisation of more constructive debates around human–animal coexistence (such a debate has not been totally absent, but remained very marginal, at least thus far). I also hope to have successfully demonstrated the green cultural criminological relevance of this case, which has involved, among others: dominant media narratives promoted by the provincial government (and supported by local famers and mayors in mountain villages) constructing bears as a threat to humans and legitimising their killing by relevant authorities (or even citizens-vigilantes); the commodification of bears for profit (while at the same time being targeted with punitive policies); and resistance practices by eco-justice groups challenging harmful policies against brown bears.

Concluding thoughts

In this article, I have proposed two distinctive research directions that could help further invigorate the already rich green criminological scholarship focused on nonhuman animals and committed to addressing and reducing their human-driven harms. What I have argued is that the objectification and harming of animals to safeguard anthropogenic and related capitalist needs also happens in the city and through mediated cultural and political dynamics which ought to be further investigated in future research.

The first of the two directions I proposed focuses on animal control in the city – in inner-city spaces of 'consumption and pleasure', in particular. Drawing on the literature in urban studies and the scholarship on the governance of urban space, and using some examples from Europe and North America, I have argued that green criminology can go a long way

towards unpacking animal control in the city. Among others, critical analyses in this field can help reveal the market-related logics which include some animals (e.g. by co-opting them in the capitalist project), while demeaning and excluding others deemed to diminish the city's attractiveness and profitability. Green criminology can also address the measures regularly used to 'manage' animals in the city, which often match, at least in terms of justifications, the ones used to penalise and exclude humans from the public space, often the most vulnerable among us.

To these ends, I stressed the importance of analysing spatial governance through the lenses of affect and the senses – those of the better-off, in particular – which shape spatial ordering and hence human and animal exclusion in the city. Moving beyond a focus on urban governance alone, I also drew on recent work by Lundberg et al. (2024) to emphasise the need to think about the city not only in terms of governance but also of (more-than-spatial) *justic*e. This means approaching city space no longer as a mere site of control where discipline is dictated by powerful humans according to their sensory and affective registers, but as a locus of conviviality and cohabitation with others – *all others*, both humans and animals. Ultimately, by devoting attention to animal control in the city, green criminologists can work towards reducing human-animal conflict in the urban space, and also help move towards a multi-species city centred on multi-species cohabitation and tolerance.

The second research direction outlined in this article has focused on green cultural criminology. By looking at animal control as a cultural construct, green cultural criminological research can effectively examine the cultural, mediated and political dynamics surrounding the 'management' of wild animals. With an example from Italy, I have demonstrated not only that predators like brown bears can be commodified for profit, but that they can also, and at the same time, be represented as a 'danger' in dominant (often sensationalised) media discourses, in this way leading to exemplary and harmful responses against them – whether delivered by local authorities, citizens-vigilantes or symbolically during trials in local festivals. I have also showed that discourses around bears and their 'management' can be extremely polarised and motivate resistance against harms to animals by environmental and anti-speciesism groups through street-based protests and other activist performative and visual practices.

Future research in this area can similarly engage with the three main areas of green cultural criminology – but can even go further than that. For example, moving beyond a focus on individual case studies, green cultural criminological research can engage with cross-cultural comparative analyses: wild animals, indeed, (being them predators or not) may be considered and valued differently in varying cultural contexts, with the result that their 'management' may also be represented differently in the media and shaped in policy and practice. To these ends, in addition to press and other mainstream media news, green cultural criminologists can engage with local stories, folklore and popular culture – all mediums which may provide an interesting space for a green cultural criminological (comparative) analysis of human control of nonhuman animals. While such analyses can reveal shared patterns of control across space, they can perhaps also help us move beyond debates on human 'management' of animals and offer new ways of imagining our lives *alongside* other species, rather than in spite of them. To do so would be the task of future green (cultural) criminological research addressing nonhuman animals, and my hope is that it takes up the challenge.

Funding
The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD
Anna Di Ronco https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7191-6161

Notes
1. It is worth noting that relevant green criminological literature has suggested using the term 'abduction' (Sollund, 2011, 2017), instead of 'poaching', and 'theriocide' (Bernie, 2007, 2014, 2018), instead of 'killing', to challenge our dominant anthropocentric and speciesist language (and general mindset), while emphasising the importance of regarding nonhuman animals for their own intrinsic value. In this paper, I try to follow this literature except for the term 'killing', which I sometimes use, and that of 'management', which – for the lack of better alternatives – I decided to keep but within quotation marks, to signal its inadequacy.
2. This does not mean that no criminological study has touched upon these areas. In green criminology, for example, studies exist addressing legal/official constructions of predators (e.g. Sollund, 2016), moral panics around companion animals (Hallsworth, 2011) and the criminalisation of animal rights groups (e.g. Yates, 2011), which are highly relevant to the field of green (cultural) criminology.
3. See https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/20/nature-is-taking-back-venice-wildlife-returns-to-tourist-free-city.
4. In Trafalgar Square in London, however, predators were not only evoked through images and sounds, but actually used to control pigeon numbers.
5. See for example, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/birds-poisoned-by-avitrol-avicide-leads-to-city-bans#:~:text=Avitrol%2C%20an%20EPA%2Dregistered%20bird,a%20reaction%20that%20horrifies%20onlookers.
6. See https://www.pctonline.com/article/successful-bird-control-strategies/. The culling of the entire local pigeon population through neck breaking was also recently approved in Limburg an der Lahn, a city in the western German state of Hesse, through a popular referendum. For more on this case, see e.g. https://www.euronews.com/green/2024/06/12/pigeon-problems-german-town-votes-to-have-birds-killed-outraging-animal-rights-activists.
7. https://grandicarnivori.provincia.tn.it/L-orso/Storia-sull-arco-alpino/Il-Progetto-di-reintroduzione-Life-Ursus.
8. See for example, https://www.pnab.it/en/the-nature-park/.
9. The paper's frontpages are accessible through the newspaper's online archive (https://epaper.ladige.it/epaper/archive). In the considered period (April 2023-February 2024), the paper's frontpages addressing 'problems' with bears and their 'management' through, for example, top headlines, teaser and lead articles, columns and accompanying graphics were 99. The cut-down number of considered frontpages per month is as follows: April 23 (N 20); May 23 (N 15); June 23 (N 12); July 23 (N 16); August 23 (N 11); September 23 (N 8); October 23 (N 4); November 23 (N 0); December 23 (N 1); January 24 (N 6); February 24 (N 6). N 33 full articles (i.e. articles starting in the frontpage and then continuing later in the paper) were analysed in the key months of April 23 and February 24 – they were 22 (in April 23) and 11 (in February 24), respectively.
10. This was eventually turned into law, which now allows, for example, the murdering of up to eight bears per year.
11. This and all other quoted headlines have been translated from Italian to English by the author.
12. https://www.cultura.trentino.it/Appuntamenti/La-Tonca. For the Tonca in June 2023, see https://www.rainews.it/tgr/trento/articoli/2023/06/castelli-e-la-tonca-lorso-espiatorio-colpevole-di-cio-che-non-va-in-trentino-fcf8cf0c-3922-49aa-b8e5-c8d28f26bdf6.html.

13. See for example, https://www.iltquotidiano.it/articoli/lorsa-f36-uccisa-da-un-colpo-di-fucile-e-su-mj5-lombra-dellavvelenamento-confermate-le-morti-violente/.
14. Another similar and even more recent case is that of bear KJ1, whose killing order was issued by the province in the evening of 29 July 2024 and was executed by the Forest Police in the early hours of the next day to avoid being challenged in court by animal rights groups (the province had issued two orders before the one which became executive; both of them were challenged in court and were suspended).

References

APEX (2023) Bird control in urban areas: Challenges and solutions. Available at: https://www.apexbirdcontrol.uk/article/bird-control-in-urban-areas (accessed 18 March 2024).

Bannister J, Fyfe N and Kearns A (2006) Respectable or respectful? (In)civility and the city. *Urban Studies* 43(5–6): 919–937.

Beirne P (1995) The use and abuse of animals in criminology: A brief history and current review. *Social Justice* 22(1): 5–31.

Beirne P (1999) For a nonspeciesist criminology: Animal abuse as an object of study. *Criminology* 37(1): 117–148.

Beirne P (2007) Animal rights, animal abuse and green criminology. In: Beirne P and South N (eds) *Issues in Green Criminology: Confronting Harms Against Environments, Humanity and Other Animals*. Willan, pp.55–83.

Beirne P (2011) A note on the facticity of animal trials in early modern Britain; or, the curious prosecution of farmer Carter's dog for murder. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55: 359–374.

Beirne P (2014) Theriocide: Naming animal killing. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 3(2): 50–67.

Beirne P (2018) *Murdering Animals: Writings on Theriocide, Homicide and Nonspeciesist Criminology*. Palgrave.

Brighenti AM and Pavoni A (2021) Situating urban animals: A theoretical framework. *Contemporary Social Science* 16/1: 1–13.

Brisman A (2019) The fable of the three little pigs: Climate change and green cultural criminology. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 8(1): 46–69.

Brisman A and South N (2013) A green-cultural criminology: An exploratory outline. *Crime, Media, Culture* 9(2): 115–135.

Brisman A and South N (2014) *Green Cultural Criminology: Constructions of Environmental Harm, Consumerism, and Resistance to Ecocide*. Routledge.

Cazaux G (1999) Beauty and the beast: Animal abuse from a non-speciesist criminological perspective. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 31(2): 105–125.

Cazaux G (2007) Labelling animals: Non-speciesist criminology and techniques to identify other animals. In: Beirne P and South N (eds) *Issues in Green Criminology: Confronting Harms Against Environments, Humanity and Other Animals*. Willan, pp.87–113.

Di Ronco A (2023) *Policing Environmental Protest: Power and Resistance in Pandemic Times*. Bristol University Press.

Donaldson S and Kymlicka W (2011) *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. Oxford University Press.

Drenthen M (2021) Coexisting with wolves in cultural landscapes: Fences as communicative devices. In: Bovenkerk B and Keulartz J (eds) *Animals in Our Midst: The Challenges of Co-existing with Animals in the Anthropocene*. Springer, pp.425–444.

Elliott-Cooper A, Hubbard P and Lees L (2020) Moving beyond Marcuse: Gentrification, displacement and the violence of un-homing. *Progress in Human Geography* 44(3): 492–509.

Ferrell J (1997) Youth, crime, and cultural space. *Social Justice* 24(4): 21–38.

Fraser A and Matthews D (2021) Towards a criminology of atmospheres: Law, affect and the codes of the street. *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 21(4): 455–471.

Goodall O (2023) The rural enterprise crime complex: "Undefendable rural space" and the threat from the fortress farm. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 82: 215–235.
Goyes D (2015) Denying the harms of animal abductions for biomedical research. In: Sollund R (ed.) *Green Harms and Crimes: Critical Criminology in a Changing World*. Palgrave, pp.170–188.
Hallsworth S (2011) Then they came for the dogs! *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55: 391–403.
Harvey D (1989) From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: The transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 71(1): 3–17.
Hayward KJ (2004) *City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience*. Glass House Press.
Hayward KJ (2012) Five spaces of cultural criminology. *The British Journal of Criminology* 52(3): 441–462.
Hubbard P and Brooks A (2021) Animals and urban gentrification: Displacement and injustice in the trans-species city. *Progress in Human Geography* 45(6): 1490–1511.
Kennedy L (2021) "Whenever there's trouble, just yelp for help": Crime, conservation, and corporatization in Paw Patrol. *Crime, Media, Culture* 17(2): 255–270.
Lundberg K (2022) Walking at the edges of green criminology: The edges of the city and the extraordinary consequences of ordinary harms. *Criminological Encounters* 5(1): 18–34.
Lundberg K, Popovski H and Young A (2024) Justice in the streets? Towards a criminology of more-than-spatial justice. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. Epub ahead of print 30 May 2024. DOI: 10.1177/17488958241257834
McClanahan B and South N (2020) "All knowledge begins with the senses": Towards a sensory criminology. *The British Journal of Criminology* 60(1): 3–23.
Maher J (2021) Documenting harm to the voiceless: Researching animal abuse. In: Davies P, Leighton P and Wyatt T (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Harm*. Palgrave, pp.167–195.
Maher J, Pierpoint H and Beirne P (2017) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Animal Abuse Studies*. Palgrave.
Millie A (2011) Value judgments and criminalization. *The British Journal of Criminology* 51(2): 278–295.
Millie A (2023) Guerrilla gardening as normalised law-breaking: Challenges to land ownership and aesthetic order. *Crime, Media, Culture* 19(2): 191–208.
Nurse A and Wyatt T (2021) *Wildlife Criminology*. Bristol University Press.
Owens M and Wolch J (2015) Lively cities: People, animals, and urban ecosystems. In: Kalof L (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Oxford University Press, pp.542–570.
Peršak N (2017) *Regulation and Social Control of Incivilities*. Routledge.
Peršak N and Di Ronco A (Eds.) (2021) *Harm and Disorder in the Urban Space: Social Control, Sense and Sensibility*. Routledge.
Peršak N and Di Ronco A (2024) Security governance, harms and resistance: Recalibrating security and redefining incivility through legitimacy concerns. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. Epub ahead of print 30 May 2024. DOI: 10.1177/174889582412544.
Philo C and Wilbert C (2000) *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*. Routledge.
Schuilenburg M and Peeters R (2018) Smart cities and the architecture of security: Pastoral power and the scripted design of public space. *City, Territory and Architecture* 5(1): 1–9.
Shingne MC (2022) The more-than-human right to the city: A multispecies reevaluation. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 44(2): 137–155.
Sollund R (2011) Expressions of speciesism: The effects of keeping companion animals on animal abuse, animal trafficking and species decline. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55: 437–451.
Sollund R (2016) The animal other: Legal and illegal theriocide. In: Hall M, Maher J, Nurse A, et al. (eds) *Greening Criminology in the 21st Century: Contemporary Debates and Future Directions in the Study of Environmental Harm*. Routledge, pp.93–113.
Sollund R (2017) Doing green, critical criminology with an auto-ethnographic, feminist approach. *Critical Criminology* 25(2): 245–260.
Sollund R (2020) The victimisation of women, children and non-human species through trafficking and trade: Crimes understood through an ecofeminist perspective. In: Brisman A and South N (eds) *Routledge International Handbook of Green Criminology*, 2nd edn. Routledge, pp.512–528.

Van Patter LE (2021) Comment: Encountering urban animals: Towards the zoöpolis. In Bovenkerk B and Keulartz K (eds) *Animals in Our Midst: The Challenges of Co-Existing With Animals in the Anthropocene*. Springer, pp.361–373.

Wolch J (1996) Zoopolis. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 7(2): 21–47.

Wolch J, West K and Gaines T (1995) Transspecies urban theory. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13(5): 735–760.

Wyatt T (2022) *Wildlife Trafficking: A deconstruction of the Crime, Victims and Offenders*, 2nd edn. Palgrave MacMillan.

Yates R (2011) Criminalizing protests about animal abuse. Recent Irish experience in global context. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55: 469–482.

Author biography

Anna Di Ronco is Associate Professor at Department of Legal Studies at the University of Bologna and Honorary Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Essex. Her books include *Policing Environmental Protest: Power and Resistance in Pandemic Times* (BUP, 2023).