

Feral is what and who escapes and rejects domestication and the anthropocentric modes of domination, also the ones at the root of the global environmental collapse. It is the runaway but also the non-designed, one that slips through the cracks, is abandoned or neglected. Rooted in biology, ferality as a notion has a broad use – as I will explore in this project, humans and nonhuman animals, ecologies, effects, processes, technologies, but also theories and art, can become feral. As an adjective, “feral” has become a prominent category in environmental humanities and Anthropocene studies and has been widely used, particularly in the approaches drawing from feminist and queer theories. It offers an alternative to “wild” as that which has broken away from the systems of domination, without implying a return to a natural state. Reading diffractively through environmental humanities, animal, queer, feminist and decolonial studies, often employing the arts-based research methodologies, feral theories are the ones that disrupt the humanist, patriarchal and settler-colonial orderings of knowledge, accounting for the human and nonhuman lives and habitats destroyed by them, as well as un-taming human life. However, although the wild is being conceptualised also as a process of rewilding, feralizing as a process has not yet received the necessary attention. Indeed, to the best of our knowledge there have not been any publications in the field of humanities that look specifically at the process of feralization. The proposed project aims to fill this gap and answer the question – how does feralizing work within the field of study? How does something (like theory or art) BECOME feral? This will be done by (1) developing the category of feralizing, (2) establishing its characteristics, (3) conditions of use, and (4) critically comparing it with the category of rewilding.

As the primary site of domination, domestication is the necessary precursor to its other forms. Questioning domestication is thus an important element of environmental humanities’ and Anthropocene studies’ attempts at creating improved modes of theorizing human relations with the environment and other humans. As an alternative to the more established rewilding, feralizing explicitly confronts the fact there is no pristine wild to return to. Although many takes on rewilding do problematise this, the term remains burdened with unwanted meanings. As emphasised by Tsing et al. in the *Feral Atlas*, ferality is neither inherently good nor bad, but it is the descriptive characteristic of a more-than-human Anthropocene. It can be a strategy of fleeing oppressive governance and some learn to thrive in the feral state, but it is a state few will choose outside of a dire circumstance, as it is often marked by violence, isolation, and diminished security. Yet what is the current political, ecological, and social situation if not desperate?

Drawing from the existing literature employing the “feral” category in the humanities, as well as biology and life sciences, the study employs mainly theoretical research methods operating on conceptual analysis. A selection of artworks will be studied, with an element of qualitative research methods, as a series of interviews with artists is planned in order to investigate the process of feralization in the field of art and arts-based research, which have become an integral part of the discipline at hand.

The project will be conducted through international collaboration with (1) Anna Tsing, the world-leading expert on the category of ferality in the humanities and social sciences, making use of the PI’s 3-month stay at UC Santa Cruz under her supervision and (2) researchers from the “The Body of Animals” and “Knowledge in and of the Anthropocene” research groups at the Berlin Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte.