

CONSERVATION FRONTIERS

RE-STORYING WILDERNESS FROM THE MARGINS OF EUROPE

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In Europe's marginal areas, from the Carpathian to the Rhodope Mountains, conservation interventions are being integrated into the EU's strategies to relaunch the economy by addressing the joint climate-biodiversity crisis. Climate-smart rewilding, restoration projects, and the expansion of strict nature protection are not only promoted as urgent conservation fixes, but they are also framed as solutions to accelerating land abandonment, the emptying of the countryside, and the widespread erosion of rural livelihoods. Building on over ten years of ethnographic engagements in mountain areas across Eastern Europe, I outline the spatial contours of wilderness protection initiatives to explore how green growth by conservation deepens existing environmental injustices and vulnerabilities while rewriting environmental histories of multilayered cultural landscapes.

George Iordachescu is a Senior Researcher at Wageningen University in the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy. His work explores rewilding conflicts, environmental crime and human-bear relations in Europe. Currently, George is leading the ERC-funded project GreenFrontier: Politics of Conservation and Unequal Ecological Exchange in European Peripheries (2024-2029), which investigates the development of conservation frontiers and environmental justice issues associated with the strict protection of nature in marginal mountain areas of Europe.



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