
The wolf, the wild boar and the media: how semantic plurality and scientific publicization impact human-wildlife conflict mitigations.

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Résumé

This communication focuses on the social and scientific dimensions of human-wildlife conflicts. Wolves and wild-boars are causing damages on agricultural activities in Europe. Their presence leads to conflicts between various stakeholders (livestock breeders, farmers, pro-environmental activists, scientists, politicians, etc.). Those conflicts have been publicized in the national and regional press during the past decades. The debates between stakeholders, combined to large press diffusion, allowed the emergence and the circulation of specialized terms in lay discourses. This phenomenon of terms' circulation is likely to allow the variation of the words' scientific meaning. This variation can impact the social representation of the species and influence the way each controversy evolve. We used a linguistic approach to analyse and discuss the role of the media in influencing the use of scientific terms in the controversy. We analysed how scientific words are spread in the national and regional French media from 1990 to 2014. Focusing on the example of the adjective "opportunistic", we showed that the use of scientific terms in the debates, combined to their circulation in the media, have an impact on the representation of each species. While the adjective "opportunistic" contributes to a positive representation of the wild boar, it leads to a depreciation of the wolf in the regional press. The wolf is thus seen as premeditating its actions, and consequently, seems more dangerous for livestock. We discuss the role of the media in biodiversity conservation issues, its effects on conflict mitigations and policy-making processes.

Mots-Clés: linguistics, environment, conservation, human, wildlife conflicts, media

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