



**University of  
Zurich**<sup>UZH</sup>

# Back to 'Nature'? Exploring Perceptions and Values of Nature and Wild(er)ness in the Swiss National Park during the Covid-19 Pandemic

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

**Author**

Selina Gattiker  
17-702-853

**Supervised by**

Dr. Annina Michel  
Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus

**Faculty representative**

Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus

30.04.2023

Department of Geography, University of Zurich





University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>



GEO 511 Master's Thesis

# Back to 'Nature'?

Exploring Perceptions and Values of Nature and Wild(er)ness in the Swiss National Park during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Selina Gattiker | Matr. Nr.: 17-702-853 | contact: [selina.gattiker@geo.uzh.ch](mailto:selina.gattiker@geo.uzh.ch)

Supervisor  
Dr. Annina Helena Michel

Faculty Representative & Co-supervisor  
Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus

Unit Space, Nature and Society  
Department of Geography  
University of Zurich

30. April 2023



## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Annina Helena Michel and Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus. I feel deeply grateful for your continuous support and guidance during the whole research process, for all the inspiring discussions, and valuable, instructive feedback on my work. With your knowledge, interest, and trust in what I was working on, you motivated and encouraged me also in tiring phases of this Master's thesis. Knowing that you have been there from the beginning on, always willing to answer any upcoming questions was an extreme relief and I highly appreciated all your advice, time, and flexibility.

I am also sincerely thankful to Dr. Sonja Wipf for supporting my research in the Swiss National Park. Bringing in your ideas in the initial phase of developing this Master's thesis was as inspiring as our talks during fieldwork. I am particularly grateful for welcoming me so warmly in Zernez, for introducing me to the park team and mediating all these enriching contacts. Your knowledge was extremely helpful in organizing all the logistics regarding the access to the field and data collection.

A most special thank you goes to all research participants without whom this work would not have been possible. I am incredibly thankful to you for letting me accompany you sometimes so spontaneously during hikes in the park, for having trust in me, and sharing your time, personal stories, experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings with me. You all have considerably accounted for this work with your ideas.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to my family and colleagues for their tremendous emotional support throughout the year. I greatly acknowledge your time for proofreading my work, and the questions asked which motivated me to remain critical through the research process. Thank you, Susanne, Martin, and Fiona, – whether it was in moments of crisis or enthusiasm – you were always on my side encouraging me in doing my best.



## Abstract

Reduced transnational mobility and social restrictions as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic have had a profound impact on people's interactions in nature. Local nature parks and protected areas experienced a boost in visitor numbers, provoking new challenges and opportunities for people and nature. A considerable increase in younger, less experienced visitors was also observed in the Swiss National Park as an immediate reaction to the pandemic, revealing the importance of nature experiences during a time of crisis. Changes in outdoor recreation behavior raise the question of how people-nature relationships in the park have been affected by the pandemic and to what extent this informs park visitors' and members' perceptions and values of nature. A key interest of this study thus constituted the examination of the pandemic's influence on perceptions of, and values about nature and wild(er)ness in the Swiss National Park as a research area. To this end, a total of 20 qualitative, problem-centered go-along interviews were conducted in the summer of 2022 in the park with younger visitors (age group 21–40 years) and park members. Go-along interviews were implemented on hiking trails in the park and subsequently transcribed and evaluated through abductive content analysis. The theoretical framework of relational values was applied as a conceptual lens in the discussion of the results to account for park visitors' and members' manifold relationships with nature. Research findings support the relevance of actively 'being in nature' for both the construction and acting out of people's relations with the non-human world. Sensory perceptions, experiences, and interactions in the park by research participants unravel particularly relational values among intrinsic and instrumental values about nature and wild(er)ness during the pandemic and beyond. Nature perception in the park was largely informed by three different conceptual understandings of wildness: *ecosystem wildness*, *place-based determined wildness*, and *wildness as embodied feeling and affective event*. However, results also allude to underlying notions of *wilderness* as humanly 'untouched' nature. Besides, research findings point to transformed self-people-nature relationships through the pandemic. The need for sharing nature with more people influenced both individual perceptions and values of nature. Among recreational and aesthetic values, and embodied awareness, wellbeing and social relations have become particularly important in the context of the pandemic. This study further illustrates that relational values such as knowledge, care for, and stewardship of nature seem to have been fostered during the pandemic and can also emanate from visitors' relationship with nature in the park, presenting a rather unfamiliar environmental entity to first-time visitors. Values emerging from research participants' relationship with nature do not differ fundamentally between visitors and members of the park. This seems to provide common ground for future park management. Based on research findings, the study concludes that people's interactions with nature in the Swiss National Park during the pandemic particularly highlighted the meaningfulness of relational values, thus going beyond the frequent discussion of humans as threats or custodians of nature.

*Keywords:* Nature perception, wild(er)ness, embodied experience, relational values, Swiss National Park, Covid-19 pandemic, go-along interviews



# Contents

Acknowledgements.....	I
Abstract.....	III
List of Figures.....	VII
List of Tables.....	VII
Abbreviations.....	VIII
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Research Area — Swiss National Park.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 Theoretical Approach.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Approaching ‘nature’ from a social constructivist, political ecologist perspective.....	7
3.2 From <i>wilderness</i> to <i>wildness</i> .....	8
3.3 Relational values — towards values derived from meaningful human-nature relationships.....	10
3.3.1 Relational values among intrinsic and instrumental values.....	10
3.3.2 Critical voices in the discussion of relational values.....	14
<b>4 Research Design &amp; Methodology.....</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 Qualitative go-along interviews.....	16
4.1.1 Go-alongs as paired interviews and the co-construction of meaning.....	17
4.1.2 Establishing a problem-centered interview guideline.....	18
4.1.3 Researcher generated photography and the use of GPS in go-alongs.....	19
4.2 Access to the field and sampling.....	20
4.3 ‘Going along’ in the SNP.....	22
4.4 From raw data to abductive content analysis.....	24
4.4.1 Processing textual data – transcripts and postscripts.....	24
4.4.2 Processing visual data – GPS tracked go-along routes and photographs.....	25
4.4.3 Abductive Content Analysis.....	26
4.5 Methodological reflections.....	29
4.5.1 Producing collaborative in-situ knowledge in unknown terrains – strengths and challenges of the go-along.....	29
4.5.2 The challenge of a ‘new visitor type’ and retrospective.....	31
4.5.3 Positionality.....	32
<b>5 Results.....</b>	<b>35</b>
5.1 ‘Being in nature’ – experiencing and perceiving nature.....	36
5.1.1 Sensory perception of nature in the SNP.....	37
5.1.2 Emotions and feelings as in-situ experience and expression of value when ‘being in nature’.....	42
5.2 Nature’s contribution to people and other (non-anthropocentric) values of nature.....	45

5.2.1	Recreation and wellbeing.....	45
5.2.2	Privacy versus social relations and cohesion.....	47
5.2.3	Intact nature as ‘life insurance’ and nature as resource.....	47
5.2.4	Nature’s own value, habitat creation, and fascination for life and processes in nature ....	48
5.3	Human-nature relationships.....	50
5.3.1	Participants’ personal relation with nature.....	50
5.3.2	Decisive elements in the construction of human-nature relationships.....	52
5.3.3	How human-nature relationships interweave with normative nature conceptualizations.....	57
5.4	Understanding <i>Wildnis</i> – between normative imaginations and embodied experiences.....	58
5.4.1	<i>Wildnis</i> as untouched nature and counter-pole to cultural landscape.....	59
5.4.2	<i>Wildnis</i> as an intact ecosystem allowing natural processes.....	61
5.4.3	<i>Wildnis</i> as sensory experience and feeling.....	62
5.4.4	How ‘wild’ is the park? Perception of <i>Wildnis</i> in the SNP.....	63
5.5	The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on people’s experience and perception of nature.....	66
5.5.1	Appraisal of personal changes in nature experience and perception.....	66
5.5.2	‘Chatting about others’ - Perceived changes in other people’s behavior in nature.....	70
5.5.3	Challenges and chances for nature and people.....	73
5.5.4	Temporal dimension of change - questions of sustainability.....	76
<b>6</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>78</b>
6.1	Embodied perception and normative understandings about nature, wilderness and wildness.....	78
6.2	Values emerging from visitors’ and park members’ relationships with nature.....	81
6.2.1	Intrinsic and instrumental values of nature in the SNP.....	82
6.2.2	Relational values of park visitors’ and members’ relationship with nature.....	85
6.3	How ‘self-people-nature relations’ shape experiences, perceptions, and values in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.....	91
6.4	‘Going-along’ to identify values in embodied experiences in nature.....	94
6.5	Limitations and outlook.....	96
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>98</b>
	Bibliography.....	101
	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>109</b>
A.1	Informational letter.....	109
A.2	Problem centered interview guidelines.....	110
A.2.1	Interview guideline park visitors.....	110
A.2.2	Interview guideline park members.....	112
A.3	Category System based on ACA.....	114

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.</b> Overview of research area. ....	6
<b>Figure 2.</b> Overview on different EVs and the relationships between common value concepts proposed in the study of Chan et al. (2018: A3). ....	13
<b>Figure 3.</b> Go-along interviews conducted with park visitors and park members in the SNP between July and October 2022. ....	25
<b>Figure 4.</b> Category-relation-model visualizing co-occurrence between frequent categories and subcategories in interview transcripts. ....	27
<b>Figure 5.</b> Qualitative typology of conducted go-alongs. ....	31
<b>Figure 6.</b> Conducted go-along interview with two park visitors (PV9) and exemplary georeferenced photographs with corresponding interview sections. ....	40
<b>Figure 7.</b> ‘Diversified nature’ described in terms of perceived variety in landscape by a visitor in the park. ....	41
<b>Figure 8.</b> Conducted go-along interview with a park member (PM6) and exemplary georeferenced photographs with corresponding interview sections. ....	43
<b>Figure 9.</b> Conducted go-along interview with a park member (PM5) and exemplary georeferenced photographs with corresponding interview sections. ....	56
<b>Figure 10.</b> Deadwood perceived as a ‘wild’ feature in the park by PV7. ....	64
<b>Figure 11.</b> Deadwood described as a symbol of transience by PV13. ....	64
<b>Figure 12.</b> Mudflow at Stabelchod described by PM7. ....	65
<b>Figure 13.</b> Small wooden bridge referred to by PM4. ....	65
<b>Figure 14.</b> Examples of EV types identified in park visitors’ and members’ relationships with nature. ....	88

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1.</b> Sampling overview of park visitors and selected sample characteristics. ....	21
<b>Table 2.</b> Transcription rules and special characters applied in interview transcripts. ....	24
<b>Table 3.</b> Exemplary categories developed through ACA. ....	28
<b>Table 4.</b> Overview on identified intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values deriving from participants’ relationship with nature in the SNP. ....	83

## Abbreviations

ACA	Abductive Content Analysis
CP	Covid-19 Pandemic
EV	Environmental Value
GIS	Geographic Information Science
IPBES	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
PA	Protected Area
PM	Park Member
PV	Park Visitor
SCNAT	Swiss Academy of Sciences
SNP	Swiss National Park

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

---

Reduced transnational mobility and social restrictions as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic (henceforth CP) strongly influenced people's behavior in outdoor spaces and highlighted the importance of natural recreational spaces and local nature parks (Dobson et al., 2021; Jacobs et al., 2020; Venter et al., 2021). Local nature parks and protected areas (PA) played an important role in improving physical and mental health as well as people's overall wellbeing and experienced a considerable rise in visitor numbers (McGinlay, 2020). Yet, this also evoked new challenges in the management of such natural spaces and has influenced human-nature relationships more generally (McGinlay, 2020; Morse et al., 2020). As provocatively pointed out by Bates et al. (2021: 7), the global Covid-19 lockdown may be considered as "a unique, quasi-experimental opportunity to test the role of human activities in both harming and benefiting nature."

Research on the effects of the CP on outdoor recreation experience and management is rapidly growing (Hansen et al., 2022). Recent studies focus on general recreational trends observed throughout the pandemic, often with an emphasis on outdoor activities and the appropriation of urban and rural green and blue spaces (Hansen et al., 2022; White et al., 2021; WHO, 2021). While Dobson et al. (2021) and Venter et al. (2020: 104075) explore the impact of social distancing measures on massively increased recreational use of urban green space, thus shedding light on "the value of urban nature as resilience infrastructure during a time of crisis", other studies focus on the impacts of the CP on PA and nature parks (Jacobs et al., 2020; Waithaka et al., 2021). The authors highlight both considerable reductions in foreign visitor numbers and associated challenges for livelihood strategies based on protected and conserved areas in Africa and Latin America, as well as increased local park visitation rates in the USA and Europe (Jacobs et al., 2020; Waithaka et al., 2021). Research conducted as an immediate response to the outbreak of the CP indicates that lockdown implications for natural spaces represent a global phenomenon, yet they considerably differ between regional and local contexts and the type of natural space observed.

Particularly for European nature parks, several studies engaging with the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on visitors' composition and behavior observed new types of outdoor recreation participants (Beery et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2022; McGinlay, 2020). Although the spatial context and lockdown or shutdown<sup>1</sup> restrictions have varied between and within different countries, a growing number of new, inexperienced, less well equipped and informed visitors has challenged the management of natural spaces and PA (ibid). As pointed out in a comparative study of 14 European national and nature parks by McGinlay et al. (2020: 2, 5), a new profile of users was frequently linked with conflicting interests between different visitor groups and park rangers, as well as the violation of park regulations and conservation aims.

An "outdoor recreation renaissance" (Ferguson et al., 2022: 1063) as an immediate reaction to the pandemic was also observed in the Swiss National Park (henceforth SNP) (Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021; Wipf et al., 2023). Presenting a strict nature reserve and wilderness area (IUCN protection category Ia; Dudley, 2008), the SNP experienced a substantial increase and greater variety of new types of visitors

---

<sup>1</sup> In Switzerland, national social restrictions were less far-reaching compared to other European countries, and individual mobility was not limited by the Swiss government (see BAG, 2020). As Wipf et al. (2023) note, although restrictions were not officially defined as 'lockdown' or 'shutdown', these terms have been widely used in everyday speech. In summer 2022, at the time of fieldwork, social restrictions were completely repealed.

during the shutdown in 2020 (Tin, 2022). An increasing need for “pure nature” (Wipf, 2021:12; translated by author), recreation, and a seemingly higher personal freedom experienced within natural landscapes led to a boost in visitor numbers in the park, provoking several challenges regarding park management, overcrowding, and appropriate implementations of nature protection rules (Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021; Wipf, 2021; Wipf et al., 2023). A combined qualitative and quantitative study by Wipf et al. (2023) found a change in visitor composition in the park with a considerable increase in younger guests (age group between 21 and 40). These newly outdoor-attracted visitors were often perceived by the park management and regular guests as less experienced hikers with a lack in appropriate hiking equipment, sometimes not complying with the parks’ protection rules (ibid). The rise in domestic, younger visitors in the SNP counterbalances the usually high number of recurring guests (Backhaus et al., 2013) and contrasts with a general trend of elderly people as a growing tourist group in the SNP observed by Trachsel and Backhaus (2011).

Although the stampede in visitors during the summers 2020 and 2021 posed challenges for the park management and nature itself, the increase in a broader and younger visitor group has also been considered an opportunity for people to discover and connect more closely with their local environment (Wipf, 2021; Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2020). For instance, Dobson et al. (2021) highlight people’s increasing subjective connectedness to nature in outdoor public spaces during the pandemic. Moreover, the authors found that these connections as particular aspects of human-nature relations were predominantly characterized by “contact with nature (e.g. being in ‘nature’), the aesthetic appreciation of the natural world and the feelings prompted by experiences of nature” (Dobson et al., 2021: 2; text in brackets adjusted by author). Similarly, McGinlay et al. (2020: 12) argue that although Covid-19 has introduced several challenges for PA all over the world, it may also present an opportunity to foster new and more sustainable ways to manage protected landscapes. Increased feelings of connectedness could strengthen local parks and PA stewardship and conservation efforts, as well as encourage greater pro-environmental behavior by visitors towards these natural spaces (Jacobs et al., 2020: 484; Beery et al., 2021: 100457). These findings tie in with existing studies on correlations between people’s relation with nature and their ecological awareness. Researchers expounded that if people experience a greater connection with nature, they are more likely to perform pro-environmental actions (Dobson et al., 2021: 2; Lumber et al., 2017). Strengthening human-nature relationships in terms of perceived or experienced connectedness might counterbalance negative effects resulting from increased visitation rates and overcrowding (Jacobs et al., 2020).

Hence, the observed shifts in visitors’ interaction with nature in the park raise questions concerning the future development of the SNP regarding ‘new’ visitors’ expectations and needs and to what extent these will be reconcilable with conservation goals aspired to by the park management. Using the words of Schnabel-Jung and Wipf (2021: 60; translated by author), people’s relation to nature during the pandemic illustrates that “humans [are] both a disturbing factor and a custodian of nature”. Whereas Wipf et al. (2023: 7) observed a rise in visitor numbers of 55 percent in 2020 compared to the previous five years, visitations have started to slightly decrease in summer 2021, and the visitor census for season 2022 points to a normalization of visitor numbers (30 percent decrease in visitations in 2022 compared to 2020) (Blass, 2022: 1). This also poses questions about the sustainability of changes in people-nature interactions initially observed as an immediate reaction to the CP.

However, as the pandemic has influenced people’s relation to nature, more conceptual questions regarding human-nature relationships seem to (re)gain importance. As such, the CP has not solely influenced people’s interaction in and with nature (Bates et al., 2021) but also affects values held or ascribed to nature, as well as values derived from people’s relation with the non-human world (Morse et al., 2020). Whereas several studies address changes in nature activities and experiences, and human-nature interactions in the context of the pandemic and respective consequences for both people and nature, research explicitly investigating the very subject from an ‘environmental value perspective’ seems to be less common (e.g., see Morse et al., 2020). As Dandy (2020: 258) stated, “perhaps the most vital question is

whether, as a result of the current crisis, there will be any change in the values that underpin and guide human behaviours?”

Tying in with this very question, this Master’s thesis aims to engage with the potential impact of the pandemic on people-nature relationships and values derived from these relations from the perspective of relational values. The SNP, as an example of a PA that experienced such an ‘outdoor recreation renaissance’, constitutes the case study for this research. Drawing on Ferguson et al. (2022: 9), outdoor recreation presents a “central component when exploring the complex human-nature connection” influenced by the pandemic. Yet, there are limited studies on the impact of the CP on recreational experiences and perceptions of nature in Swiss PAs from the perspectives of visitors (e.g., Wipf et al., 2023; Wunderlich et al., 2021), as well as a lack of research on different types of environmental values (EVs) emerging from people-nature relationships in Swiss outdoor recreation and leisure contexts.

Through the nature of this thesis’s case study, theoretical conceptualizations of nature and wild(er)ness<sup>2</sup> particularly come to the fore. As such, the SNP as an alpine IUCN wilderness area may be associated with specific imaginations about nature and wild(er)ness by visitors as well as by the park team itself. While these underlying conceptualizations seem to be of interest for themselves, nature and wild(er)ness experiences and perceptions based on such conceptualizations could have also been influenced and challenged during the pandemic. Different conceptual understandings of nature and wild(er)ness build a crucial debate within conservation science, while traditional ideas of human-nature dualisms and romanticized notions of wilderness have been frequently criticized in the fields of human geography and political ecology (Cronon, 1996; Büscher & Fletcher, 2020; Rose & Carr, 2018). The choice of the SNP as a case study thus opens up an interesting field of potentially different or conflicting perceptions and underlying conceptual understandings of nature and wild(er)ness.

The thesis is guided by the following three research questions and respective subquestions that shall be investigated in the scope of this study:

- 1) *How do Swiss National Park visitors and park members perceive nature and wild(er)ness?*
  - Which values emerge in visitors’ relationship with nature and wild(er)ness in the Swiss National Park?
  - Which values emerge in park members’ relationship with nature and wild(er)ness in the Swiss National Park?
  - To what extent do visitors’ values regarding nature and wild(er)ness differ from those of park members?
- 2) *How have Swiss National Park visitors’ and park members’ perceptions and values of nature and wild(er)ness been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic?*
- 3) *How may values be identified in embodied experiences in ‘nature’?*

A first objective lies in the examination of park visitors’ and members’ perception of nature and wild(er)ness in the SNP. Following that, more conceptual understandings behind these perceptions will be looked at. This serves as a basis and motivation for unraveling underlying values emerging from research participants’ relationship with nature and wild(er)ness. The analysis and discussion of these values will be

---

<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, ‘wild(er)ness’ is applied as an umbrella term for *wilderness* (see Cronon, 1996) and *wildness* (see Ward, 2019; Vannini & Vannini, 2020). These two approaches to wild(er)ness are informed by different discursive meanings and are explicitly mentioned in respective sections of this thesis to indicate the underlying conceptual understandings. When referring to the SNP as a ‘wilderness area’, this labeling is based on the IUCN protection category system (Dudley, 2008) and not part of the author’s interpretation.

based on the theoretical framework of *relational values* as a third category of EVs proposed by Chan et al. (2016) and further developed by Chan et al. (2018) and Deplazes-Zemp and Chapman (2021). The very framework aims to better account for the manifold human-nature relationships and values emerging from these relations, thus going beyond the traditional dichotomy of intrinsic versus instrumental values frequently inherent in nature conservation debates (Chan et al., 2016).

Investigating perceptions and values about nature and wild(er)ness in the SNP might also shed light on whether the CP revisits human-nature dichotomies or enables a shift towards a more relational understanding of the human-nature nexus. For instance, Bates et al. (2021: 6) point to the “the dual role that humans play in threatening and protecting species and ecosystems” revealed anew through the CP, thus rather supporting a strengthened dichotomic understanding of people-nature relationships in the context of the pandemic as indicated by Schnabel-Jung and Wipf (2021). This leads to the second objective of this thesis, which consists of evaluating how the perception of nature and wild(er)ness, as well as relational values among intrinsic and instrumental values have been influenced by the CP in the park.

The third objective of this thesis comprises a more conceptual-methodological question and is linked to the qualitative research design chosen for this study. As such, this thesis is interested in go-along interviews presenting a mobile, ‘emplaced’ interview technique as a potential method for identifying values unfolding in embodied experiences in nature (May & Lewis, 2020). To answer all research questions, empirical data was gathered through qualitative, problem-centered go-along interviews (see Bergeron et al., 2014) with visitors and park members in the SNP itself during a five week-long fieldwork phase in summer 2022. A total of 20 interviews were analyzed by conducting an abductive content analysis. While the focus regarding visitors lies on younger park guests based on the relative increase of this specific age group, park members include people working in different fields of the SNP.

Thematically, this Master’s thesis contributes to research around the highly topical issue of how Covid-19 restrictions affected mobility and social interaction as well as their impact on outdoor and nature experiences. Conceptually, the theoretical and empirical engagement with values going beyond traditional binary thinking enlarges experiences with a relational values approach within conservation science. From a methodological and empirical point of view, the qualitative approach strived for in the scope of this thesis may enrich the rather small number of qualitative research projects implemented in and by the SNP with regard to socio-environmental topics. Finally, by conducting go-along interviews, experiences gained during the fieldwork will contribute to the knowledge of applying mobile interview techniques in social sciences.

Before delving deeper, the structure of the thesis will be outlined. Following the introduction, *Chapter 2* introduces the SNP as a case study to provide background information about the park, representing both the subject of research and the place of methodological implementation of go-along interviews. *Chapter 3* establishes an overview of the theoretical approach applied in this thesis. As such, relational values are discussed as a third type of EV in the context of nature conservation. Subsequently, the thesis presents the conceptual ideas about ‘nature’, ‘wilderness’, and ‘wildness’ from a critical, social constructivist perspective, combined with approaches from the field of political ecology. *Chapter 4* aims to provide a detailed description of the chosen research design by explaining the go-along interview as a qualitative mobile interview technique. This is followed by elaborating on the establishment of a problem-centered interview guideline and the usage of researcher-generated photography in go-along interviews. Additionally, access to the field, and sampling composition and strategy are delineated. Turning to the processing and analysis of the collected data, the process of abductive content analysis applied to interview transcripts is disclosed. The chapter ends with a discussion on methodological challenges encountered during the fieldwork, as well as the researcher’s positionality. In the following, *Chapter 5* presents a thorough insight into research findings as a basis for the subsequent discussion. In *Chapter 6*, results are discussed in a condensed form through the lens of theoretical concepts about nature, wild(er)ness, and relational values, with reference to existing literature. Besides, the limitations of this thesis are addressed, and an outlook for further research directions is provided to the reader. Finally, *Chapter 7* summarizes key findings of this thesis, linking them back to the very research questions.

## Chapter 2

# Research Area — Swiss National Park

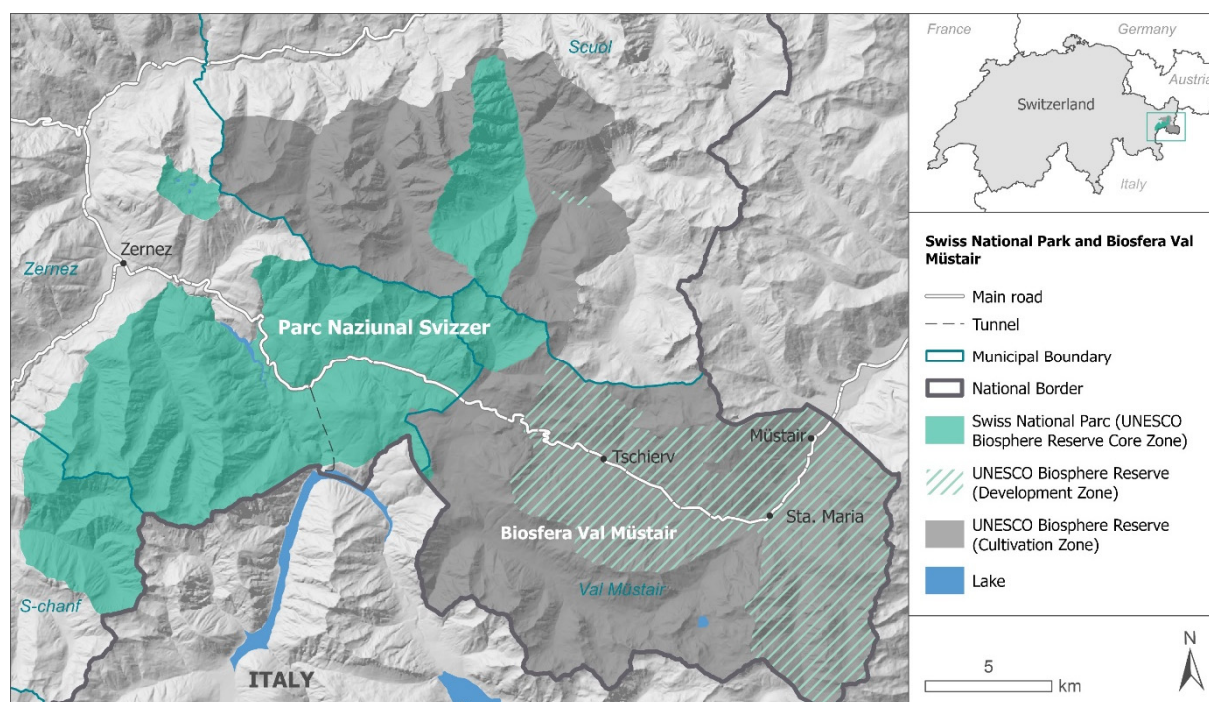
---

This thesis focuses geographically on the Swiss National Park (SNP) as a research area. The national park is located in the canton of Grisons in the lower Engadin in southeastern Switzerland (46°40' N, 10°12' E) at the border to Italy and covers about 170.3 km<sup>2</sup> of mountainous terrain ranging from approximately 1400 m to 3100 m a.s.l. in elevation (Baur & Scheurer, 2014: 13; Wipf et al., 2023) (cf. figure 1). The park was founded in 1914 through the Swiss confederation, Pro Natura, and the Swiss Academy for Sciences (SCNAT) as the first national park in the Alps, simultaneously constituting the only national park in Switzerland (Baur & Scheurer, 2014). The different valleys of the SNP are distributed over the four municipalities Val Müstair, S-chanf, Scuol, and Zernez, of which the latter has the highest area percentage (68,6%) (Parc Naziunal Svizzera, 2022). According to the Swiss National Park Act, “The Swiss National Park is a reserve in which nature is protected from any human interference, and in particular the entire fauna and flora are left to develop naturally” (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1980; Parc Naziunal Svizzera, 2022).

In addition to its protection status under the Swiss National Park Act, the park is classified in the highest IUCN protection category (category Ia) as a strict nature reserve and wilderness area (Dudley, 2008). The IUCN category Ia refers to areas mainly ‘managed’ for strict nature protection and is defined as “strictly protected areas set aside to protect biodiversity and also possibly geological/geomorphological features, where human visitation, use, and impacts are strictly controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values. Such protected areas can serve as indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring” (Dudley, 2008: 13). This definition of the IUCN largely reflects in the SNP’s ideology, consisting of three main goals, namely the protection of natural processes and species diversity, the scientific research and monitoring of the park’s nature as an outdoor laboratory to better understand the dynamic ecological processes without active anthropogenic influence, and the information and sharing of knowledge with a broader, non-scientific public (Parc Naziunal Svizzera, 2022). Together with adjacent areas and the regional nature park Biosfera Val Müstair, the park has formed the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Engiadina Val Müstair since 2010, in which the SNP constitutes the core zone (Baur & Scheurer, 2014).

It is noteworthy that the park’s area had been intensively used prior to the SNP foundation, particularly through agriculture, mining, lime kilns, and lumbering (Scheurer et al., 2014). Several of these ‘legacy effects’ are still visible in the landscape of the park, indicating that there was no such thing as a ‘primary, pristine wilderness’. Thus, the development of the park was rather driven by the idea of park founders “to provide modern civilization *again* with such a nature and to scientifically observe and evaluate the production process required for this purpose” (Kupper, 2012: 10; translated by author, italics added). Wild(er)ness ideas that were embedded in American and European cultures during the foundation of the first American national parks and the SNP did not differ fundamentally, as they were both based on an antithesis to civilization. In contrast to American national parks, however, the goal in Switzerland was not to preserve an already existing ‘primary wilderness’, but to enable its (re)production, leading to ‘secondary wilderness’ based on rewilding processes through complete protection (ibid; Bauer & Wallner, 2015).

Due to the high protection status, human activity is largely restricted to the 21 hiking trails distributed over the park area and one main road crossing the park (Kupper, 2012). Visitation of the SNP by the public is only possible during the summer season between June and October. Yet, the park is freely accessible from around 13 official entry points without an entrance fee (Tin, 2022; Wipf et al., 2023). To ensure the high protection status, the parks’ code of conduct consists of strict behavioral rules for



**Figure 1.** Overview of research area. The Swiss National Park constitutes the core zone of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Engiadina Val Mustair (*composed by author; geodata copyright: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo, Federal Office for the Environment FOEN*).

visitors, such as the prohibition of leaving the predetermined hiking trails, disturbing wildlife, lighting fires, collecting plants or rocks, bringing dogs into the park, or camping (Parc Naziunal Svizzer, 2022). To gain visitors' attention and inform guests about the rules directly in the area, the parks' code of conduct is posted on info boards at the different park entry points. The compliance of behavioral rules is punctually monitored, and the violation of rules may be punished by a fine. Yet, usually, fines are more the exception than the rule (based on talks with park members).

Nonetheless, as pointed out by Backhaus and Rupf (2014), the SNP consists of more than a PA without active human influence. As the parks' establishment and development have involved several political decision-making processes over time and its spatial extent was part of an enduring negotiation between different, sometimes conflicting interests, the SNP also symbolizes a "social and political object associated with meanings and expectations going beyond the protection of fauna and flora, or ecosystems" (Backhaus & Rupf, 2014: 298; translated by author). Moreover, the park label 'national park' seems to promise attractive and 'authentic experiences in nature' (Backhaus & Rupf, 2014: 302). As such, the park is annually visited by around 120'000 hikers and outdoor recreationists (Parc Naziunal Svizzer, 2022) and considerably contributes to the added value of the region (Backhaus et al., 2013).

Aside from the annual visitor monitoring (e.g., see Blass, 2022), quantitative visitor surveys have been repeatedly conducted in the SNP since the 1990s to examine visitors' expectations, perceptions, and needs alongside more practical information about the park infrastructure. Not least, the most recent visitor survey implemented particularly as a means to address the sudden impact of the CP on the park served as a basis for the fieldwork of this thesis (e.g., Poelsma, 2020). Besides, qualitative and quantitative socio-scientific research conducted prior to this thesis and directly related to the SNP include visitors' perception and acceptance of deadwood in the park (Hunziker, 1997; Backhaus et al., 2013), the investigation of visitors' characteristics (Camenisch, 2008), a focus on the needs and perceptions of elderly people visiting the SNP (Trachsel & Backhaus, 2011), and the examination of motorcyclists' perspective on the park when driving through the area (Jauss & Backhaus, 2013). Most recent socio-scientific park related studies emerged as an immediate response to the CP, addressing implications for visitors and non-human others in the park and questions regarding future park management (Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021; Tin, 2022; Wipf et al., 2023).

## Chapter 3

# Theoretical Approach

---

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical concepts guiding this thesis. Mostly inspired by critical social constructivism and political ecology, different conceptualizations of nature, wilderness, and wildness are introduced as a basis for the subsequent discussion of research findings. Theoretical approaches to nature and wild(er)ness are not least important in this thesis, as the SNP as a research area directly links with these concepts through its status as an IUCN strict nature reserve and wilderness area. In the first section of this chapter, conceptual approaches to 'nature' are briefly outlined as guidance for following discussions around wilderness and wildness. As conceptions of wild(er)ness may reveal the particular understanding of "*what* and *who* belongs in nature" (Ward, 2019: 44), theoretical accounts for wilderness and wildness are provided in section 3.2. Partially based on critiques regarding human-nature dichotomies, and the manifold relationships between humans and non-human others, the theoretical framework of relational values is introduced in section 3.3. The presentation of relational values as a third category of EVs constitutes the basis for discussing the research findings in this thesis.

### 3.1 Approaching 'nature' from a social constructivist, political ecologist perspective

'Nature' as a term and concept has always presented a contentious issue within the conservation debate (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020). Most common critiques of nature imaginations in mainstream conservation argue that these notions are historically founded in a conceptual distinction between contrarian realms of nature and culture (ibid: 54). Further, this separation of humans and nature is attended by a process of othering where nature presents the non-human world, the 'other' (Adams & Mulligan, 2003; Deplazes-Zemp, 2022). Yet this presents a specific cultural construction limited to primarily Western societies (ibid). Similarly, the nature/culture divide is explained by Keune et al. (2022: 26) as deeply embedded in Western conceptualizations about nature, yet not universally representative for 'the whole of human societies'. As for Eurocentric understandings, the dichotomy between humans and nature developed as a fundamental element in defining nature (ibid). Responding to some of these critiques, the alternative term 'more-than-human' has been applied (Adams & Mulligan, 2003; Fletcher, 2017).

In contrast to notions of nature as a sole social construction, a political ecology perspective acknowledges nature in all of its materiality (Rose & Carr, 2018: 270). Using the words of Rose and Carr (2018: 270), "it is the manner in which human meaning and interaction entangles itself with these materialities" that shapes what is called 'nature', and which has considerable consequences for people and the nonhuman world. Nonetheless, meanings of nature are historically and culturally produced, and neither 'nature' nor humanity exists as a delimited entity (ibid). As put forward by Rose and Carr (2018), they may rather be understood as co-produced actors in a complex system. While traditional, socially constructed binaries or dualisms between humans and nature are recognized in the field of political ecology, the existence of dichotomic relations between nature and humans as well as the presupposed hierarchies within such dualistic imaginations have been questioned and challenged (ibid).

Although these imaginations rooted in human/nature dichotomies have been criticized within and outside of the 'Western context' (Keune et al., 2022: 37), the very divide seems to maintain in recent debates in nature and wilderness conservation. As such, framing nature as wilderness in conservation goals often conflict with nature conservation strategies based on different conceptual understandings (ibid).

### 3.2 From *wilderness* to *wildness*

Imaginations of 'pristine nature' are frequently connected to notions of wilderness within conservation science (Derby et al., 2015; Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2020). Similarly, Büscher and Fletcher (2020) critically point out that the preservation of wilderness within PA often constituted and still represents a key goal in conservation. The idea of wilderness as "an area where the Earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (Wilderness Act 1964) traces back to the US National Wilderness Preservation Act in 1964 and enshrines a human-nature or nature-culture binary in Western conservation practice (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020: 58; Duclos, 2020: 97). Yet, Cronon (1996: 7) argues that far from being a place on earth standing apart from humanity, wilderness seems to rather reflect a human creation – "indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history". Euro-American wilderness ideas are thus deeply rooted within the historical-cultural context of patriarchal colonialism (Ward, 2019). From a critical decolonial perspective, the ongoing use of a primarily Western narrative of wilderness in conservation framing strengthens the long-standing nature-culture dualism, thus "conflicting with Indigenous understandings of nature as an interconnected web of life, linking humans and non-humans in complex relationships" (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2020: 750). Hence, unraveling the different (discursive) notions of wild(er)ness seems to be particularly important in this thesis to allow a more nuanced discussion and socially just approach to the very concept.

In Cronon's prominent work (1996) 'The Trouble with Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', the author highly challenges imaginations of *wilderness* and suggests turning towards *wildness* instead. As Booth (2011) argues, both terms and their meanings are entangled with each other, and frequently applied interchangeably, thus sometimes confusing or misleading in their exact meaning in respective contexts. Although these terms have appeared interchangeable, Prior and Brady (2017) and Ward (2019) argue that wilderness and wildness should not be understood as equivalents, as wildness does not imply the dualistic separation of humans from nature as wilderness does.

Cronon's critique of the wilderness concept has roots in a social constructivist perspective, understanding wilderness as a socially and culturally formed, value laden construct that implies particular meanings when used in environmental debates (Cronon, 1996; Booth, 2011). As such, Cronon (1996: 16; 79) states, "there is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness. It is entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear, a product of the very history it seeks to deny". While this statement is brought forward with reference to American wilderness imaginations, referring to the displacement of indigenous people in order to create an 'uninhabited wilderness' (e.g., in American national parks), similar notions can be found in European accounts of wilderness. Indeed, as pointed out by Kupper (2012: 12), the latter are based on an understanding of wilderness as an antithesis to civilization rooted in the same tradition of romanticism. Yet, European and particularly Swiss notions of wilderness differ in the sense that completely pristine, 'untouched' nature was considered to rather not exist anymore (ibid). Nonetheless, the idea to 'go back' to an 'alpine, original nature' undisturbed by humans (*Urnature*; Kupper, 2012: 12), as it was strived for in the establishment of the SNP is comparable to American imaginations of wilderness (Kupper, 2012). Ward (2019: 34) highlights the importance of addressing the seemingly 'innocent and objective material reality' hiding the symbolic meaning within Western wilderness ideas.

Moreover, Cronon (1996) differs between wilderness as such a cultural product and the actual more-than-human world one might find in places identified as 'wilderness' (Booth, 2011). Thus, the author (1996) certainly recognizes "the power of the things it [wilderness] contains" (Cronon, 1996: 70; in Booth, 2011: 285). As Whatmore (2002) argues, approaching the very concept entirely as a cultural construct can result in the diminishing of 'the more-than-human' within wilderness. Following that, Booth (2011: 286) declares that "saying wilderness is 'culture' is as meaningless as saying that culture is 'wilderness,' particularly if you are attempting to delve beneath and beyond such duality" inherent in Western human-nature understandings. Booth (2011: 186) argues that wilderness as a concept can and should not be fully divorced from "the entities that inhabit places we understand as wilderness", as such an approach may not explain experiences of wilderness as embodiment. In this sense, the author further elaborates that the 'articulation

of a more-than-human intersubjectivity' embodied in the concept of wilderness needs to be acknowledged among the cultural meanings embedded (ibid). As philosopher and ecofeminist Plumwood (1998: 659) states, "we should not abandon concepts of nature and wilderness [...] but we need to create new, non-colonizing understandings" of the latter to challenge the very nature-culture divide underlying these concepts.

In response to these critiques regarding the problematic nature inherent in Western wilderness imaginations, conceptions of *wilderness* shift towards *wildness* in debates about rewilding initiatives (Ward, 2019). Recent studies aim for a revised understanding of wilderness, accounting for the agency and autonomy of the natural world (or more-than-human world) while still acknowledging the culturally embedded meanings (Booth, 2011; Ward, 2019; Duclos, 2020; Vannini & Vannini, 2020; Douglas et al., 2023). Drawing on Ward (2019: 44), "wildness is abiotic, biotic and a social relational achievement within human and more-than-human worlds". The authors' shared argument refers to the possibility of experiencing wildness in what people may perceive as 'wild places' or 'places of wildness' without excluding humans completely "in time and space from nature" (Ward, 2019: 45). Different conceptual approaches to a 'revised' concept include the understanding of wildness as relational (e.g., Prior & Brady, 2017), wildness as 'borderland' instead of *borderline* concept of 'Wilderness-Culture' (Ward, 2019: 46), wildness as self-willed autonomy of nature (non-human others) (Ward, 2019), and wildness as feeling and affect (Vannini & Vannini, 2020; Douglas et al., 2023). In the following, these different accounts of wildness are briefly outlined.

Authors discussing wildness as relational (Chapman, 2006; Prior and Brady, 2017; Ward, 2019) refer to the historical cultural assumption that 'wildness' presents the 'other'. Both defining and experiencing wildness is thus entangled with setting humans in relation to non-human or more than-human others, a process of considering elements as belonging or not belonging in 'wild places', or to 'wild things' (Ward, 2019). The distinction of 'wild things' from humans or civilization more specifically is part of this process, at least in Western thinking (Chapman, 2006; Prior and Brady, 2017). This links to imaginations of wilderness, yet for relational wildness, the fundamental relationship between people and wild elements does not need to build on a mutual exclusion of the latter (ibid). It is for this reason that wildness can be conceptualized more broadly as "relational achievement within humans and more-than human worlds" (Ward, 2019: 46).

Understanding wildness as relational achievement is also linked to wildness conceptualizations as *borderlands* (Ward, 2019). As the author argues, this rather topological notion of wildness does not draw the line (or border) between wilderness and civilization, nature versus culture, but rather as spaces where relational achievements between humans and more-than-humans may occur. More recent rewilding practices in nature conservation are often based on such 'borderland' understandings of wildness. Indeed, at the intersection of environmental science and conservation policy, alternative notions of wildness are frequently described as 'wildness areas', referring to landscapes stretched in a continuum of strong to little anthropogenic influence (Moos et al., 2019). As such, landscapes may incorporate more or less elements of wildness, depending on the degree of anthropogenic or more-than-human action and autonomy (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020). This conceptualization of wildness seems to be undergoing a revival in the Swiss conservation debate (cf. Association Mountain Wilderness Schweiz; Moos et al., 2019).

In several of these alternative approaches to wildness, the autonomy ascribed to non-human others seems to constitute a decisive element. Conservation projects following the goal of rewilding rather than ecological restoration (e.g., the preservation of a specific condition through active anthropogenic intervention) are guided by the idea of a self-willed non-human nature (Ward, 2019). Typically, this understanding is associated with process protection, and the self-sustaining qualities of nature (ibid; Von Atzigen, & Bauer, 2019). Similarly, Kirchhoff and Trepl (2009) and Kangler (2009; 2021) articulate wildness as *ecosystem wildness*, which includes more biophysical notions of 'functioning ecosystems' and 'intact nature'.

A slightly different approach to wildness is brought forward by Vannini & Vannini (2020), who discuss wildness primarily as a subjective feeling and affective event. This understanding links back to wildness as relational achievement and the role of embodiment in wildness conceptualizations, indicated by Booth (2011). Furthermore, Stremlow & Sidler (2002) argue for the meaning of wildness as a space for self-awareness. However, the authors do not explicitly apply the term 'wildness' but use the German word '*Wildnis*'.

The discussion of different theoretical understandings of wilderness and wildness illustrates the multiple meanings ascribed to wild(er)ness. From a social constructivist perspective, argumentation in conservation science based on *wilderness* needs a critical reflection of underlying culturally embedded imaginations that are rooted in primarily Western human-nature dichotomies, still often influenced by colonial modes of thinking (Fernández-Llamazares, 2020).

### **3.3 Relational values — towards values derived from meaningful human-nature relationships**

Human and ecological values, frequently also referred to as *environmental values* (EVs), present a powerful yet comprehensive concept in environmental management (Tadaki et al., 2017). EVs are of interest for both environmental policy as a concept and in social sciences as a means to explore how people value nature (Deplazes-Zemp, & Chapman, 2021: 670). Whereas there exist different conceptualizations of EVs, *relational values* as a relatively new approach proposed by Chan et al. (2016) have been widely discussed in recent years within the scientific debate on nature conservation (Skubel et al., 2019). Relational values aim to widen the dichotomous view that nature is either protected for human's sake (constituting an instrumental value) or for nature's (accounting for an intrinsic value) (Chan et al., 2016: 1462). Although the discussion over instrumental versus intrinsic values frequently lies at the heart of conservation policy, these binary conceptualizations exclude the multiple other diverse ways in which humans may relate to nature (ibid). Using the words of Evans (2005: 193; brackets adjusted by author), "[as] human beings, we are part of the natural world in many different ways, ranging from the basic necessity of assimilating energy from the world around us to practices that enable us to relate to the world in ways that feed the soul with the meaning that constitutes a life genuinely worth living". Through challenging traditional and often deeply rooted ideas of nature based on its separation from humans, the concept of relational values reaches beyond the context of nature conservation and has been increasingly discussed in the broader field of environmental ethics and philosophy (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). The very concept proposed by Chan et al. (2016) and further developed by Deplazes-Zemp and Chapman (2021) amongst others, functions as a key theoretical framework in this thesis. Thus, relational values will be introduced and discussed in the following, embedded in the general research around EVs.

#### **3.3.1 Relational values among intrinsic and instrumental values**

As defined by Chan et al. (2016: 1462) in their highly cited study, relational values are "preferences, principles and virtues" associated with or about meaningful human-nature relationships. Proponents of relational values argue that the latter are not present in things but rather constituted through the relationships and responsibilities to these things (ibid: 1462; see Pascal et al., 2017: 11). The theoretical framework has been developed as a response to environmental reasoning primarily informed by intrinsic and instrumental valuation of nature often brought forward when discussing the fundamental question of why we should protect biodiversity (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023: 1). As such, relational values present an alternative approach to the widely applied idea of ecosystem services in science and policy, which is mainly rooted in a 'provider-receiver' relationship between humans and nature (Chan et al., 2018). Particularly, several authors criticized that a solely 'provider-receiver' driven approach for valuing nature does exclude non-Western and indigenous meanings and values ascribed to nature (Muraca, 2016; Himes & Muraca,

2018; Diaz et al., 2018). To address these critiques and to build on a more inclusive understanding of values associated with nature, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) articulated ‘nature’s contribution to people’ (NCP)<sup>3</sup> as an intercultural approach for engaging with EVs instead of ecosystem services (Pascal et al., 2017; Diaz et al., 2018).

Recently, and based on the propositions of the IPBES as well as empirical studies (e.g., Chan et al., 2016) and philosophical work (Muraca, 2016), relational values have been introduced more explicitly by scholars as a *third category* of EVs, complementing the axiological categories of intrinsic and instrumental value (Stålhammar & Thorén, 2019; Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). This newly suggested third category value is understood as encompassing “values that do not directly emanate from nature but are derivative of our relationships with it and our responsibilities toward it” (Pascual et al., 2017: 11). For improved transparency in the discussion of the theoretical framework guiding this thesis, EVs themselves, as well as the ‘three’ value types – intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values – are subsequently explained.

### ***Environmental values***

In line with Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman (2021: 672), I understand EVs in this thesis as “values ascribed by people to natural items in the environment”. These environmental items may include single elements of the non-human world, such as animals and plants, but also whole species, ecosystems, landscapes, or other more all-encompassing understandings of nature (ibid). EVs can be structured around environmental valuation, which tries to explain “how, why, and the extent to which, some group or community values nature” (Stålhammar & Thorén, 2019: 1205). Crucial for an understanding of EVs is the meaning of ‘value’ and the related process of ‘valuing’. Within environmental philosophy, ‘valuing’ refers to the ‘attribution of importance’ to the environmental objects (ibid). The valuing of an environmental item may consist of attributing intrinsic importance to the specific object, thus valuing it as an end in itself. Ascribing instrumental relevance to the environmental item constitutes the valuation of the latter as a means to an end. Importance may also be attributed to an environmental item if the relationship with that item is considered meaningful. In this sense, Deplazes-Zemp and Chapman (2021: 672) argue that “each of these three types of environmental values is attributed in virtue of another feature of the object (its usefulness, its own properties, or its relationship with the valuer)”. EVs are thus conceptualized from the perspective of environmental philosophy based on the three categories of intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values (Neuteleers, 2020).

### ***Intrinsic values***

Intrinsic values are frequently discussed in opposition to the utilitarian, anthropogenic framing inherent in the ‘ecosystem services’ approach in conservation science (Batavia & Nelson, 2017). As a subcategory of EVs, intrinsic values in the context of nature conservation are usually based on the argument that a non-human part of nature is valuable for itself, independent of the benefits for humans (ibid). In environmental philosophy, intrinsic valuing is understood as attributing value to an object’s own properties, “in virtue of which it is being valued” (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021: 672). Put differently, regarding the intrinsic value of nature, the latter is valued for its own sake, as an end in itself (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). Whereas intrinsic (as well as instrumental) values are less often defined in more detail in respective studies, the author points to the differences within intrinsic value (ibid). Most frequently, intrinsic value is applied as valuing an environmental item as an end in itself, or as Deplazes-Zemp (2023: 4) refers to it, ‘final value’ (e.g., valuing an ecosystem for its own sake). However, an environmental entity may also be intrinsically valued for specific inherent properties (e.g., valuing natural processes as ‘internal properties’ of an ecosystem for its own sake) (ibid). As in the former understanding of intrinsic value, the environmental object is morally considered for its own sake. Additionally, Deplazes-Zemp (2023: 5) describes a third type

---

<sup>3</sup> NCPs are defined by the IPBES as “all the positive contributions or benefits, *and* occasionally negative contributions, losses or detriments, that people obtain from nature” (Pascal et al., 2017: 15). This understanding of NCPs resonates with the usage of the term ‘ecosystem services’ (ibid). Yet, it aims to go further by “explicitly embracing concepts associated with other worldviews on human–nature relations and knowledge systems” (Pascal et al., 2017: 15).

of intrinsic value that is not attributed to the environmental entity itself but to its “properties, capacities, or state of affairs” (e.g., valuing the creative capacity to transform landscapes inherent in natural processes). In the scope of this thesis, I understand intrinsic value primarily as final value. Yet, as chapter 6 of this study will show, all three forms of intrinsic value are present in research findings.

### ***Instrumental values***

Instrumental value, as a subcategory of EVs, is ascribed to an environmental object as a means to a certain end. In this sense, an environmental entity is valued in virtue of its perceived usefulness to satisfy human’s needs (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). As such, instrumental value is most frequently conceptualized from an anthropogenic perspective, e.g., the instrumental value of an item for the satisfaction of humans. However, an environmental entity can also be of instrumental value to other non-human beings (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). From this perspective, the receiver of instrumental value as a human has changed to a non-human being. In this thesis, instrumental value is understood in the former sense, as a means to the satisfaction of human’s needs, where a natural entity is valued for its usefulness for specific purposes (e.g., valuing a forest for providing wood as a resource usable by humans). Furthermore, “as a means (instrument) to something else, a thing is potentially replaceable” (Chan et al., 2016: 1463). Regarding the current discussion of relational values as a third category of EVs, the substitutability of instrumental values is considered an important distinction from the non-substitutability inherent in intrinsic and relational values (ibid; Muraca & Himes, 2018; Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). Frequently, but not necessarily, instrumental values are also monetary values. With respect to ecosystem services in the context of nature conservation, the latter are often promoted in a neoliberal sense focused on the implementation of ecosystem services in markets and payment schemes, thus putting a “price tag on nature” (Chan et al., 2016: 1463).

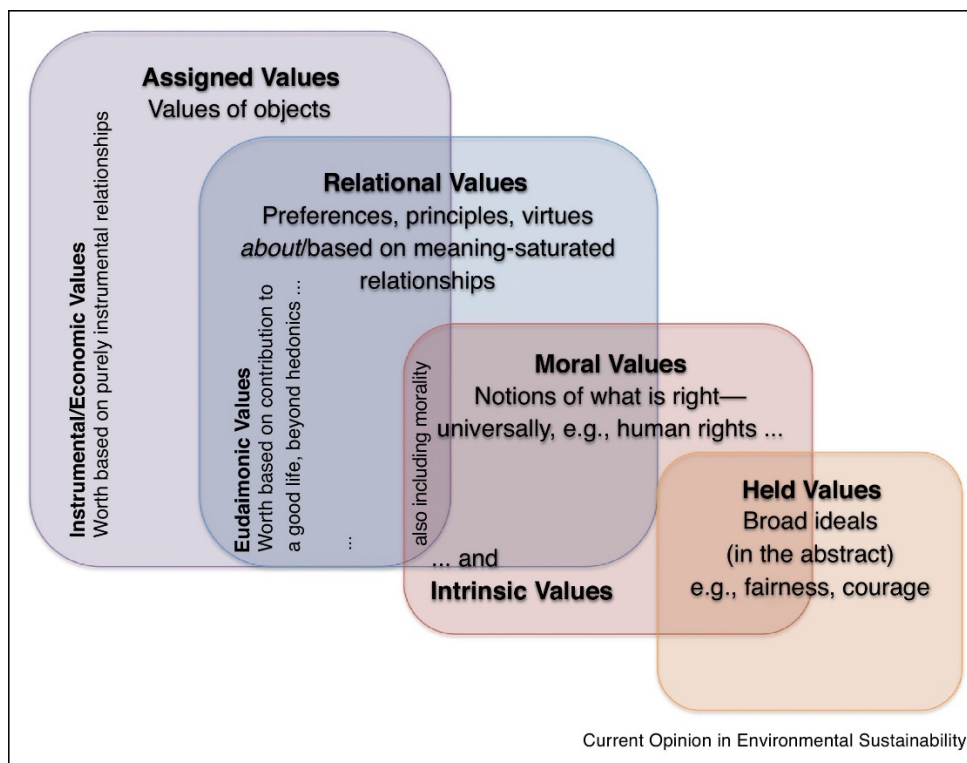
### ***Relational values***

In contrast to intrinsic and instrumental values, where an environmental object is either valued as an end in itself or as a means to certain ends, relational values are understood as the values emerging from meaningful human-nature relationships (Chan et al., 2018; Muraca & Himes, 2018; Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). Put differently, values emanate from the relationship itself (Muraca, 2016). Chan et al. (2018: A1) articulate that this third category of EVs includes “preferences, principles, and virtues about these human nature relationships”. Yet, relational values are not restricted to human-nature relationships but may also include relations between people themselves (ibid; Pascal et al., 2017). As such, relational values can emerge in relationships between individuals or societies, animals, plants, and other non-human others (Pascal et al., 2017: 15). Further, a key argument in defining relational values often brought forward in the very discussion around these values is found in their non-substitutability (Muraca & Himes, 2018; Chan et al., 2018).

Another decisive element in the conceptualization of relational values consists of eudaimonic values. The latter describe values that account for human wellbeing through fostering a ‘good, flourishing life’ (Pascal et al., 2017; Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). Drawing on Muraca and Himes (2018: 2), relational values may unfold in “actions, experiences, and habits associated with a ‘good life’ in the sense of a meaningful, ethically responsible, and overall satisfying life, or what is called eudaimonic values”. Importantly, the criteria for what constitutes a good quality of life may vary greatly between different cultures, societal groups, and even individuals (Pascal et al., 2017). Whereas some studies understand eudaimonic values as a particular sub-type of relational values (e.g., Muraca & Himes, 2018; Chan et al., 2018), other authors consider relational values themselves as eudaimonic values (e.g., Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021).

With growing interest in relational values as a new approach to better account for the manifold relationships between humans and nature, there also arose conceptual ambiguities with the very term in relation to other types of values. An overview on different EVs and the relationship between them is proposed in the study of Chan et al. (2018) (cf. figure 2). Although the authors argue for considering

relational values as a third category of EVs, it is noteworthy that they include aspects of intrinsic and instrumental valuing (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). For instance, this may be the case as attaching relational value to something is often attended by a “genuine esteem for the valued item” (intrinsic) (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021: 669). Simultaneously, being in a meaningful relationship with an environmental object or thing can result in both relational value in the sense of eudaimonia and an instrumental contribution (ibid). Besides, the framework of relational values allows for the analysis of relationships going beyond common ‘unidirectional’ and ‘bi-directional’ relations between the valuing subject and valued object. Instead, human-nature and people-people relationships are often more complex, influenced by emotions, memories, and specific experiences (Neuteleers, 2020). As such, relationships and derived relational values can be indirect or mediated through an additional ‘third party’ in that relationship (cf. research findings in chapter 6).



**Figure 2.** Overview on different EVs and the relationships between common value concepts proposed in the study of Chan et al. (2018: A3).

While some studies point to the similarity between relational values and cultural ecosystem services or non-material values about nature, Chan et al. (2018: A5) argue that the relational value approach offers a language for elements of human-nature relationships that may not be described exclusively by a ‘provider-receiver’ metaphor of ecosystem services. As such, cultural ecosystem services often root in an instrumental relation, as they constitute an element of the ecosystem services framework (ibid). Although cultural ecosystem services are often not substitutable (as it is the case for relational values), particularly monetary services occurring in the context of eco-tourism or nature-based tourism are replaceable (ibid). Nonetheless, Deplazes-Zemp (2023: 2) reveals that empirical studies engaging with relational values often refer to values that can also be discussed through the lens of cultural ecosystem services (e.g., Arias-Arévalo et al., 2017). According to the author, such values at ‘the boundary between relational values and cultural ecosystem services’ frequently include aesthetic value, spiritual value, values associated with personal or cultural identity, and place attachments.

Whereas intrinsic and instrumental values are to some extent ‘relational’ through the valuing process between the valuing subject and the valued object, the underlying reason why the natural world is valued differs between the three types of EVs (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). As such, while there is still a valuing subject

and a valued object, relational values allow a particular focus on the relationship between subject and object. To this end, relational values can include non-instrumental yet anthropogenic values through their relational dimension in human-nature relationships. Therefore, Skubel et al. (2019: 2; italics added) suggest that such an approach fosters a “dialog over where or *whether* to draw the human-nature divide in the assignment of value”. This enables drawing links to recent critiques of human-nature/ culture-nature dichotomies in nature conceptualizations.

While the thesis orients itself on the above description of relational values, the conceptual approach is neither understood as absolute nor complete. In contrast, as the discussion of relational values identified in the scope of this thesis will illustrate, a thorough understanding of this third category of value might benefit from phenomenologist research and more-than-representational theory-inspired studies on embodiment.

### 3.3.2 Critical voices in the discussion of relational values

Partially due to the aforementioned ambiguities, the theoretical framework of relational values has been criticized for being unnecessary, useless, or lacking clarity, leading to questions about the conceptual and pragmatic worth of the latter (Gilliand, 2021; Luque-Lora, 2022). While both authors highlight the importance of relationality in the development and articulation of values about nature, they do not support relational values as a third category of EVs. As such, Luque-Lora (2022) articulates based on their empirical research that people naturally do not value nature in separate and distinct value categories. Instead of differentiating between intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values, the author points to the “relationality [inherent] in instrumental and intrinsic values, as well as people’s guiding principles (held values)” (Luque-Lora, 2022: 18; brackets adjusted by author). As the ‘unnatural imposing’ of these value categories on values emanating from people’s relationship with nature rather leads to a misrepresentation of the latter, Luque-Lora (2022: 18) suggests dropping the very idea of relational values as a distinct type of environmental valuing, in order to ‘truly promote relational thinking’.

Likewise, Gilliand (2021) argues for completely abandoning the traditional categorization of intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values. Alternatively, the author suggests one single category consisting of different types of relational values. Rooted in phenomenological perspectives, Gilliand (2021: 723) expounds on values more subtly emanating from relationships as “layers or parts of reality where the encounter between what we later call the subject and object occurs”. In this sense, the author supports the notion of valuing as a dynamic, multilayered process inherent in the conceptual approach of relational values. More explicitly drawing on phenomenologist ideas, Gilliand (2021: 717) strives to understand relational values as “forms of ‘events’” in which humans interact alongside other people and non-human beings. Following this conceptualization, the relation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ involved in the valuing process becomes less concrete (ibid). For this reason, Gilliand (2021: 722) critiques the strict division of subject and object in the act of valuing.

# Research Design & Methodology

---

This thesis follows a qualitative approach in identifying and understanding experiences, perceptions and values entangled with being in nature and wild(er)ness. Applying a qualitative research design is particularly suitable to examine subjective and intersubjective meanings, views and 'live-worlds' of social actors situated within a specific context and time (Burns, et al., 2022; Flick, 2010). As such, qualitative research provides an overview of a specific research problem, striving for an in-depth understanding of different perspectives (Newing, 2011: 9). Epistemologically, it becomes relevant to address how these subjective and intersubjective perspectives gathered during data inquiry are understood and embedded within qualitative research. Moreover, from a social constructivist point of view, qualitatively collected knowledge is constantly being revised, inevitably incomplete and co-constructed by research participants and the researcher itself (Charmaz, 2013). Using the words of Crang and Cook (2007: 14), "stories told in the research encounter are not simply to be regarded as means of mirroring the world, but as the means through which it is constructed, understood and acted out."

The research process was designed based on abductive reasoning, thus investigating the very research questions through the combination of inductive and deductive approaches. Timmermans & Tavory (2012: 167) indicate that abduction relates to a 'creative inferential process' which wants to produce new hypotheses and theories based on surprising data. In doing so, abductive research "moves back and forth between inductive and open-ended research settings to more hypothetical and deductive attempts" (Yin, 2018: 29). While accessing the field site as a researcher according to the principle of 'reflective openness' (Kruse, 2015: 40-41; Flick, 2010: 124), existing theoretical concepts of relational values and different conceptual ideas about nature and wild(er)ness functioned as sensitizing concepts before, during and after fieldwork, and influenced the collection of data as much as the subsequent analysis. Yet, to explore embodied experiences, perceptions and values grounded in the participatory collected data instead of simply imposing on the theoretical framework of relational values was a substantial goal of this study. Hence, the iterative nature of the research process consisted of the 'systematic combining' of inductively and deductively gained knowledge (Dubois & Gadde, 2002: 553).

Interviews are commonly used in qualitative research to gain a wide spectrum of different voices and opinions regarding a research problem and frequently enable detailed insights into a specific matter of interest (Newing, 2011). To build the empirical foundation of this thesis, problem-centered go-along interviews as a particular type of qualitative interviewing were gathered in the SNP during a five week-long fieldwork phase between mid-July and mid-August as well as individual fieldwork days in early October. In total, twenty go-along interviews were conducted in the park area, divided into thirteen interviews with park visitors and seven with members of the park itself.

This chapter first introduces the go-along interview as a qualitative interview method (section 4.1), followed by elaborating on how the chosen mobile interview technique supports the co-construction of meaning in the case of paired interviews. Further, the establishment of a problem-centered interview guideline as the basis for conducting the interviews as well as the inclusion of researcher-generated photography in go-along interviews are depicted. Secondly, section 4.2 addresses the access to the field and applied sampling strategy before the empirical implementation of go-along interviews is elaborated in the third part (section 4.3). Fourth, an insight into the data gathered during fieldwork (section 4.4) and its subsequent qualitative content analysis through abduction is provided for the reader in section 4.4. The chapter concludes with addressing methodological challenges encountered in the field, as well as reflecting on the researchers' own positionality (section 4.5).

## 4.1 Qualitative go-along interviews

Mobile interview techniques or walking methods have received growing interest in social sciences and are being increasingly used to investigate place-based meanings, everyday life practices, and people's encounters with landscape (Macpherson, 2016: 425; Kühl, 2016; Hein et al., 2008). As Carpiano (2009: 263; brackets adjusted by author) points out, "the 'go-along' interview method is a variation on qualitative interviewing techniques that has great utility [...] for exploring — and subsequently improving understanding of — peoples' experiences of their local residential context". Thereby, perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of an environment are investigated simultaneously to spontaneous interaction with the latter (Kusenbach, 2003; Sattlegger et al., 2023). Walking methodologies such as go-along interviews (hereafter 'go-along') increasingly emerged in the scope of the 'new mobilities paradigm'<sup>4</sup> (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 208) and have been particularly applied in research areas of health and wellbeing (cf. Carpiano, 2009), in the field of urban planning and neighborhood studies (cf. Kusenbach, 2003), landscape and leisure research (cf. Burns et al., 2020; Sattlegger et al., 2023), and feminist, more-than-representational theory inspired work (Macpherson, 2016; Teff-Seker et al., 2022). Although walking interviews do not present a novel research method in themselves, implementing them in protected areas to identify grounded and embodied (relational) values constitute a rather unique approach (Teff-Seker et al., 2022: 3; see also Dick, 2022, and Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020).

Go-alongs present a hybrid method combining interview techniques with participatory observation (Evans & Jones, 2011). In contrast to sedentary interviews, go-alongs consist of on-site interviews and may be implemented as 'walk-along' on foot, or as 'ride-along' by bike or car (Carpiano, 2009: 264; Bergeron et al., 2014: 10). They all have in common that the researcher "is walked through' people's lived experiences" of their surroundings, whether this contains people's familiar neighborhood, natural areas or a local park (Carpiano, 2009: 264). When actively 'going along', the conversation between interviewee and interviewer is frequently guided by a semi-structured or problem-centered interview guideline (Sattlegger et al., 2023). This enables the researcher to set thematic stimuli while still providing the interviewee with space to narrate on the loose (ibid). As opposed to stationary interviews, both the interviewer and interviewee become research participants who bodily experience and go along (Hein et al., 2008; Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020). While the degree of the researchers' involvement during the exercise may vary, interview participants often proceed as 'tour guides' by leading the walk (Bergeron et al., 2014: 110). In this sense, the interviewer usually follows the interviewee through his or her lived experiences in a specific spatial context (Carpiano, 2009). This challenges traditional 'expert' driven research and holds the potential for empowering visitors or park rangers as research participants in the scope of this thesis (Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020).

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, Kusenbach (2003: 456) highlights five themes for which go-alongs are particularly eligible: "(1) environmental perception; (2) spatial practices; (3) biographies; (4) the social architecture; (5) social realms". For this thesis, all five themes pointed out by Kusenbach (2003) and further developed by Carpiano (2009: 264) seem to be of direct meaning, when it comes to the examination of embodied experiences in nature, and the identification of values derived from relationships with nature. Beginning with environmental perception, it is a people's knowledge and associated values which shape their experience of social and physical environments (ibid). However, this experience is linked to the spatial practice performed in these environments, meaning the way in which people engage in the respective environment (Carpiano, 2009: 264). The linkages between biography and place, or what Kusenbach (2003) refers to as biographies, shape a persons' lived experiences and memories situated at a

---

<sup>4</sup> The 'new mobilities paradigm' refers to a turn in thinking within social research where scientists are particularly interested in studying different types of *mobility* within society (Hein et al., 2008). The paradigm emerged as a response to social research done in an 'a-mobile' manner and undermines static or "*sedentarist theories*" existent in studies in the field of geography, anthropology, and sociology (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 208). In doing so, it questions imaginations of 'spatially fixed geographical containers' for social processes (ibid). A stronger relational emphasis on movements in and between spaces, and the practices and meanings attached by its subjectivities in these spaces evoked varying mobile ethnographic research methods (ibid; Hein et al., 2008).

specific place, and guides the various forms of relationships unfolded in and with particular natural surroundings, described as the social architecture of natural settings. Indeed, being in a particular spatial setting through go-alongs, people may more easily reflect on their own experience and relation towards their environment, thus better explain their emotions and meanings ascribed to that place (Kühl, 2016: 35). Go-alongs as embodied walking may disclose how people “sense place and movement, and construct emotional geographies” (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 216). Finally, the place itself is of importance, as it affects the nature of interaction between people (social realm) as well as non-human actors in the environmental setting (ibid; Carpiano, 2009). In this sense, go-alongs entail a ‘three-way conversation’ between the place one is walking along, the researcher, and the participant (Hall et al., 2006 in: Moles, 2008).

Hence, and in line with Bergeron et al. (2014: 110), I argue that the go-along approach is particularly suitable for this research project as it presents an “innovative, flexible and original way of identifying landscape values” based on people’s embodied experiences of being in nature. Furthermore, conducting such a “walking-the-talking” approach enables the establishment of direct relations to the surrounding environment by research participants, thus inducing place-bound narratives of landscape perception and values (Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020: 238). Go-alongs provide a means of inquiring embodied experiences and spatial practice ‘in the moment’, thus creating information not only based on “the memory and sentiment of the participant” but also informed by in-situ observations and interactions of both the researcher and participant with their environment (Burns et al., 2020: 52). The participatory and place-based style of go-alongs may result in an increased traceability of participants’ individual relationship with nature and the development of relational values through everyday practices and interactions grounded in the specific natural setting (Sattlegger et al., 2023).

Yet, as critically pointed out by Macpherson (2016: 425), go-alongs open up particular relational spaces of ‘people-landscape’ but may also close them down, as embodied dispositions and fitness, style and route of the walk, and cultural practices highly impact the outcome of mobile interview techniques. As such, taking part in go-alongs implies the physical ability of participants to access relevant places through walking which essentially excludes people with reduced mobility from the research (Kühl, 2016). Applying the very interview method thus calls for acknowledging that go-alongs do not simply disclose people’s experiences and perceptions but “walking and the walker’s bodies bring with them their own politics, cultures, histories, habitual responses, and lived experiences” that need to be considered in the research process (Macpherson, 2016: 426). According to Lykke and Jantzen (2013), one should also take into account that go-alongs may “de-naturalize” the experience of interview participants in natural environments as they probably behave in ways they would not in absence of the researcher. The methodological challenges arising from such an in-situ, mobile interview technique shall be discussed more thoroughly in section 4.5, addressing some of the downsides of go-alongs directly in relation to the case study of this thesis.

#### **4.1.1 Go-alongs as paired interviews and the co-construction of meaning**

During the initial phase of fieldwork, it turned out to be a frequent pattern that people usually seem to visit the park in pairs or smaller groups of three to four persons. As a consequence, the majority of go-along interviews with park visitors were conducted in pairs and only three of thirteen go-alongs related to traditional one-to-one interviews (cf. table 1). Hence, it seemed to be valuable to look into paired interview techniques within the scope of go-alongs. In contrast to group discussions and focus group interviews (Flick, 2010: 248) this technique has received relatively little attention in qualitative research. Originally developed in the 1970s (Wilson et al., 2016: 1551), paired interviewing or joint interviewing is commonly understood as one researcher conducting an interview with two interview participants together (Wilson et al., 2016). According to Wilson et al., (2016: 1551), paired in depth interviews “involve the researcher interviewing two people at the same time and in the same place so that the two interviewees can interact during the interview”. Furthermore, participants should ideally engage in the discussion of interview questions as equitably as possible (ibid).

Paired go-along interviews considerably influenced the dynamic and atmosphere of conversations during the fieldwork and opened up new questions about the relation between interviewer and interviewees as well as between interviewees themselves. Based on a *constructionist* and *postmodern* conception of interviewing, Depperman (2013) and Roulston (2010) consider the latter as a situated practice, in which social structures of meaning are produced by interviewers and interviewees together through performative action at a specific moment of time. Therefore, representations of interview findings are always “partial, arbitrary, and situational” (Roulston, 2010: 220). While this certainly applies to various types of interview techniques, paired interviews especially highlighted how common meaning is *negotiated* between interviewees themselves, and between interviewees and the researcher, as thoughts, opinions and actions of interviewees were shaped, influenced, and inspired by each other. Moreover, interviews are thus “moments of socially embodied practice, in which participants position themselves within an in situ constituted space” (Depperman, 2013: 32). In contrast to an often monologic narrative produced in one-to-one interviews, processes of constructing social realities take frequently place in shared stories between research participants (Flick, 2010: 248).

Taking one step further, Roulston (2010: 220) argues in his transformative conception of interviews, how the interviewer and interviewees “develop ‘transformed’ or ‘enlightened’ understandings as an outcome of dialogical interaction”. Regarding the fieldwork in the SNP, dialogical interactions resulting in vivid discussions and ‘new’ thoughts were observed in several paired interviews. In this sense, paired interviews may be characterized as an interactive and sometimes synergistic meaning-making process (Wilson et al., 2016). As the authors point out, these dynamics particularly occur in paired interviews, where both participants share a pre-established relationship (Wilson et al., 2016).

However, interviews in pairs may also cause and have indeed induced new challenges during the fieldwork. In fact, asymmetrical power relations between two interviewees sometimes hindered an equal participation of both persons in the interview. Wilson et al., (2016) indicate that especially within a dyad, processes of domination in conversation may arise. As much as paired interviews can gain information richness through filling each other’s gaps, relationships between participants also lead to information loss, as specific issues might not be addressed by one interviewee in front of the other (Wilson et al., 2016). During fieldwork, this was observed exemplary in a paired interview, where two male friends in their 20s were asked to describe the feelings or emotions they have when being in nature. While this certainly consists of the subjective perception of the researcher and might have been perceived differently by research participants, the interviewees seemed to feel embarrassed when talking about their feelings in front of each other and stayed on a rather superficial level of conversation.

#### **4.1.2 Establishing a problem-centered interview guideline**

To identify different perceptions, experiences, and values during the go-alongs, a problem-centered interview approach was chosen. The problem-centered interview (PCI) originally developed by Witzel (1985) is particularly valuable, if specific questions focused on a particular (societal) topic want to be investigated. As such, PCIs represent a “qualitative, discursive-dialogic method of reconstructing knowledge about relevant problems” (Witzel & Reiter, 2012: 4). As the authors clarify, the ‘problem’ in problem-centered interviews is not meant to be ‘problematic’ but rather refer to a specific research question (ibid). Besides, the focus on a socially relevant problem has also practical implications, as “all strategies and activities – ranging from access to the field to forms of communication – are oriented systematically, but flexibly, towards the *research problem*” (Witzel & Reiter, 2012: 5; italics in original). ‘Centering’ the research problem should by no means be understood as a strict thematic limitation of the topic but aims for encouraging and supporting the interview partner in the reconstruction of meaning regarding the research problem (ibid). Hence, the interview is based on guiding questions which should stimulate in depth answers by the interviewee. Although PCI are more structured and focused compared to narrative interviews, the interview is less bound to an interview guideline than other guided interview techniques (Witzel, 1985; Flick, 2010: 210). As such, the interview guideline serves to support the narrative strand developed by the

interviewee in a trustful dialogue with the interviewer (ibid). Questions should thus be formulated openly, and oriented towards research as a process.

Based on the problem-centered approach proposed by Witzel (1958) and Witzel & Reiter (2012), two interview guidelines were developed for go-along interviews with visitors, and park members, consisting of *opening questions* and possible *follow-up questions*. As Witzel & Reiter (2012: 11) point out, the interplay of these types of questions “constitute the heart of the PCI and form a complex unity of strategies of interaction and communication with the purpose of facilitating a process of discursive-dialogic<sup>5</sup> knowledge production”. As the guideline for both visitors and members of the park focused on the same research problem, they consisted of predominantly similar or equal interview questions. However, interview questions for park members contained a stronger focus on their working experience within the SNP. After the establishment of a raw version of interview guidelines, two test interviews were conducted to gain a more detailed and hands-on idea of the interview process and usability of interview guidelines itself. In contrast to the actual go-along interviews within the SNP, test interviews were implemented in urban and suburban natural areas located in participants’ neighborhoods. Yet, the test interviewing followed the same procedure as interviews at the final research site and provided useful insights into the design and arrangement of questions, as well as the handling with technical equipment for the actual interviews. Based on the experience and feedback gained in test interviews, both interview guidelines were revised. The latter started with an opening question, followed by stimuli-questions structured in seven thematic blocks: *relation to place; conception and meaning of nature; conception and meaning of wild(er)ness; emotions and memories; human-nature relationship; influence of Covid-19 pandemic; change and future*. Each thematic block entailed possible follow-up questions. The interview guideline ended with some closing remarks and a small questionnaire to collect socio-demographic information about the research participants (cf. appendix).

#### 4.1.3 Researcher generated photography and the use of GPS in go-alongs

In addition to interview transcripts, go-alongs are frequently complemented through visual methods such as photo elicitation, photo-voice approaches or researcher generated photographs (Bergeron et al., 2014; Kühl, 2016). As such, Weber and John (2019) argue that the inclusion of photographic documentation facilitates the communication of collected perceptions and experiences during the interviews which would otherwise be difficult to explain verbally. Depending on the specific setting and research purpose, photographs can be taken by interview participants or the researchers themselves (Carpiano, 2009; Bergeron et al., 2014). However, the idea of using photographs as representations of material social realities is bound to the understanding that “images are part of the discursive production of geographical knowledge” (Münderlein et al., 2019: 519; translated by author). Moreover, they present important means in the discursive construction of places and the allocation of values and meanings to the latter (Rose, 2002). As photographs in social science are considered to be “*made* rather than *taken*, its meaning constructed rather than discovered”, the choice of researcher generated images holds implications for the subsequent interpretation of the visual material gathered in the scope of this fieldwork (Langmann & Pick, 2018: 7). The question of who *makes* the photography is thus of critical importance when entering the research field (Langmann & Pick, 2018). In the following, researcher-generated photography shall be briefly explained, as the method is applied in go-alongs conducted for this research.

Researcher-driven photography approaches seem to be less often employed in contrast to research-participant produced images such as through photo-voice (Langmann & Pick, 2018). Nevertheless, Langmann and Pick (2018: 22) grappled exactly with researcher-generated photography and developed a

---

<sup>5</sup> In their work on the problem-centered interview Witzel & Reiter (2012: 18f; italics in original) describe a discursive dialogue as the process in which “the researchers’ *prior* knowledge meets the respondents’ *practical knowledge*”. The authors refer to the *discursive* character of the dialogue, as the exchange between interviewer and interviewee refine the researchers’ *social scientific constructs* in a dialogue with the respondents’ *common-sense constructs* (ibid).

photography practice they referred to as ‘snapshot’ approach. According to the authors, capturing images in the field through the very approach is characterized by a certain “*spontaneity* of the occasion” where the researcher takes pictures quickly, unplanned and with minimal prearrangement (ibid). This may be the case, if participants suddenly spot something in their surrounding which is of special meaning to them, or if they refer to specific elements in the landscape walked through. Usually, these encounters between participants and the environment in a particular moment may not be predicted by the researcher. Hence, the snapshot approach essentially aims to emphasize on the immediate relationship with the subject in the field, creating a recollection about the phenomenon of interest in an authentic manner without being biased by pre-established, fixed ideas about the latter (Langmann & Pick, 2018: 23). This may result in both a single image focusing on a particular aspect of the subject or a series of photographs also providing insights into the subject’s surroundings (ibid).

Aside from photographs, go-alongs may also produce quantitative spatial data through the simultaneous practice of walking and talking. By using Global Positioning System (GPS), walking routes can be tracked and illustrated in maps through Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, thus adding contextual information to narrative stories (Evans & Jones, 2011; Bergeron et al., 2014). Similarly, geotagged images captured during go-alongs provide an additional layer of information and can be included within maps (ibid). In doing so, place-based gathered verbal and visual knowledge during the interviews is not only depicted cartographically but it enables a more nuanced discussion of people’s encounters with their environment as situated practices (Bell et al., 2015). Besides, the resulting photographs also function as ‘visual field notes’ for the researcher’s reflection on the fieldwork, as they trigger memories associated with individual interviews by the researcher. This can be especially valuable in the process of data analysis, and facilitates the interpretation and contextualization of both participants’ knowledge and the researcher’s perceptions.

## 4.2 Access to the field and sampling

As discussed in chapter 2 and illustrated in figure 1, the SNP consists of different valleys distributed over the four municipalities Val Müstair, S-chanf, Scuol, and Zernez. The equally named village Zernez presents one of the main starting points for accessing the park and fieldwork was mostly planned out from the village. This turned out to be particularly useful, as it allowed a close exchange with the SNP staff working at Zernez, as well as enabled me to quickly reach out for several hiking routes located in the area of the Ofenpass. Hence, the sites around Il Fuorn also represent the places where most go-along interviews took place. However, the valleys Trupchun and Val Mingèr accessible from the villages S-chanf and S-charl respectively were also included for the fieldwork, as they are usually visited by a relatively high number of visitors (Poelsma, 2020; Brunner, 2020). Further, the sites for implementing go-along interviews were chosen based on recommendations by park members and results of the visitor monitoring, which has been conducted regularly by the park management (Brunner, 2020). During the peak season (summer and fall break), the valleys Trupchun, Champlönch, Val da Stabelchod, La Schera, Margun Grimmels, Val da Botsch, and Cluozza present the most frequently attended sites within the SNP (Brunner, 2020: 2). Additionally, the level of difficulty regarding hiking trails was considered as a deciding factor when finding suitable routes for interviewing visitors. Go-along interviews with visitors were generally played out on hiking trails ranging from easy (Swiss hiking level T1) to medium hiking trails (Swiss hiking level T3) in order to possibly approach different types of hikers. A detailed overview of all go-along routes with visitors of the park is provided in table 1.

As the data encompasses interviews with both visitors as well as park members, the sampling process slightly differed between the two groups of research participants. However, for both samples, a purposeful sampling approach was applied which aims to select ‘information-rich’ cases related to a phenomenon of interest (Patton, 1990). According to Patton (2002: 230), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful

sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations". There exist several different strategies for a purposeful selection of information-rich cases (Patton, 1990). As for park visitors, a combination of criterion and opportunistic sampling was applied, whereas park members were approached based on snowball sampling. Subsequently both sampling strategies will be explained briefly.

**Table 1.** Sampling overview of park visitors and selected sample characteristics.

Interview number	Gender	Age	Profession	Place of residence	Number of visits in SNP	Go-along site
I 01	female	61	teacher	urban	first time	Stabelchod –
	male	64	teacher	urban	first time	Il Fuorn
I 02	female	36	HR-manager	urban	often*	Val Trupchun
	female	60	teacher	agglomeration	often	
I 03	male	27	IT	urban	first time	Val Mingèr
I 04	female	22	student	agglomeration	two	Munt la Schera – Buffalora
I 05	female	25	theater pedagogy	urban	first time	Munt la Schera – Alp la Schera
	male	35	engineer	urban	first time	
I 06	female	26	architectural draftswoman	urban	often	Champlönch
	male	28	architect	urban	often	
I 07	female	32	social pedagogy	urban	first time	Champlönch
	male	32	project manager pharma	urban	first time	
I 08	male	30	IT	urban	one	Grimmels –
	male	28	development engineer	urban	first time	Vallun Margun
I 09	female	24	teaching assistant	urban	one	Val da Botsch
	male	25	gardener	urban	first time	
I 10	female	22	student	urban	first time	Munt la Schera –
	male	27	event manager	urban	first time	Alp la Schera
I 11	female	30	teacher	rural	often	Vallun Margun
	male	30	banker	rural	often	
I 12	female	41	finance / IT	urban	first time	Val Trupchun
I 13	female	40	communication	urban	three	Champlönch –
	female	41	businesswoman	urban	two	Il Fuorn

\* 'often' equals more than three visits of the SNP within one year.

Criterion sampling is a convenient sampling strategy, if information-rich cases meet some predefined criteria that are important for addressing the research problem. Moreover, criterion sampling can be useful to identify cases from previous quantitative studies for an in-depth discussion (Patton, 1990). Indeed, a quantitative visitor survey conducted during summer 2020 in the SNP (Poelsma, 2020) served as a basis for defining the sample criteria at least in the initial phase of fieldwork. As I was interested in 'new' visitor types which have been potentially motivated in their visit of the park through the Covid-19 pandemic, the parks' visitor survey built a central starting point for identifying characteristics describing such new visitor profiles. As previously discussed in chapter 1, especially less well equipped and experienced, younger people between 21 and 40 years were observed by the park as a relatively increased visitor group (cf. Poelsma, 2020; Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021). Hence, the age of visitors represented a first decisive criterion for selecting interviewees. As summarized in table 1, 18 of 23 participants fell into the particular age group. Within this age group, I aimed to reach sample variation regarding participant's profession, place of residence, and number of previous visits in the SNP. Besides, only people who have been living in Switzerland since the beginning of the pandemic were chosen as interview participants. Swiss residency as

selection criteria was considered to be necessary, as Covid-19 restriction measures varied across countries and might have influenced the touristic behavior of people differently compared to Swiss park visitors.

However, as first experiences and conversations with park members during the fieldwork indicated that visitor behavior seemed to shift towards pre-covid times, I decided to also follow an opportunistic sampling strategy in the second phase of fieldwork. The strategy is often applied “to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities after fieldwork has begun” (Patton, 1990: 179). Hence, opportunistic sampling allows the sample to evolve during the process of data collection and “takes advantage of whatever unfolds as it unfolds” (ibid). This decision to extend the sample composition has been supported by the fact that changes of nature and wilderness perceptions during the Covid-19 pandemic do not have to be experienced exclusively by ‘covid-motivated’ visitors fitting into a ‘new visitor profile’. In contrast, regular visitors described too how their own experience of being in nature has been changed. Although gender does not play a specific role within my research, I aimed for an equal proportion between female and male participants.

The technique of snowball sampling uses information of ‘key informants’ about possible information-rich cases in the field (Patton, 1990; Suri, 2011). Applied on the sampling of park members, two persons served as initial ‘informants’ and suggested different park members as information-rich cases for the interviews. While person 1 was itself a member of the park and stayed in close contact with me for the whole fieldwork phase, person 2 had no direct connection to the park, but knew a park member through personal relations. In order to include different information-rich cases, it was explicitly the aim to find park members working in varying fields of responsibility regarding the SNP. Based on the snowball technique, the final sample consisted of seven park members, two of them engaging in park research, three people actively working in the nature protection management (including park rangers), and two conducting excursions and partaking in voluntary work. Participants either live in urban surroundings or in adjoining municipalities of the park and are relatively balanced regarding their gender (three female interviewees and four male interviewees). In contrast to a predominantly young sample group of park visitors, interviewed members of the park were at an age between 30 and 64 years.<sup>6</sup>

### 4.3 ‘Going along’ in the SNP

When it comes to the implementation of go-alongs in the field, the fundamental decision whether the walking route is determined by the interviewer or the interviewee must be made by the researcher (Evans & Jones, 2011). Applying the method of go-alongs in the SNP, interviews were conducted on pre-given hiking trails within the park. While both park visitors and park members chose their route by themselves, the procedure of go-alongs slightly differed between the two samples. Due to the parks’ given trails and behavioral rules, visitors’ movements in the park were clearly guided by the infrastructure of the SNP. Yet, they could freely pick their hiking route and were approached by the researcher directly in the field without any agreement beforehand. It turned out to be a useful strategy to reach out to visitors at the official resting places, which were almost always located in the middle of hiking routes. Thus, visitors already had the opportunity to experience the park on their own, before sharing their impressions during the interview. In this sense, interviewees chose their walking route by themselves, however, the researchers’ decision of approaching visitors at particular sites in the SNP had an influence at which routes go-alongs were conducted. As for park members, the interviews were pre-agreed, and participants fully decided about the time and locality of the planned go-alongs.

It is worthwhile to note that park members were quite familiar with the place of implementation as go-alongs were conducted before, during, or after their daily work in the SNP. In contrast, at least first-time visitors were considered to be unacquainted with the research site. As the familiarity with the place and the

---

<sup>6</sup> To assure anonymity of park members who participated in go-along interviews, the sample characteristics are not illustrated in further detail, as the park team is constituted by a rather small group of involved people.

degree of whether walking routes are predetermined by the interviewer or interviewee affect the authenticity of the conversation and embodied interaction happening in the field, as well as the (dis)empowerment felt by research participants (Evans & Jones, 2011), the different dynamics of go-alongs with visitors and park members will be reflected upon in section 4.5. Besides, the perceived differences in familiarity with the SNP, the assumed influence of the parks' infrastructure (e.g., pre-given trails, behavior rules of the park), and the degree of determination regarding interviewer- or interviewee-led go-along routes between diverse research participants are qualitatively illustrated in figure 5.

The following procedure regarding go-alongs relates to both sample groups. After introducing myself, the aim of my research and idea of the go-along, visitors as well as park members were asked for their consent regarding the recording of the interviews. To inform participants about the very research project, the process of interviewing, data storage and analysis as well as publication, an informational letter was handed out (cf. appendix). With regard to introducing the interview method to participants, the latter were explicitly encouraged to take the lead of the walk and to determine the rhythm and walking speed similar to as they would do in a normal hiking situation without the researcher's presence. Further, they were informed to decide for themselves when to take a break and the possibility to end the interview at any point of time. Depending on the hiking route, weather conditions, the walking speed of interviewees and their will and ability to engage in an in-depth conversation, go-alongs lasted approximately between 40 minutes and 2 hours, with a median of 50 minutes for go-alongs with visitors and 105 minutes with park members.

The recording itself was implemented by using a recorder app on the smartphone and a small microphone (RØDE microphone) with a windshield for an improved quality of sound. During the interviews, go-along routes were tracked with a GPS tracker (GPS Logger for Android) combined with an active GPS application integrated in the smartphone. The specific GPS tracker was selected based on the successful usage in test interviews and its ability to track geographical location points offline, thus being especially eligible for mountainous terrain. The choice of GPS tracker was further informed by a study carried out by Martini (2020) which specifically addresses the usage of GPS and GIS for mobile methods such as walk-along. As walking routes were limited to pre-given trails of the park and those are included within open access maps (e.g., swisstopo), checking the accuracy of tracked routes was relatively straightforward. Through including GPS in go-alongs, research participants generated geographical data through their simultaneous action of walking and talking but were not actively involved in the creation of the resulting maps (Evans & Jones, 2011). Consequently, the participatory involvement of interviewees refers rather to the practice of go-alongs itself than to the production of maps.

Additionally, researcher generated photography was applied to gain visual information directly related to participants' narrative interview content. Interviewees were advised to indicate whenever they would like to take a picture of something they encountered during the go-along. Whether it was suggested directly by participants or initiated by the interviewer itself, photographs were taken by the researcher either with a reflex camera (Nikon D3400) or the smartphone to capture important elements and moments in the landscape linked to participant's interview statements (e.g., landscape elements holding a special meaning for interviewees, elements described as particularly important related to participants' perception and experience, etc.). If park visitors took pictures for their own purposes, the researcher asked interviewees for the reason why they decided to visually capture the thing of interest.

#### 4.4 From raw data to abductive content analysis

The data gathered during fieldwork, and subsequently analyzed in order to discuss the research questions grounded in empirical data, contains transcripts of in-depth go-along interviews with park visitors and park members, postscripts providing contextual information about the conducted go-along interviews, as well as fieldnotes and memos including preliminary ideas and thoughts that arose during the process of data collection. Aside from textual data which will be analyzed using a qualitative abductive approach, go-along interviews produced rich visual data in form of georeferenced photographs and walking routes. For data processing, the collected interviews, photographs, and GPS-tracks were digitized and, where relevant, information was anonymized to guarantee participants' anonymity during data storage. In the following, the data processing of these different types of collected data will be expounded before elucidating on the analysis of interview transcripts in particular.

##### 4.4.1 Processing textual data – transcripts and postscripts

The transcripts of undertaken go-alongs constitute the main foundation of the subsequent analysis and thus lie at the core of this research. In total, the 20 interviews resulted in around 23½ hours audio material. All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and those conducted in dialect were translated from Swiss German into standard German. The single interview which was held in English was transcribed in the original language. Although transcripts rather represent a construction than depict the reality of a conversation, the process of transcription aims to preserve as much information covered in the interview as possible (Kruse, 2015: 352). To keep the richness of people's expressions and the meanings 'between the lines', interviews were transcribed close to the original statements and followed specific transcription guidelines, summarized in table 3.

**Table 2.** Transcription rules and special characters applied in interview transcripts (*composed by author; adapted by Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019: 42*)

Transcription character	Meaning
(uhm)	reflective expression
(loud)	(loud speaking)
(laughs), (groans)	non-verbal sounds and emotional expressions of interviewee(s)
(phone ringing)	interruptions during the interview
(walks carefully)	non-verbal actions during the interview
(unintelligible)	partial unintelligible audio section
\$	supporting sounds by the interviewer
(...) / (...) (...) (...)	short / long pause
[...]	comments by the interviewer about important or specific events and observations that occurred during the interview but are not covered by the voice recording

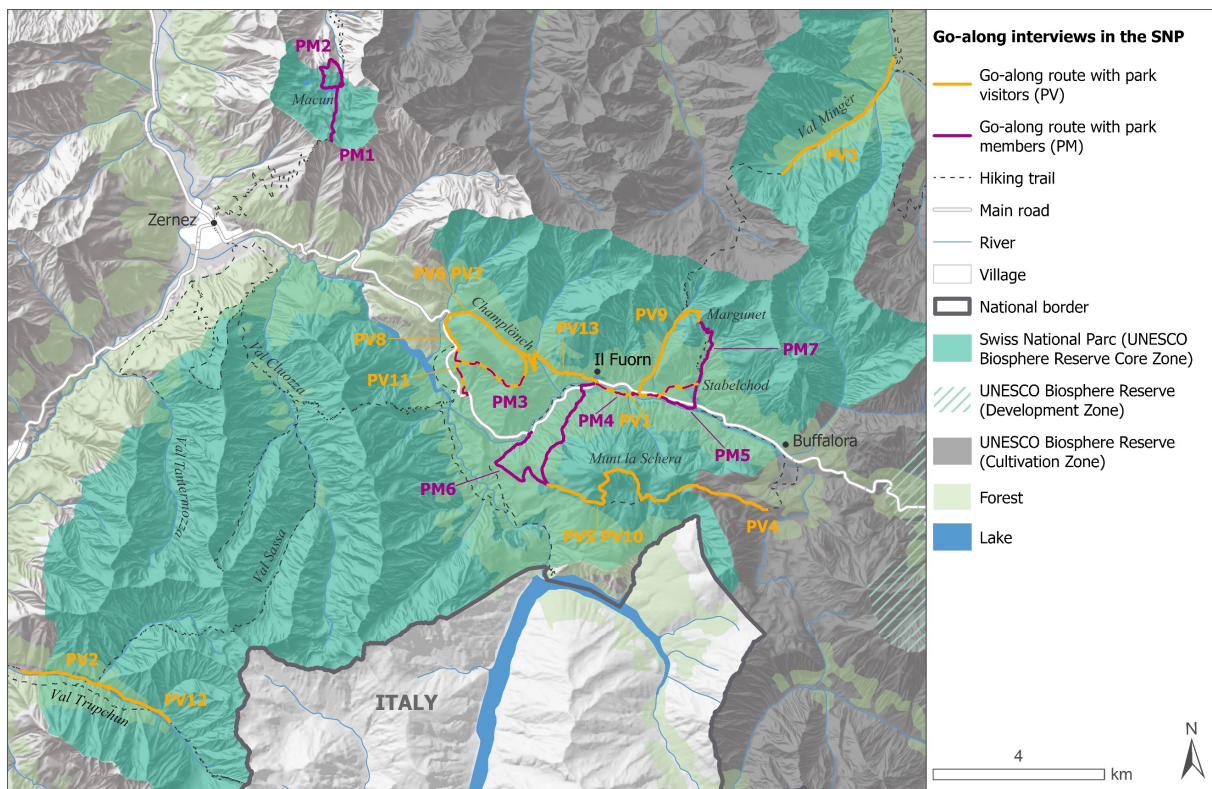
Hence, for this thesis, interview transcripts include non-verbal expressions as well as short comments by the interviewer regarding the surrounding conditions of each interview. However, these are not meant to substitute additional valuable information gathered in postscripts which provide more detailed context information of the interviews. For the transcription process, the software MAXQDA was chosen, as the same software was also used for the coding of transcripts and facilitated the subsequent evaluation. Exemplary quotations from interviews presented in the result section were translated into English for a better reading flow, while using back-translation into the original language to guarantee accuracy in sentence meaning.

Postscripts (post-communication description) were drafted by hand through the researcher directly after each go-along (Witzel & Reiter, 2012: 95). They comprise a collection of thoughts and immediate impressions about the external conditions during fieldwork (e.g., weather), the course of the respective go-along, the general atmosphere of conversation and go-along, the ways of speaking and mentioning particular themes of interest whilst sidestepping others through the interviewee, interactions between the

interviewee and the interviewer as well as between interviewee and the environment, challenges experienced during the interview, non-verbal characteristics observed about the interviewed person, and finally the emotional state of the researcher itself. Although not examined in the same manner as interview transcripts, these fieldnotes provided useful context information during the process of analysis and methodological reflection. As such, they supported the overall nexus of research findings (Witzel & Reiter, 2012).

#### 4.4.2 Processing visual data – GPS tracked go-along routes and photographs

The GPS tracked go-along routes were processed using GIS in order to visualize them in a map. Correspondingly, tracks recorded by the GPS Logger as delineations were converted to vector layers (polygon lines) in ArcGIS Pro. This allowed an improved handling of the generated spatial data and facilitated the cartographic illustration of go-alongs. Although the GPS tracked routes were not directly linked with interview statements of participants as it was done in other studies (e.g., Bell et al., 2015; Martini, 2020), they reveal the geographical distribution of conducted go-alongs in the SNP as well as the distance walked in the scope of the interviews (cf. figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Go-along interviews conducted with park visitors and park members in the SNP between July and October 2022. Few go-along interviews were partially performed on the same hiking trails. The respective overlapping routes are indicated through dashed lines in yellow and magenta (*composed by author; geodata copyright: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo, Federal Office for the Environment FOEN*).

Similarly, geo-tagged photographs captured through the researcher when going along with participants are considered as ‘secondary data’ in this thesis, thus primarily used for visualization purposes and the contextualization of interviewees’ responses. Yet, the combination of geo-tagged images and GPS tracks of go-alongs still enables to spatially locate specific interview statements, as together they indicate ‘landmarks’ in terms of content in the study site. For this reason, few exemplary maps were generated with the aim to situate narrative and figurative elements of go-alongs in their respective spatial context. The decision to include the visual (and spatial) data gathered during fieldwork mostly as a graphical presentation of specific

experiences and perceptions described in go-alongs was made particularly due to the limited time and capacity of carrying out a detailed and systematic image analysis in addition to the interview analysis in the scope of this thesis.

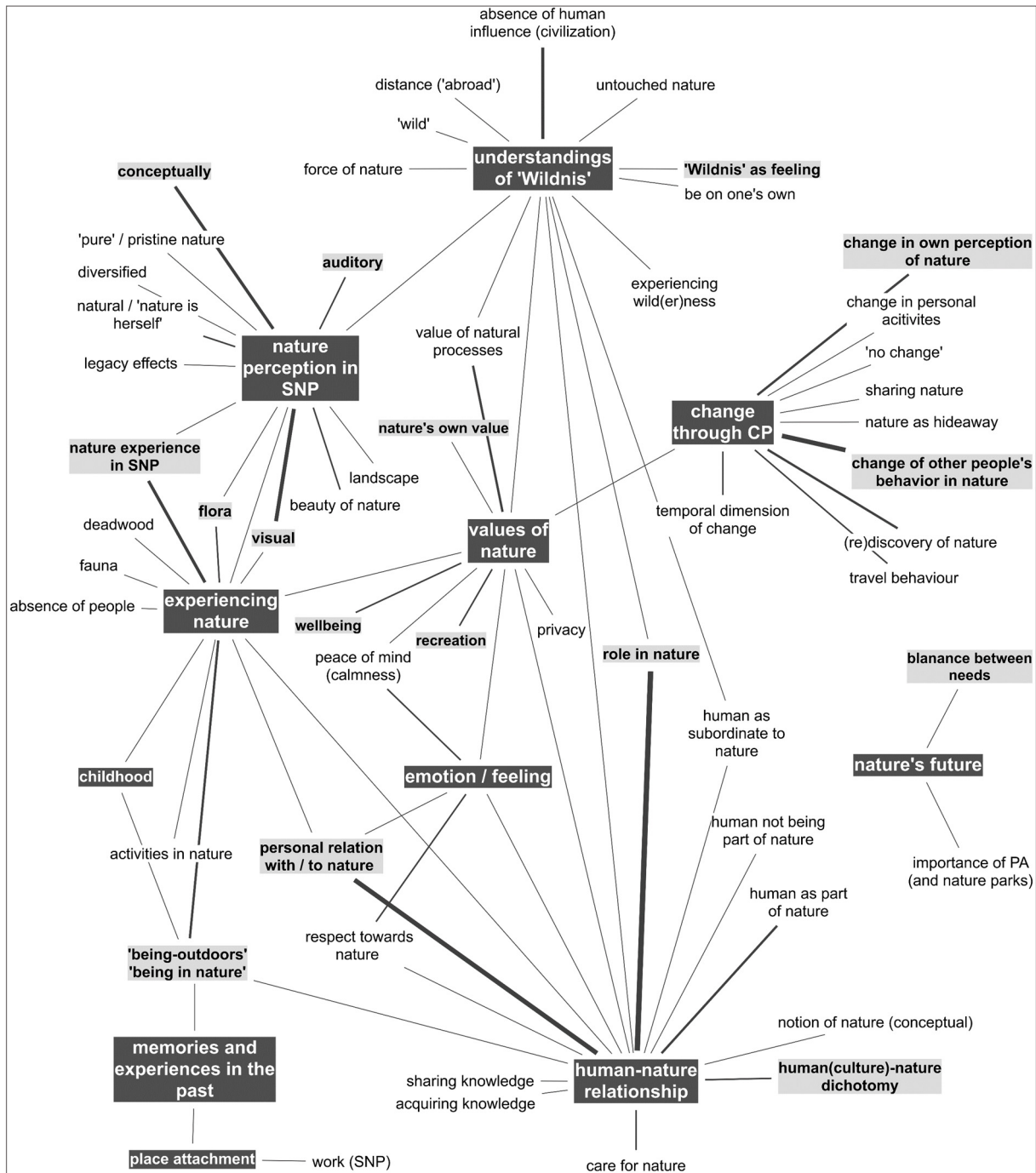
#### **4.4.3 Abductive Content Analysis**

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is a method applied to analyze qualitatively collected data in the form of verbal, written, or visual information (Dieckman, 2017). Thereby, QCA represents an analytical, interpretative understanding practice focusing on subjective experiences and perspectives (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Depending on the research interest and process, one may follow an inductive (e.g., data-driven, theory evolves out of empirical data), deductive (e.g., concept-driven, applies existing theories on empirical data), or abductive logic (e.g., combined, or complementary approach) (Graneheim et al., 2017: 30-31). Abductive Content Analysis (ACA) has been regarded as a suitable method for interview transcripts resulting from go-alongs as it allows best to attune to the research design earlier chosen in this thesis. The approach contains a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning (Graneheim et al., 2017) and goes well with problem-centered interview techniques. While the PCI is a theory-generating method that aims for neutralizing “the alleged contradiction between being directed by theory or being open-minded so that the interplay of inductive and deductive thinking contributes to increasing the user’s knowledge” (Witzel, 2000: 1), abductive data analysis similarly consists of a method to synergize an inductively generated understanding of empirical cases with a theory driven, deductive perception towards a comprehensible, theory expanded explanation (Reichertz, 2007). Hence, abduction presents a type of reasoning that starts investigating empirical data, followed by the consideration of all possible theoretical explanations for the very data (Charmaz, 2013). Reichertz (2003: 12; translated by author) argues that “[a]bduction is required within the research process when combinations of characteristics appear in the collected data for which no corresponding explanation or rule can be found in the already existing scientific body of knowledge”. If existing theoretical frameworks are incapable to account for empirical findings, abductive analysis allows the creative process of constructing new theory elements which provide an improved understanding of unexpected empirical patterns (Thompson, 2022: 1411; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Timmermans & Tavory, 2022).

The quality of ACA presenting a way of discovering new relationships in data (Witzel & Reiter, 2012) and leading towards a “tentative and subjective interpretative synthesis” (Hansen, 2008: 457) among the researcher’s sensitizing concepts was decisive in following the very approach of analysis in this thesis. Indeed, the theoretical concepts of relational values and embodiment constituted preliminary conceptual knowledge during the implementation of interviews, and guided the researcher’s interpretation of the collected data in line with the problem-centered fieldwork approach. Hence, interview transcripts were analyzed in an interplay between inductive thinking grounded in the actual data and deductive inspiration through the above-mentioned sensitizing concepts. Furthermore, the aim of abductive reasoning to identify and understand ‘surprising’ empirical patterns in the data especially seemed to fit well with the goal to explore Covid-19 pandemic related themes as the latter presented a less theoretically informed topic. In the following, the procedure of abductive analysis shall be expounded, namely the process of coding, the iterative establishment of a category system and the identification of themes.

The process of coding provides an in-depth engagement with the raw data and operates as a starting point for further analytical reasoning. In order to describe and interpret interviewees’ narratives, transcripts get analyzed through categorizing text segments by assigning them short, summative, meaningful names, thus producing content-related categories (Charmaz, 2013: 43). As the unit of data analyzed (e.g., words, sentence fragments, sentences, paragraphs) has an influence on the future interpretation, it remains important to define the latter (Charmaz, 2013). For this thesis, the data corpus to be coded consists of all 20 interview transcripts which were generally coded line by line. Whereas the smallest coding unit was determined as a word, the context in which it was looked at usually comprised sentence fragments or a few sentences.

The coding process itself was divided into an *initial* (also referred to as open coding), repetitive, largely inductive driven coding, followed by a *focused* coding and the identification of relationships between codes through *axial* coding (Charmaz, 2013).



**Figure 4. Category-relation-model visualizing co-occurrence between frequent categories and subcategories in interview transcripts.** The model illustrates how often two categories are assigned together on a transcribed segment (the categories overlap, but do not have to cover 100 percent of the same area in the transcript). Categories in dark gray boxes present the main categories established through ACA, the categories in light gray boxes and without boxes constitute respective subcategories (light gray boxes indicate the possibility of further division in sub-subcategories, whereas categories without boxes contain no additional subcategories). The lines between categories depict the relation between two categories, the thickness of the line shows the frequency of co-occurrence between respective categories (i.e., thick lines indicate high frequency), with a minimum of 10 overlapping relations. For an improved readability, co-occurrence lines are drawn exclusively between main categories and subcategories, thus not visualizing co-occurrences between subcategories themselves. Besides, the simplified model focuses on most frequent categories and excludes less often occurring (sub)-subcategories (*composed by author with MAXQDA software*).

As such, *initial* coding was applied to scrutinize transcripts for the first time and assign codes close to the actual data, resulting in several ‘in vivo codes’ which reflected interviewee participants’ own terms (ibid). Yet, based on the problem-centered interview guideline, few deductive codes were applied already in the initial coding phase. During *focused* coding, the data was analyzed in a more directed and conceptual manner, with the aim to crystallize frequent or important codes that can be used to analytically categorize the data as concisely as possible. Subsequently, codes were selected and categorized based on their relation to each other through *axial coding*, building categories and subcategories which incorporate both a manifest and more abstract level of content (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). This allows to explore and uncover connections between categories. The interplay between inductive and deductive thinking in ACA turned out to be especially beneficial for axial coding as the interest lies in the process of setting categories at different abstract levels in relation to each other (Flick, 2010). However, the different steps in coding were not entirely separate from each other but sometimes applied concomitantly. In the scope of this thesis, five interview transcripts were analyzed comparatively through the three coding processes, resulting in a system of categories and subcategories. Categories most frequently occurring during the coding process and the relation between these different categories are visualized in figure 4. This system was largely used for coding the remaining transcripts. Yet, whenever new codes or resultant categories emerged, already coded transcripts were reviewed, and the coding got adjusted.

Finally, based on categories, themes may emerge on a higher conceptual dimension of analysis, describing more latent or implicit meaning of the data (ibid). As pointed out by Morse (2008: 727), “a theme [...] is a meaningful ‘essence’ that runs through data”. Frequently, themes are considered to cross several categories as a ‘red thread’ but can be difficult to identify because of their conceptual complexity (Graneheim et al., 2017). Whereas themes can arise inductively, the process of developing the latter is often influenced by the conceptual perspective taken in the scope of research questions. Indeed, themes emanating throughout the transcripts are clearly informed by the theoretical concepts of nature and wild(er)ness, human-nature relationships, and embodiment. Table 4 exemplifies categories and respective subcategories frequently found in transcripts, illustrated with sample quotes from both visitors and park members.

**Table 3.** Exemplary categories developed through ACA. Selection of frequent categories and subcategories identified in both visitors’ and park members’ transcripts, and sample quotes corresponding to respective subcategories. Whether the category emerged inductively or deductively is indicated in brackets. Related underlying themes are listed as well.

Theme	Category	Subcategory	Sample quote
Embodied experience	Nature perception in the SNP (deductive)	Haptic (inductive)	“So, the stone is a stone, you feel it on the sole of your foot. I don’t know, the thistle that scratches you is just a thistle, the wind is just there. So, it’s all real.” (PV9:66)
	Value of nature (deductive)	Wellbeing (inductive)	“Well, I always find that it (being in nature) contributes somewhat to well-being.” (PV6:45)
Humans’ place in nature	‘Wildnis’ as feeling (inductive)	‘Be on one’s own’ (inductive)	“If you’re all by yourself somewhere in the middle of nowhere.” (PV12:125)
	Understandings of ‘Wildnis’ (deductive)	Absence of human influence/ civilization (inductive)	“For me, ‘Wildnis’ is nature without people. And as soon as too many people go in and want to experience this ‘Wildnis’, ‘Wildnis’ is no longer wild.” (PM4:23)
Self-People-Nature	Personal relation with/ to nature (deductive)	Care for nature (deductive)	“So, we are careful, we take uhm, how do you say it, yes, care. You have to look after it.” (PV2:89)
	Change of other people’s behavior in nature (inductive)	(Re)discovery of nature (inductive)	“Well yes, I can just imagine that there are a lot of people who have rediscovered it (nature) somehow a little bit.” (PV6:63)

## 4.5 Methodological reflections

Far from being always straightforward and ‘going according to the plan’, enlightening and surprising moments are as much part of research as unforeseen events and challenges experienced through the researcher as well as research participants. This chapter is dedicated to some reflections on the research design, including go-alongs as the chosen method of data collection (section 4.5.1), the sampling process (section 4.5.2), and the researcher’s positionality (section 4.5.3).

### 4.5.1 Producing collaborative in-situ knowledge in unknown terrains – strengths and challenges of the go-along

Go-alongs presented a unique approach in researching people’s experiences of being in nature, and perceptions and meanings of nature and wild(er)ness, as the researcher becomes a research participant who bodily “go and tag” along in the field together with research participants (Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020: 439). Similar to other studies that applied go-alongs outdoors (Kühl, 2016; Burns et al., 2020) the interview technique was considered to be particularly valuable to capture participants’ subjective encounters in real time during the fieldwork of this thesis. Being actively ‘out there’ in the field allowed an interaction between interviewees and their environment, thus triggering participants’ thoughts, memories, and emotions. This often but not always resulted in rich, in-depth, and situated content shared with the researcher. Besides, through ‘hiking along’ in the SNP, participants seemed to be inspired by immediate observations and experiences in nature which may have supported authentic narrative descriptions and sometimes brought forward surprising outcomes.

Further, a recurring feature of conducted interviews was the development of a reflective mode where both interviewee and interviewer naturally started to reflect on their own understandings and way of making sense when going along. The potential of go-alongs to initiate a process of reflection and formation of thoughts is especially useful to receive a more thorough understanding of people’s underlying motivation, beliefs, and otherwise hidden rationales. Yet it highlights once more the co-construction of knowledge in go-alongs through its collaborative approach as well as the possibility of a conversation to lead towards a new synthesis of ideas (Sattlegger et al., 2023). Using the words of Anderson (2004: 260; text in brackets adjusted by author), by going along through an environment, “we [the researcher and participant] are able to create worlds of knowledge (or pathways of knowledge through the world) by talking meanings and understandings into existence”.

The nature of participatory, collaborative knowledge emerging through go-alongs gained additional relevance, as interviews with park visitors were predominantly conducted with pairs. In this sense, the construction and communication of ideas of one interview participant were assumably not only influenced by the researcher’s presence but also by the second participant and the relationship between the two interviewees (cf. section 4.1.1). Although one might think that interviews with pairs would result in extended information, this was not necessarily the case in this thesis. Rather, it often felt difficult to enter a less superficial level of conversation with interview pairs compared to a one-to-one talk with single interview participants. This seemed to be partially linked to the ability or incapacity to build a trustful atmosphere with participating visitor-pairs. In contrast to conversations with single interview participants, it seemed to be harder for visitors in pairs to get into the go-along and engage with the researcher. In return, it also consisted of a challenge to get involved with both participants equally as a researcher, without leaving someone behind. However, in some cases, having a familiar person around when participating in a go-along with the researcher as a complete stranger could have provided pair interviewees with a sense of security and habituality. This in turn positively influenced the atmosphere of conversation and broadened the insights gained through the researcher.

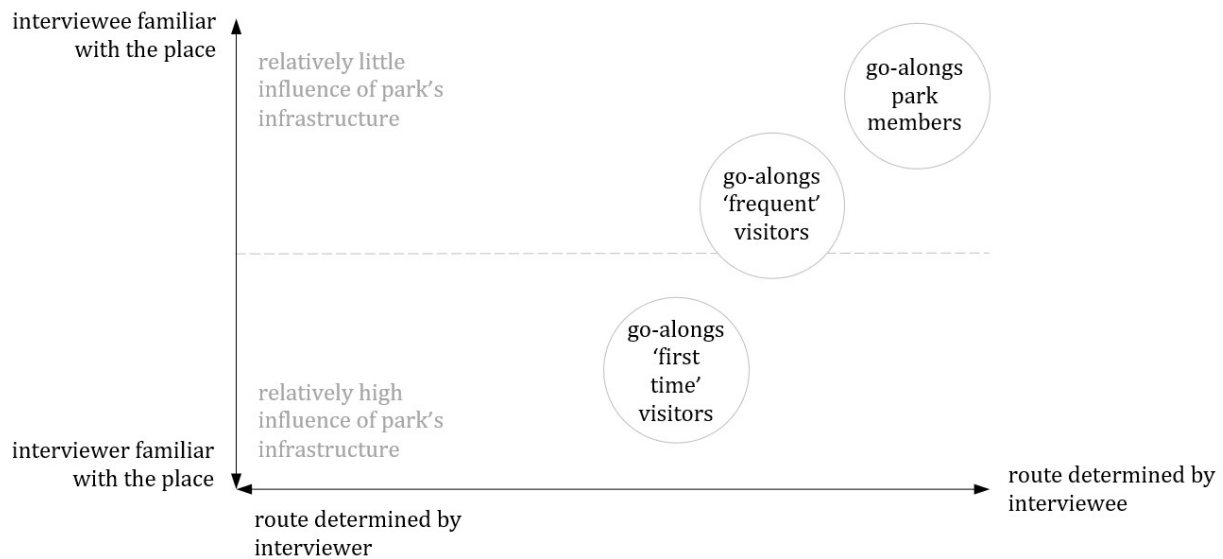
Due to the method’s collaborative and participatory nature, the researcher at least partially leaves the comfort zone of researcher-led, predetermined research setting and needs to navigate through multiple

'unknown terrains' (Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020: 438). As the authors indicate, these unknown terrains can be related to the unpredictability being inherent in nature-based research setting, the sociality of go-alongs, the (dis)empowerment evolving out of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and embodiment in go-alongs (Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020). Indeed similar 'unknown terrains' were experienced during this fieldwork which are reflected upon in the following. Concerning the unpredictable nature of nature, it turned out that the successful implementation of go-alongs is – not surprisingly – highly weather dependent. The alpine environment of the research site and quick changes in weather added a sense of uncertainty regarding the planning and realization of go-alongs. Whereas there were in general relatively stable and good weather conditions for taking part in outdoor activities during the whole fieldwork phase, there was the need to previously check for each day whether hiking trails were accessible or not. Unexpected shifts in weather such as sudden rainfalls or storms also led to the shortening of one go-along, as well as the unfamiliar situation when the researcher finds herself borrowing a jacket kindly offered by a participant.

This leads towards the unknown terrain of embodiment. Depending on the chosen route for go-alongs, steeper hiking trails were physically tiring and interrupted or hindered a fluent conversation as concentration was no longer directed to the interview but to the terrain. This particularly poses an additional challenge for the interviewer, who anyway needs to concentrate on a range of things such as keeping track with the interview guideline, the content of talk, the recording and taking of photographs, as well as your own walking. Yet, the shared bodily experience of what Duedahl and Blichfeldt (2020: 447) describe as go-along embodiments (e.g., sweating, freezing, etc.) between researcher and participant sometimes created a feeling of 'being in the same boat', thus facilitating the built of a trustful relationship. On the other hand, differences in fitness and (un)familiarity of hiking also revealed insecurities and unintended feelings of embarrassment experienced by research participants, thus influencing the way of socially engaging with the researcher or second interviewee. Moreover, as Macpherson (2016: 429) points out, the terrain itself as well as the rhythm and style of walking influence our experience of the environment and content of thoughts. Taking part in physical activities outdoors are likely to show 'mood enhancing effects', thus provoking a feeling of wellbeing and overall positive stance when going along (Macpherson, 2016: 30). Whereas these subtle affecting dynamics were difficult to grasp and evaluate, it demands the awareness that the methodological choice of go-alongs was likely to produce positive dispositions and may have resulted in the unconscious exclusion of less positive thoughts by interviewees (ibid).

Empowerment of research partners is frequently discussed as a particular strength of the go-along approach, as the interviewee ideally participates actively in the walk by determining the route, speed, and rhythm of the interview (Kusenbach, 2003; Evans & Jones, 2011; Duedahl & Blichfeldt, 2020; Santo-Tomás Muro et al., 2020). However, the experienced empowerment can vary based on the degree of route guidance, familiarity with the place, and characteristics of the place itself. In regard to conducted go-alongs in the SNP, the felt empowerment by visitors and park members might have differed. Or, conversely, the experienced disempowerment of the researcher was higher in go-alongs with park members. This traces back to the process of reaching out to park members as research participants in a scheduled, predictable manner, the planning of interview beforehand, the strong familiarity of park members with the area as their daily place of work (and leisure) and their general sense of place, the relative unfamiliarity of the researcher, and the clear determination of go-along routes by interviewees. Further, the empowerment of park members was strengthened through their possibility to leave pre-given hiking trails, thus being less restricted by the parks' infrastructure and able to decide more freely where to go along (while still complying with their duties and obligations in the park). Therefore, go-alongs implemented with park members represent so-called 'natural go-alongs' as described by Kusenbach (2003).

On the contrary, visitors participating in go-alongs are considered to have felt less empowered than park members. Yet, this might differ between first time and regular visitors in the sense, as some participants frequently attending the park showed a more established sense of place, were familiar with different hiking routes and were approached on their favorite hiking trail. Hence, although the go-along was not prearranged, the research was guided by the interviewees more clearly than by first time visitors.



**Figure 5.** Qualitative typology of conducted go-alongs. Differences regarding the familiarity with the place of interview implementation, the influence of the park's infrastructure, and the degree of guidance by the interviewer or interviewee during the walk between first time visitors, frequent visitors, and park members (*composed by author; adapted from Evans & Jones, 2011: 850*).

Indeed, depending on the person's hiking experience and sense of direction, it was difficult for the researcher to not take over the lead of the walk. For instance, one go-along interview was conducted on a hiking path covered with debris and the interviewee subsequently struggled in finding the way, thus resulting in a clear guidance through the researcher. This challenge was particularly experienced towards the end of fieldwork, where the researcher gained an improved knowledge of locality. A qualitative typology of conducted go-alongs regarding the potential of participants' empowerment is illustrated in figure 5. Nonetheless, the above discussion on the experienced (dis)empowerment of research participants is exclusively based on the researcher's subjective perception, which is itself influenced through the researcher's position in the field.

#### 4.5.2 The challenge of a 'new visitor type' and retrospective

The potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on people's perception of nature and how this might have influenced values derived from their relationship with nature takes a substantial part of this thesis. Yet, to investigate this issue in the field became a challenge for itself mostly on account of three reasons: the intricacy of finding the 'right' interview participants; a partially retrospective perspective on the question of interest; a subtle dynamic being inherent in participants' responses.

As delineated in section 4.2, sampling characteristics used as a guidance to approach suitable research participants in the field were based on a previously conducted quantitative survey in the SNP (cf. Poelsma, 2020). However, to find covid-motivated park visitors fitting into what has been referred to as 'new type' of visitors was not exactly straightforward. Whereas interviewees were successfully selected according to the sample characteristics of age and gender, it was difficult to assess a person's experience in hiking or outdoor activities in nature more generally based on his or her appearance. Although observing a lack in hiking equipment sometimes gave a hint towards less familiarity with outdoor sports, this certainly was not always and sometimes even the contrarian case. Indeed, as it will be discussed in the results of this thesis, buying 'proper equipment' such as branded hiking clothing was mentioned by research participants as a phenomenon associated with people who were newly attracted to activities in nature through the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, with approaching park visitors based on their hiking equipment and behavior, the highly non-desirable problem of stereotyping people into certain subjective imaginations of what does or does not make a 'hiker' arose. In fact, this experience actually seemed to uncover the existence

of what one could call a 'hiking stereotype', meaning that this opens up a field where certain people belong, and others do not.

Trying to find as many different interview participants as possible regarding their experience, the final sample of visitors consisted of first time as well as recurring park visitors. Yet, most of the latter were considered to have had at least some experience in outdoor activities and being in nature independently of the Covid-19 pandemic. Apart from that, it seemed that the amount of park visitors that could belong to such a new visitor type declined in summer 2022 in contrast to the previous two years. This was not only reported by other visitors who participated in interviews but also by park members (cf. chapter 5, results). However, one should carefully regard these findings, as they are based on the subjective perception of interview participants and are not documented through sociodemographic data. The qualitative impression of the above-mentioned decline in a certain group of park visitors may be related to a general decrease in visitor numbers in 2022 according to the parks' visitor monitoring results (Blass, 2022).

Regarding participants' appraisal on how their perception of nature has been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to consider that their answers might be partially biased by the retrospective nature of interview questions being asked. One may argue that a certain retrospective nature is almost always immanent in people's stories where their memories of past experiences become entangled with present perceptions, emotions, and actions. As pointed out in a study on the impact of retrospective affective reports in leisure context by Ito et al. (2019: 48), affective experiences can be captured through retrospective research as reliable as through a direct experiencing sampling method. Yet, moment- and memory-based perceptions frequently appear to differ in leisure contexts (ibid; Dobson et al., 2021). Whether this is somehow related to the very retrospective or not, changes in nature perception due to the Covid-19 pandemic reported by interviewees (park visitors as well as park members) seemed to be subtle and sometimes 'hidden' in reports where participants rather talked about the behavior of other people than themselves (cf. chapter 5, results). It is for this reason that it felt difficult to gain a differentiated and more thorough understanding of people's personal potentially changed perception of nature.

On a more general level of discussion, the visitor sampling of this thesis includes particular people and excludes others. Aside from the need of a certain physical fitness to access and move around in the SNP, the ability to visit the park is also dependent on the temporal capacity and financial position to afford traffic costs arising from the arrival (and departure). Further, one seems to be in a rather privileged position to be able to practice outdoor sports or experiencing nature for recreational purposes more generally. As illustrated in table 1 visualizing the sample characteristics of visitors, most participants possess a high educational background, working in medium or high wage economic sections.

### **4.5.3 Positionality**

Conducting fieldwork in the SNP and producing, interpreting, and expressing situated knowledge in the scope of this Master's thesis also calls for reflecting on my own positionality. As Donna Haraway claimed, "situated knowledge is local, partial, and embodied" and thus always a product of the context it developed (Haraway, 1988; in: Kobayashi, 2009: 138). The way we approach the research field and engage with research participants, make sense of experiences, and understand practices and relations is shaped by our identity (Giampapa & Lamoureux, 2011: 128). Using the words of Kobayashi (2009: 139), "both researcher and subject, knower and known, are embodied, positioned and empowered within specific landscaped". Hence, the following sections shall elucidate reflections on my own positionality as a researcher in relation to my research partners as well as the field site as such.

Growing up and living in an urban environment has certainly influenced my relation to and understanding of 'nature', as rural and particularly alpine landscapes always fascinated me from an aesthetic and corporal-sensual point of view amongst ecological aspects. As a person 'close to nature', I frequently haunt local nature parks and natural recreational spaces and visited the SNP for leisure purposes

as well as within the scope of my studies before the actual fieldwork period. As I actively participated in go-along interviews and appropriated the SNP similar to regular visitors, I partially considered myself in an insider position from the perspective of visitors. Yet, I gained only a few insights into local perceptions and opinions towards the park as well as attitudes of park members themselves before staying for a longer time in the SNP region. Thus, I rather perceived and still think of myself as an outsider regarding the SNP as a study site integrated in a particular local context. This resulted in an insider-outsider position, depending on the scale and space focused upon. In this sense, and on grounds of the chosen research method, I was “actively taking part in the system of knowledge being studied,” but not experiencing “the world in the same terms” as my research partners (Tresch, 2001: 303).

To take the role of a researcher within the SNP not only changed my own position within the park and experience of nature but both influenced my relation to other visitors as well as members of the park. While my own experiences as a visitor of nature parks served as a common ground for building a trustful relationship with actual visitors of the SNP, my position as a researcher also led to a distant relation between park visitors and myself. This was particularly the case, when visitors tended to directly associate me with park members and interests held by the park itself. Although this was rather the exception than the rule, I experienced situations where interview participants did not stick to the code of conduct provided by the park management (e.g., leaving the hiking trail, taking a footbath in the river). Interestingly, but not surprisingly, I never got confronted with these kinds of ‘wrongdoings’, when wearing the parks’ official research jacket. Yet, I usually did go-along interviews without the recognizable research jacket, as the constant reminder of talking to someone associated with the park might have hindered participants from engaging in a relaxed and open talking atmosphere. Hence, I believe that the communication of my own position and interests as a young student conducting fieldwork for my studies were fundamental for steering the interaction with both park visitors and members of the park management and avoiding uncomfortable situations for both interview participants and the interviewer.

As a white, cis, able-bodied Swiss woman, who is usually well-equipped regarding hiking material when engaging in outdoor activities, I am in the privileged position to fit imaginations of a ‘Swiss female hiker’, thus having ‘the right kind of body’ for appropriating these particular spaces without getting confronted with feelings of ‘not belonging’ or ‘otherness’. Yet, especially in the beginning of the fieldwork process, I felt more confident asking female participants to share their thoughts and experiences in an interview. This feeling led me to more wittingly approach male hikers in the field, as I was worried to be biased in the sampling process based on my own gender. My physical wellbeing as part of my positionality became especially relevant, as I was able to access hiking trails at different degrees of difficulty within the park, while others have been excluded as the parks’ infrastructure does not satisfy their needs.

Although I am familiar with cultural structures and norms in Switzerland, my communication skills were limited to Swiss German, High German, and English which hampered the inclusion of perceptions and values held by potential research partners speaking different languages. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to conduct an interview with a person living in the French speaking part of Switzerland, however, this was only feasible due to the person’s willingness and ability to participate in English. As restrictions through the COVID-19 pandemic strongly varied between different cantons, people’s experiences with outdoor spaces and relation to nature during the pandemic might have differed between the French, Italian or German speaking part of Switzerland. As I had only limited options to include some of these peoples’ perceptions of and their values attached to nature and wild(er)ness because of my own positionality, it became even more important to carefully consider to what extent the latter influenced the in- or exclusion of particular voices during the research process.

My background in human geography and interest in political ecology have especially sensitized me towards different conceptual approaches to nature and wild(er)ness, and questions of inclusion and participation of various actors involved within conservation projects. While I considered this Master’s thesis as a possibility to engage exactly with such potentially different views, I was also curious on how my position as a researcher has been influenced by these intersecting or conflicting values and interests. Indeed, when conceptually and empirically approaching diverse notions of nature, and asking my research

participants to engage with the very question of nature's meaning to themselves, it became only natural to reflect upon these questions for myself. Yet, drawing to a close of this Master's thesis, I still struggle to find an ultimate answer to what nature, or wild(er)ness means to me personally. Hence, the following thoughts are neither concluding nor fix, but shall provide a brief insight into some of my reflections during fieldwork.

Whether I consider myself in the position of a researcher or as a person doing outdoor activities in leisure time undoubtedly affects my understanding of 'nature' and point of view. The dilemma of feeling somewhere between conceptual explanations and the actual embodied personal experience when 'being in nature' was something I frequently encountered during hikes on my own in the scope of fieldwork. As such, walking on a rocky, steep trail surrounded by alpine, wild vegetation was no longer solely a moment of physical exertion, aesthetic appreciation of a wild, beautiful scenery, and feeling of joy and ease, but changed to a reflection on how this lived experience shapes my personal interpretation of nature as much as my imaginations of *wild* and *beautiful* landscapes might be embedded in specific cultural discourses. Indeed, I believe that the entanglement of our embodied interactions with nature's materiality (e.g., a tree as a biological being) and our socially constructed meanings about nature (e.g., an urban park framed or not framed as nature) shapes in how we understand 'nature'. Hence, I consider nature to be material, embodied, and constructed, as well as ultimately pluralistic, context-specific, and subjective. Moreover, as Keune et al. (2022: 37) nicely point out, "defining nature is a value-laden task" and different definitions may influence individual behavior as well as affect political actions. Yet, working with the approach of relational values presented a way for me, to make these different, sometimes co-existing personal and societal meanings and underlying values of nature visible, and more comprehensible in respective contexts.

Turning from nature towards wild(er)ness, I paradoxically find myself as a non-Indigenous, European researcher trying to identify and interpret other people's imaginations and values stemming from an equal or similar (Western) cultural background, while simultaneously, I aim for critically grapple with Western conceptions of wilderness and alternative forms of understanding the latter. In this regard, I must concede that my knowledge on different, non-Western ideas about wild(er)ness (as well as nature) is primarily academic and thus inevitably limited. As I was less familiar with the concept of wild(er)ness than notions about nature previous to this research project, I felt more inspired, surprised, but also irritated by thoughts of interview participants regarding this topic. Thus, my personal conception about wild(er)ness has been influenced more obviously through the research process. In particular, I gained an awareness of how colonial ways of thinking still seemed to be entangled with my own, sometimes romanticized imaginations of '*Wildnis*', especially when associating the latter with places described in the sense of *wild*, *remote*, *untouched*. However, I believe that, from a critical human geography perspective, this somehow alarming cognition was enlightening and important in the process of developing my own understanding of wild(er)ness and my examination with decolonial approaches on a more general level of discussion.

## Chapter 5

# Results

### Exploring embodied experiences, perceptions, and values of nature and wild(er)ness in the Swiss National Park

---

The following chapter provides a detailed and comprehensive presentation of research findings emerging from the ACA. Key results are selective and focus primarily on discussing the very research questions. The findings shall reveal an insight into research participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings of nature and wild(er)ness. As (relational) values deriving from their relationship with nature constitute a major interest of this thesis, they will be addressed in both the presentation of results (implicitly) and the subsequent discussion (explicitly). Some of these values are pointed out by participants directly, others seem to be more hidden in interviewees' stories and entangled with complex people-people-nature relations. Hence, this chapter begins by articulating participants' experiences and perceptions and aims for educating values from nature, wild(er)ness, and human-nature relationships. This provides the basis for discussing the identified values more thoroughly in chapter 6 with reference to the existing theoretical framework of intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values.

Moreover, the actual results are depicted close to interviewees' narratives and roughly structured according to the category system established through ACA (section 4.4.3). Results are summarized in short textual explanations and underpinned with meaningful exemplary transcribed passages from interviews. Images produced through researcher-generated photography and maps of individual go-alongs aim for contextualizing the knowledge arising from interviews visually and geographically, and are included for paradigmatic purposes. Through the nature of both SNP related and more general interview questions, research findings are not exclusively restricted to in-situ experiences in the park but also partially disclose place independent thoughts of interviewees. Whether patterns of argumentation refer to the SNP in specific or need to be considered in a broader spatial context is indicated in the respective result subsections.

This chapter starts by expounding experiences in nature more generally, such as 'being in nature' or 'being outdoors' as an introductory and guiding element for subsequent results. Part of 'being in nature' in the SNP consists of participants' sensuous perception of the environment in the park, and emotions felt in encounters with nature, which are highlighted in the course of the first part. Secondly, nature's contribution to people – as described by participants – and other non-anthropocentric values associated with nature are delineated in the following section 5.2. Interviewees' descriptions of their relationship in and with nature, as well as their conceptualizations of humans' place in nature are presented in section 5.3. As imaginations of nature and wild(er)ness are far from being separated from each other, research participants' understanding of the latter are presented in section 5.3 and 5.4. The chapter concludes by addressing the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on participants' nature perception and associated opportunities and challenges for people and nature.

## 5.1 'Being in nature' – experiencing and perceiving nature

Research participants' experiences in, and perceptions of nature are closely intertwined and a range of different elements such as single sensory perceptions, more holistic, embodied experiences through encounters in the environment, engendered affective feelings and emotions, and activities related to 'being in nature' or 'being outdoors' influence how and what is perceived by interviewees. First and foremost, there is a common sense of experiencing nature through 'being in nature' or 'being outdoors', and experiences with or in nature are strongly associated with active movement in respective natural locations. Thus, a general underlying argument of experiencing nature shall be delineated first, before looking into visitors' and park members' site-specific sensory perception of nature and experienced emotions during their stay in the parks' nature. This seems to be relevant, as experiences in nature and particularly 'being in nature'/'being outdoors' also occur several times in interviewees' lines of argumentation regarding their relationship with nature, memories and past experiences, and values emerging through people-nature interactions (cf. figure 4).

Both visitors and park members primarily talk about 'being in nature' (e.g., PV1; PV3; PV7; PV11; PM6) or 'being outdoors' (e.g., PV3; PV6; PV7; PV11; PV13; PM2; PM4; PM7) as a means to experience nature. Especially the term 'outdoors' (in this thesis used as equivalent to the German word *'draussen'*) was frequently applied by participants in conversations regarding their experience of nature. For example, two park members state, "I like to be outdoors, I like to walk, I like to be on foot" (PM2:60), and "the other thing is that nature gives me a lot purely as a human being. I like to be outdoors [...]. But in principle, at least when the weather is nice (laughs) there is nothing better than being outdoors and as soon as you are outdoors and the human things don't dominate, that is also nature" (PM4:35). Though, the two terms can refer to slightly different meanings, as well as the meaning of the German word *'draussen'* is itself rather ambiguous. Indeed, 'being outdoors' may refer to engaging in activities outside of buildings, or activities in natural spaces. For the latter, 'being outdoors' seems to be often used as equivalent to 'being in nature', as it is mentioned by PV11: "outdoors in nature" (PV11:43). The diverse meanings of being outdoors and its relation to 'nature' may further be depicted in a shared experience of PM7:

*"And after all, you're outdoors every day, once a little more and once a little less. [...] I have a dog [...] so I can then still go with her into the forest, enjoy nature (laughs), let the dog run, she has to get tired. And then you're actually always outdoors. I have a big garden; I like to do that very much."* (PM7:80)

In above quotation 'being outdoors' consists of both nature in the *forest*, as well as nature in the *garden*. In a few cases, such as in the above-mentioned statement of PM4, being outdoors as a way to experience nature gets particularized by a specific understanding of nature (i.e., 'human things do not dominate'). Yet, these terms arose naturally and unconsciously in interviews and were rather not specified by interviewees.

Secondly, 'being in nature' or 'being outdoors' are related to physical activities in nature, which lead to a sense of active movement accompanying experiences in and of nature according to interviewees. As such, PV3 argues that engaging with nature also comes along with "being allowed or having to do something a little bit, getting some physical exercise" (PV3:14), and another visitor explains, "as I said, we like to be outdoors a lot, I like to bike, I also liked to do high altitude tours. We have a VW bus where we actually try to go out into nature as much as possible, and yes, camping or tenting or something" (PV7:25). Likewise, experiencing nature is linked to corporeal movement in the subsequent narration:

*"So of course, I find it most beautiful to walk in nature, so I also like to sit somewhere and enjoy it that way. But I think it's nice when I can move around in nature. And when I'm thinking about something now, then I know I can go running somewhere where there's a forest, or a meadow or a mossy area, yes, it really doesn't matter what it looks like exactly."* (PM6:52)

Activities associated with being outdoors or being in nature and thus serve as a means to experience nature mostly include jogging (e.g., PV3; PV5; PV7), hiking (e.g., PV2; PV4; PV5; PV7; PV11; PV13; PM6; PM7),

climbing (e.g., PV8), biking (e.g., PV5; PV7), swimming (e.g., PV3), ski-touring (e.g., PV4; PV7; PM6), reading (e.g., PV3), camping (e.g., PV3; PV7), going on a mushroom foray (PM5), and hunting or fishing (PM2; PM5; PM7). The importance of more or less physical activity in experiencing nature links to corporeal and haptic perceptions of the environment and are connected with particular feelings of embodiment presented in section 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 respectively.

### 5.1.1 Sensory perception of nature in the SNP

During go-alongs in the park, participants perceived their environment with different senses. Whereas sight consists of the most prominent sensory perception of interviewees, they also engaged with their surroundings based on haptic, auditory, and olfactory senses. Frequently, a specific perception became a particular experience in the respective environment, resulting in no clear boundaries between 'perception' and 'experience'. For instance, the visual perception of wildlife constitutes also an experience of wildlife observation for PV2: "Simply the many animals that we saw, these animal observations, I found them unique" (PV2:55).

#### *The visual*

Visually, especially park visitors shared their perception of the *'beauty of nature'* in the SNP (e.g., PV1; PV2; PV3; PV5; PV7; PV8; PV9, PV12; PM3; PM6) the *landscape* in and around the park (e.g., PV1; PV2; PV4; PV6; PV13; PM2; PM3; PM6; PM7), *fauna*, and *flora* with particular focus on *deadwood* (e.g., PV1; PV6; PV7; PV8; PV9; PV12; PV13; PM1; PM2; PM3; PM6), the *view* (e.g., PV3; PV5; PV8; PV9; PV12; PV13; PM1; PM2), and an *absence of other people* (in the landscape) (e.g., PV3; PV4; PV6; PV8; PM1). The prominence of visual perception is highlighted in statements such as "it looks incredibly beautiful" (PV3:36), "[it is] very diverse to the eye" (PV5:39), and "oh look, there's an alpine aster. That's what I like, suddenly you see something again. That's what I find, nature is also 'seeing'" (PV1:46). Moreover, PM6 points to the role of sight in relation to other senses:

*"So, I am of course - like everyone - very much with the eyes on the move, which upsets me a bit, because you can perceive so much simply with the nose or the hearing. But we have a good sense of sight, and you'd almost have to force yourself not to look like that."* (PM6:33)

A sense of aesthetics in nature is pointed out in several visitors' descriptions, such as "just the beauty of nature" (PV3:34), or "but you can hardly get enough of it. [...] then you look away and then you look again and it's like 'Ah yes, it's actually really beautiful!'" (PV5:38). Further, this visual aesthetic perception is well pointed out by another visitor:

*"In general, it's really very beautiful here, so the nature is, ah, overwhelmingly beautiful, yes. [...] I always find it exciting; you can see how everything has been washed away or where glaciers flowed down or, um, exactly, water went through somewhere and where something erodes, and rocks come down and stuff (grins). I find that quite exciting. And yes, I find it extremely beautiful."* (PV5:21-23)

The appreciation of nature's beauty is also shared by PV5, who argues that "it's also just really beautiful, when you see it then, it's just more beautiful than anything humans do, because humans just can't make a landscape like that [...] it's just something that humans can't design themselves, stupidly speaking (laughs). If you think about it now, exactly. But it basically has a very high value" (PV5:82-83). Interestingly, the aforementioned statement by PV5 is not any longer entirely a description of aesthetic appreciation but the 'ability' of nature to create beautiful landscapes is of high value for PV5. However, it is important to notice that the visual aesthetic sensation is perceived regarding 'landscape', thus turning from nature to an understanding of landscape.

The visual perception of landscape in the SNP is shared by PV8 describing the landscape during the go along: “So, with this path everything is actually beautiful and at the bottom this flat - how should I describe it? - this flat plateau there is just super nice to look at” (PV8:42). The description of landscape versus nature is used by participants to describe perceived features on a larger scale or all-embracing. Indeed, one visitor explains, “I think for me it's a little bit special that it's such a bit of a barren and rugged landscape up here, and down below it has these beautiful forests where you have the root system. It has such different things in a rather small space” (PV4:9). A rather all-encompassing visual perception regarding landscape is implied by PM1 asserting “scenically it is extremely beautiful” (PM1:28). Aesthetic sensation of landscape and beauty of nature is also addressed in a statement by PV9 (28:48) in figure 6 illustrating the respective go-along and single photographs contextualizing the interviewee's statements.

Aside from aesthetic sensation, fauna and flora constitute a further part in participants' visual perception. Especially regarding the observation of fauna in the park, visual perception becomes intertwined with an experience particularly enabled in the SNP: “This nature experience that you can still experience animals so in free nature, right? The fact that you don't have to go to the zoo, I still find that very special” (PV2:44). The perception of wildlife does not have to be entirely visual, yet the visual observation was mentioned by interviewees as most obvious perception. This is also visible in the case of PV5 elaboration, “and then there are the beautiful little flowers, and then there are a lot of animals, and then you can discover them and so on” (PV5:28). Whereas PV1 shares her perception of flowers (i.e., “I especially like the flowers that you usually see” (PV1:24)), several visitors construe deadwood as something special in the park. For instance, PV9 particularly perceives “the left wood, dead wood” (PV9:27), and another visitor emphasizes in the following:

*“Well, what you surely notice a little bit, if you know other forests, is just, I mean, here are trees everywhere that have fallen down and everything, I say now. And [otherwise] they are somewhat tidy and here you just leave it.” (PV8:48)*

The visual perception of deadwood can also be found in conversations with park members, as exemplary illustrated in a geo-, and photo-referenced statement on the mapped go-along of PM6 in figure 8. Further, deadwood is perceived as a ‘wild’, ‘natural’ feature, and its role in the perception and understanding of wild(er)ness in the SNP will be presented in section 5.4.

Besides, the view and absence of other people in the park are visually perceived as positive. Regarding the latter, absence of people can also be perceived through other senses, although not explicitly described by participants. Regarding the view, PV12 mentions, “well, the mountains are just magnificent. There are places where the view is really beautiful” (PV12:45), and PV3 refers to “just beautiful views from nature” (PV3:14). Perceiving the view consists also of an experience and is related to a feeling of relaxation for PV13, thus adding elements of feeling and wellbeing to the primary visual perception:

*“And looking into the distance is something I always notice when I'm out somewhere in the mountains - it doesn't matter if I'm in a national park or somewhere else - that it's extremely beautiful and that you don't do that very often, that you look somewhere far away and it's somehow so relaxing, this looking into the distance.” (PV13:20)*

Similarly, the relatively small number of people being in the park presents a perception and an experience. As such, one visitor explains, “it's especially nice when there aren't too many people, because then I can take it [nature] in a little better. [...] I still find it nice when you don't meet people every few minutes” (PV6:9;105). This perception and feeling are shared by PV8 described in the following:

*“And what is now also, what I still find cool, is just a little bit what makes it special, it is now also not exactly overcrowded here. [...] It was special, or what was the case for us right now, that there was no one on the trail. You just stand there at the starting point, actually see the end and no one on the path, that is of course somehow beautiful in itself.” (PV8:24;44)*

As deadwood, the perceived absence of other people appears in interviewees' argumentation of wild(er)ness in the SNP and is delineated more thoroughly in section 5.4.

### ***The auditory and olfactory***

Aside from visual perception, auditory and olfactory impressions complement interviewees' experience in nature. This is shown in the statements "I enjoy the sound, the wind" (PV12:96), "Yes I especially find sounds and smells also belong to it of course" (PM5:48), and "I always hear the stream now, it's rushing and that's somehow also so relaxing" (PV2:55). The perception of quietness or natural sounds is considered to be relaxing and pleasant. The difference in sound is subsequently pointed out by PV13

*"And also sounds, so sounds and smells which are somehow completely different. Um it's extremely quiet, you really just hear like that, or if it's loud, well the street you still hear from time to time or it's maybe a loud stream or something like that, and it's kind of different sounds than normal. Yeah, it smells, it just smells everywhere, and it smells fine most of the time (laughs)."* (PV13:23)

Further, the perceived sounds of animals and insects are understood as indication for life in the respective surrounding and also as a means to reveal information about the environment which would otherwise stay hidden:

*"Here, too, you notice that it's like lively all around, so in the sense of you can hear, I'll say now, you can still hear a chirping, it still has some insect sounds."* (PV8:102)

*"When I hear, 'ah, there's a three-toed woodpecker back there', then I have an idea what kind of trees there are around here where this three-toed woodpecker can go and drink plant sap. And I don't have to see it at all. And I mean, you quickly don't see so much in a forest like this as soon as something is smaller."* (PM6:33)

Olfactory perception through participants also refers to specific smells described by them. As such, PV1 mentioned during the go-along, "oh there it smells nice, that's probably a flower that we saw" (PV1:65), and PM1 and PV9 both describe the smell in forests and wood: "But also when you are in the forest, where the smell of nature is even more intense. [...] I am very sensitive to smells and like the smells of nature" (PM1: 26;34), and "that's also a completely different scent when the wood is lying like that" (PV9:43).

### ***The haptic***

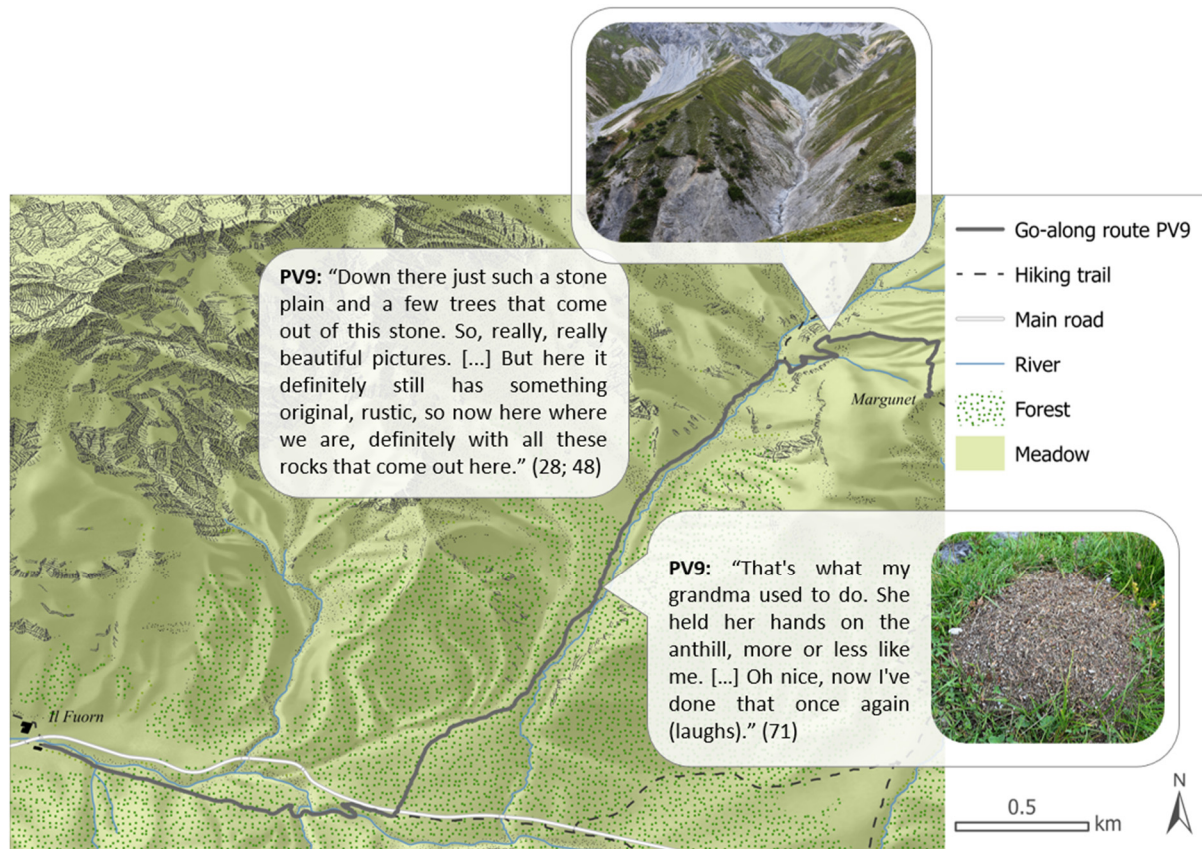
Whereas participants frequently perceive their environment visually, auditory, and olfactory, haptic perception occurs less often in interviewees' nature experience in the park compared to the other three senses. However, they may have implicit meaning in an all-embracing perception and less well definable experiences (e.g., 'embodied awareness' in section 5.2). Haptic, corporeal perception is mentioned regarding the felt temperatures during hikes by PV2 and PV12 (e.g., "a pleasant temperature" (PV2:57)), and by PV9 who describes, "at the beginning of our hike the ground was quite pleasant to step on, so slightly soft so between the firs" (PV9:32). In addition, the haptic perception (and olfactory) seems to be important in experiencing nature, as it reinforces a sense of realness to the respective visitor:

*"So, the stone is a stone, you feel it on the sole of your foot. I don't know, the thistle that scratches you is just a thistle, the wind is just there. So, it's all real, the tastes are natural, and I think this is noticed by both your senses, your soul, your spirit, however you look at it philosophically."* (PV9:66)

Interestingly, encounters with anthills constituted a recurring phenomenon during go-alongs with both visitors and members of the park and present a quite specific haptic experience in nature. This is exemplified by PV9 (71) in figure 6, where the visitor holds their hands upon the anthill to feel (and smell) the formic acid. Similarly, another visitor explains such an interaction with anthills:

*“Look, there’s another anthill. [my life partner] always holds his hand on it and then it stinks like this (laughs). He sticks his hand in and afterwards, when you take your hand away, it really stinks, it smells like acetone, doesn’t it? Exactly, these experiences you just can’t have inside, can you? And for me that was really incredibly important, that fulfilled me somehow.” (PV1: 48)*

More importantly though may be the fact that these haptic interactions in nature can engender memories and emotions shared with people that are important to the interviewees. Indeed, whereas PV9 is reminded on her grandmother, and PV1 associates these kinds of encounters with their life partner, a park member likewise remembers that “he touched an anthill as a child and remarked with a laugh that one should not actually do this, but that such things were associated with many beautiful experiences in nature” (PM3:10).



**Figure 6.** Conducted go-along interview with two park visitors (PV9) and exemplary georeferenced photographs with corresponding interview sections (composed by author; geodata copyright: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo).

### ***‘Interpretative perception’***

In contrast to a primary sensory perception, participants perceived nature in the SNP in a certain way, circumscribing nature with conceptual terms going beyond description but rather containing elements of interpretation. However, the perception of nature in park as “natural” (PV8:50), “pure/pristine” (e.g., PV1:26; PV9:48; PV2:21; PV13:25), “intact” (e.g., PV9:24), “diversified”, “not commercialized” (e.g., PV5:173), and as a “bubble” (PV8:67) are certainly based on sensory perception amongst other factors such as expectations and imaginations related with the park label. Moreover, these conceptual interpretations often also refer to the parks’ ‘landscape’, as participants describe a specific spatial area in or around the park. Whereas ‘nature’ and ‘landscape’ were used rather colloquially and sometimes even interchangeably by interviewees in conversations, descriptions of landscape usually referred to a particular segment of space in and around the SNP. Hence, interviewees’ perceptions of nature range from individual, small-scale non-human beings and objects (e.g., a tree, an animal, a stone) to specific places and landscapes which are spatially more extensive and all-encompassing.

In terms of 'natural', interviewees frequently refer to the perception that 'nature can be herself'. This is best visible in statements such as, "I actually like that nature here is as it simply is" (PV6:8), "that nature can simply 'be as it is', that natural processes can take place and that humans actually have little influence on the landscape and nature" (PM3:12), and "that you leave a relatively large piece of land to itself, to nature" (PM4:11). Ideas of pristine nature are linked to the sensory perception of 'wild features' in nature or landscape, as for example PV1 describes nature as "pristine, wild, archaic" (PV1:31), and the pristine character of mountains mentioned by PM4 (17) is dependent on the perceived absence of people in these mountainous landscapes.

The description of a diversified nature is related more obviously to the visual perception of variety in nature within the experienced landscape:

*"Actually [it is] quite diverse. [...] for me it has like two parts. One, I think, is this forest part. And on the other side there is [the part] where it is still dominated by all these erosion processes, gravitational processes, so where it is still very much in flux. [...] I think this very versatility also makes it somehow special."* (PV4:15)



**Figure 7.** 'Diversified nature' described in terms of perceived variety in landscape by a visitor in the park (PV4:15).

The relatedness of 'nature' and 'landscape' in participants' language also comes to the fore in the aforementioned description of PV4(15) amongst other quotations. Although the interviewee was asked to describe nature in the park, their perception includes different elements in the landscape walked through, thus not solely speaking of nature but also about the perceived landscape. Similarly, a 'diverse nature' is expressed by PV12 and PM1 in the context of landscape, describing a specific segment of space:

*"[...] it's nice because you know, each side is different. So, you enjoy it really in a different way. You see from this side you have fewer spectacular mountains, but then you have the valley, which is nice, then you have the red little guys [butterflies] that fly around."* (PV12:102)

*"But this place is special again because yes, because it has so many facets."* (PM1:28)

Perceptions of 'pure' or 'pristine', as well as 'intact' nature frequently overlapped with ideas about wild(er)ness and are thus presented in section 5.4. Besides, few visitors (PV2; PV4; PV5; PV7; PV9) point to the non-commercialization of nature (or landscape) in the park. Indeed, one visitor articulates, "what I also still find that one [makes] it as uncommercial as possible and just, for example, limits certain hiking trails" (PV5:173), and a second interviewee compares the park with other alpine places and argues that "the alpine kiosks, or the alpine inns, or everywhere this stopping in [at other places], that is also special here and I find that quite nice" (PV7:17). Likewise, PV9 appreciates the non-commercialization of nature:

*"And now since we've been up here, since our hike, the cool thing is that it doesn't seem so commercialized. So now it's not like, 'here's a shopping sale, here's the next alpine hut, here you can buy a beer for 12 francs', but if you didn't have anything with you now, you wouldn't have anything either. And I find that mostly or often even nicer than when everything is now fully paved with mountain railroads. That is always absolutely (laughs) the low point in such mountain regions, where you think 'it's actually a beautiful mountain' but then it is so much about money and profit." (PV9:29)*

While visitors describe nature in the SNP as being diversified, natural, pure, and not commercialized, they also perceive it as a 'bubble' or 'oasis', therefore ascribing nature in the park with different meaning than nature outside the SNP. Here, this specific perception and interpretation of nature seems to be influenced by the park label, where visitors entered the park with specific imaginations and expectations. As such, PV6 explains, "for me it somehow represents an oasis" (PV6:18), and another visitor comments on nature in the SNP as a bubble due to the parks' code of conduct: "I mean, you already have the sign at the beginning, so kind of you should not leave the trail. In that sense, it should be natural, nothing with a bike and so on, something like that. So, you know that you're entering a bit of a 'bubble' in a certain sense, right?" (PV8:67). The interpretative perception is underlined by statements such as "It is actually like a sphere of its own" (PV8:66), and "it's a little magical" as you cannot leave the path (PM5:46; cf. figure 9).

In contrast to the above interpretative perception of the 'natural', interviewees also described elements in nature (or landscape) as 'unnatural'. Elements considered to rather not belonging to nature in the park include the visibility of park infrastructure (e.g., PV3; PV6; PV8; PV9; PV13; PM1) such as hiking trails, picnic places, huts, and informational boards, the main road crossing the park (i.e., Ofenpassstrasse) which is perceived as visually and auditory disturbing (PV4; PV5; PV6; PV7; PV9; PV13; PM1; PM3), and finally the dam of Livigno (PV4; PV5; PM3). Interestingly, opinions about the unnaturalness of hiking trails diverge, as some visitors view the latter as a symbol of human design contrasting 'naturalness', whereas others compare them with natural deer crossings.

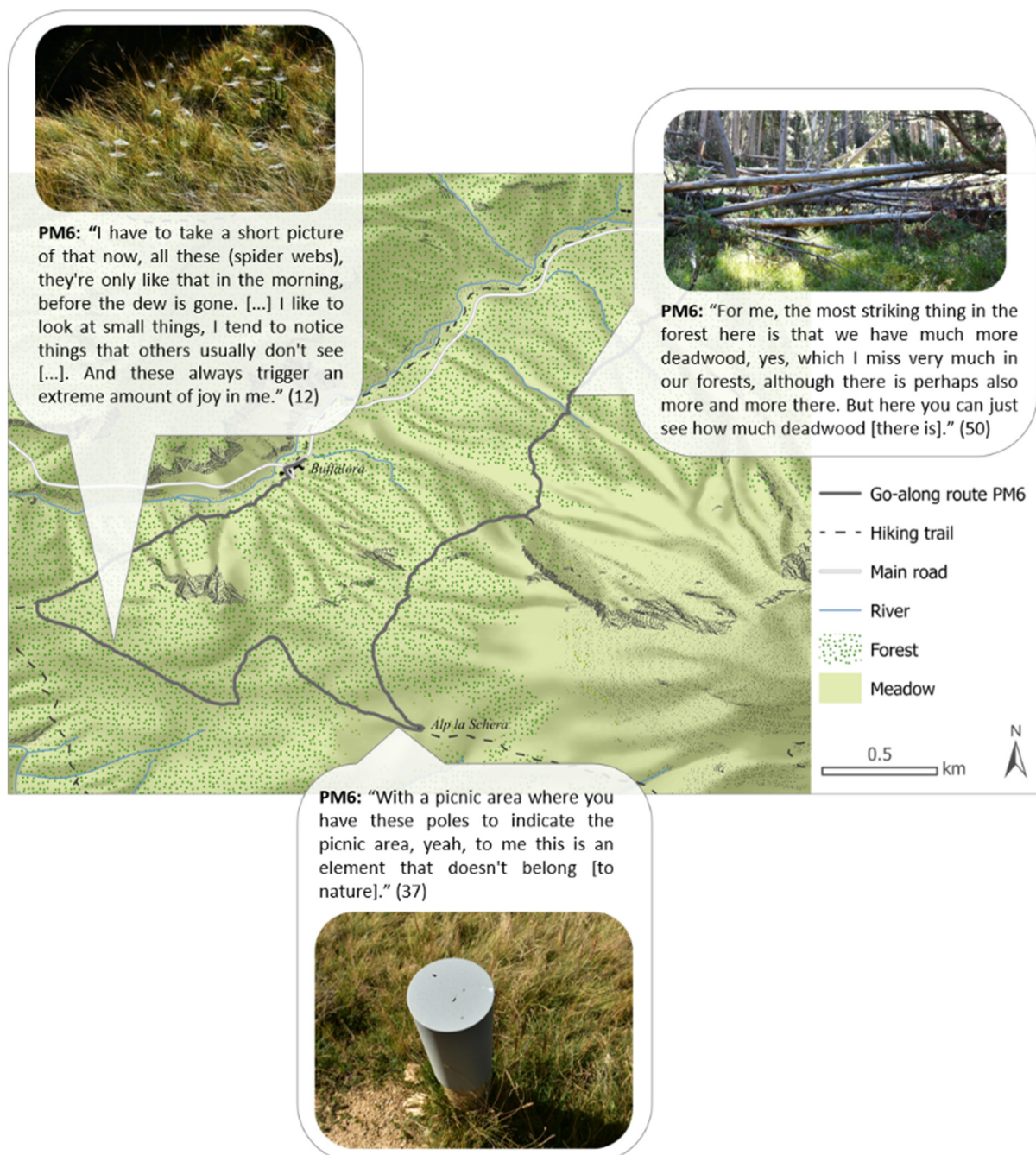
*"Now I find that fascinating, we were talking about that earlier, how groomed these paths are, [...] if the human being can't otherwise take care of anything or somehow do something, then they just focus insanely tightly on these paths (laughs)." (PV13:32)*

*"For example, [...] such a trail with roots, etc., is very similar to a deer crossing and how we walk through nature on such a trail is basically comparable to deer moving on deer crossing trails. Of course, this is only valid as long as humans behave 'correctly' in their environment and leave nature as it was." (PM3:16)*

### **5.1.2 Emotions and feelings as in-situ experience and expression of value when 'being in nature'**

Emotions felt by participants during their hikes in the SNP seem to constitute an essential part of being in nature. They include both feelings experienced directly through engaging in nature but also feelings (and principles) held towards nature. For instance, *joy and happiness, sadness and frustration, a feeling of connectedness with nature, and a sense of individual freedom* represent most frequent emotions expressed by visitors and park members which arose through experiencing nature. On the other hand, *respect towards nature* was strongly brought out by many participants as a feeling towards nature, yet also presenting a moral principle held by the latter. Though often mentioned as feeling, having respect towards nature is strongly linked with taking care of nature as part of interviewees relationship with nature, which is why this will be elaborated in section 5.3. In some cases, these affective experiences shared by interviewees are not necessarily emotional but seem to evolve through a combination of sensory perception and embodied interactions with the natural environment, resulting in all-embracing feelings such as *embodied awareness, relaxation, and peace of mind* (inner calmness). Moreover, experienced emotions and feelings are expressed

as a form of value by interviewees when being in nature, thus going beyond a primarily described experience (cf. chapter 6). In the following, the different affective experiences shall be briefly delineated.



**Figure 8.** Conducted go-along interview with a park member (PM6) and exemplary georeferenced photographs with corresponding interview sections (*composed by author; geodata copyright: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo*).

Joy and happiness are experienced by different interviewees when engaging more or less actively in nature. This is expressed in statements such as “for me it’s actually really a place for joy, action, fun” (PV7:45), “when I’m in pretty intact nature, a lot of joy” (PM1:50), or “because I just have so much of it myself, so all the joy” (PM6:64). Especially the last quotation captures an expression of value. The very emotions arising from actively being in nature are further highlighted by PM6 and PV13:

*“There’s almost nothing that makes me so happy. Or it just makes me happy in a way when I can just go hiking somewhere in nature. That’s insanely beautiful.”* (PV13:48)

*"I have such joy in nature. I have a huge joy when I see at an anthill how an ant carried a piece of resin around. And then I'm already happy for the day." (PM6:29)*

Besides, an emotion of joy as in-situ experience during the go-along with a park member is visualized in figure 8. For PV5, this feeling of happiness is also linked to gratitude, as they argue "and then actually also gratitude for it [nature], I'm kind of really grateful, yes, because it's very beautiful" (PV5:90). Further, for few visitors, activities in 'wild' nature are associated with "an adventure feeling" (PV7:44; PV8:52). In addition, being in nature induces a feeling of individual freedom, as for example PV2 feels "free, [it's] freedom for me" (PV2:78), and PM7 similarly reflects on his feeling as containing "freedom?" (PM7:57). Furthermore, PM7 explains that they experience a sense of personal freedom through an autonomy in decision when being in nature and wilderness in particular.

*"How should I put it, actually 'self-determining'. If I say, 'I'm going through here now and no one else can tell me where to go or what to do'." (PM7:61)*

This argumentation is shared by a visitor who feels free being in nature "in such a way that I can move around like this, that space, where I feel that I don't have to be so considerate of others" (PV4:23).

The most prominently mentioned feeling experienced by many participants, both visitors and members of the park, comprises a sense of peace of mind. The German word '*Ruhe*' was used by interviewees in different contexts, meaning 'inner calmness', privacy in terms of not being disturbed by other people, and the absence of noise. However, only the first one, namely inner calmness may be considered as affective and is thus referred to as peace of mind. The latter is also expressed as a value emerging when being in nature (or being outdoors). As one visitor argues during the go-along, being in nature evokes a feeling of "contentment and somehow also quite a big calm" (PV10:35). Further, a peace of mind is expressed as "calm[ing] down from maybe also the many impressions" (PV9:66), "where you can just switch off" (PV:38), whereat experiences in nature "give a certain balance" (PM5:103). Besides, another visitor describes their feeling as follows:

*"[...] to calm down a little bit and to be able to enjoy it in that sense and at the same time to be able to perceive everything around, be that somehow the butterflies, insects, the wind. But you still take it all in, even unconsciously, that's how it has to be said. And this leads to an inner peace, that's how I would describe it." (PV8:119)*

This illustrates the interplay of different sensory perceptions with feelings in the construction of a peace of mind. In addition, inner calmness experienced by participants while engaging with nature is characterized by distancing 'problems of everyday life'. Indeed, PV4 explains, "and I find that sometimes you forget a little bit about the problems that you have (grins). Whether it's some stuff, something that doesn't work out, you forget that a little bit" (PV4:39). Similar to experiencing inner calmness, interviewees also referred to feelings of "relaxation" (e.g., PM6:52; PV4:39; PV13:20).

A second rather all-embracing, affective state emanating from participants' shared experiences consists of what I call 'embodied awareness'. Similar to a 'peace of mind', the feeling described by visitors and members of the park is considerably connected with their sensory perceptions of the environment, yet also contains the perception of participants themselves as an individual (or body) being in nature. Hence, an embodied awareness experienced by interviewees entails both, an attentiveness towards their surroundings (e.g., elements in nature, non-human others) and an awareness of themselves, their body moving through their surroundings. For instance, one visitor expounds, "going into nature like this is really like a 'to do' [...]. It's like a very big opportunity for me to somehow be mindful of myself and yeah, just live mindfulness or become mindful" (PV9:107). More specifically, a park member shares their experience when walking alone in nature, highlighting the difference in sensory and environmental perception but also changes in the movement and awareness of the body:

*"So really, when I'm walking alone, then my eyes and ears are always open [...] It's also different when you're walking in pairs or with several people together, then you're always chatting about*

*something. But somehow so alone on a trip, you really perceive nature much [more]. [...] I also like to go to the mountains, we are not always on the hiking trails, then you also walk differently, you are somehow much more concentrated, right? [...] and then you're different, then you're much more focused on what you hear, the water or depending on it you hear a chamois somewhere. [...] And then you perceive such things much more.” (PM2:42)*

Likewise, another visitor points to a bodily awareness and general enhanced concentration when hiking in nature: “There's something about it, you just fully concentrate on that. And that is somehow, you concentrate on the breath, on your steps, look around” (PV6:35). Besides, PV5 describes the very affective state provoked through physical activities in nature as the following:

*“You feel, or I feel kind of a little bit closer to nature and also to the body. I think that has to do with nature but also how you move by yourself, exactly. [...] When it's also a bit windy and rough (laughs), you're just 'in it'. So, I have the feeling, here I am more in nature or maybe more part of it.” (PV5:57;112)*

The aforementioned statement by PV5 illustrates well how a feeling of embodied awareness refers to both the perception of nature and the body moving through the latter, and how this may influence the relation between participants with nature (i.e., whether they feel more or less part of nature).

## 5.2 Nature's contribution to people and other (non-anthropocentric) values of nature

Whereas before mentioned 'values' emerging from experiences in nature were described in a rather implicit manner by interviewees, the subsequent section takes on the perceived contribution of nature to people mentioned explicitly by participants.<sup>7</sup> These include *recreation and wellbeing; privacy and social relations and cohesion; intact nature as 'life insurance'; nature's own value, providing habitat for all species, and fascination for life in nature and natural processes*. When asked about nature's contribution or the values of being in nature, interviewees refer to in-situ experiences in the park as well as non-place specific contributions. Most of the time, participants were rather speaking about values in/ of 'nature' than wild(er)ness. However, this also depends on their understanding of nature and wild(er)ness belonging together or consisting of separate things. Besides, several values emerging from being in nature and participants' relationship with the latter are shared between visitors and members of the park, and for this reason they are presented together. Yet, whenever results are sample specific, this is indicated respectively.

### 5.2.1 Recreation and wellbeing

The argument that “nature offers us recreational space” (PV1:72) is brought forward by almost all research participants, highlighting the recreational value of being in nature. As such, two visitors declare, “so it is for me also really a place of recreation” (PV4:25), and “for me it's really an extremely important recreation factor” (PV13:48). Especially visitors point to nature as a place for leisure activities, where a state of recreation, relaxation, and balance is achieved through actively engaging in nature or being outdoors, as PV7 for example argues, “I do my hobbies in nature, so jogging, hiking, which is also connected with a balance” (PV7:69).

<sup>7</sup> The different contributions of nature to people in section 5.2 contain elements explicitly mentioned by interviewees as being of value. In the Swiss German interview guideline (cf. appendix), this refers to responses on questions about which *'Bedeutung'* (importance/value) nature or wilderness/wildness has for the interviewees, or which *'Werte'* (values) they see in nature or the 'being in nature'. Whether 'values' were stated explicitly (e.g., wellbeing, provisioning habitat, etc.) or implicitly (e.g., embodied awareness, care for nature, etc.) by participants may depend on their understanding of *'Bedeutung'* and *'Wert'* and does not mean that implicit contributions are less important. In chapter 6, values emerging explicitly and implicitly from interviewees' argumentation will be discussed together.

*“And then most of the time you're moving, you're either hiking, jogging or biking. And that's what I appreciate, it's just like, for me it's also connected with leisure time, because I don't work in nature or something. And then it's just like, yes, also leisure and relaxation somewhere through.”* (PV5:57)

A common pattern in visitors' and park members' narration contains the opposing of leisure activities in nature to the 'daily life' or 'daily world'. Whereas one visitor explains that “I'm actually looking forward to getting outdoors every time we come here [...] it's just certainly a change from everyday life in the city of Bern” (I6:18;32), a park member believes that “for me it's recreation, it's like the counter-pole to the normal world, or the daily world. So, from that point of view, it's recreation, that's probably also what others are looking for” (PM5:58). The second part of PM5' statement also indicates that the recreational value of nature is considered to be integral for other people too.

Further, the element of physical activity in nature during leisure time for recreational purposes can improve corporeal-physical health and contributes to an overall wellbeing according to several visitors but also park members. As such, PM2 points to the importance of “[being] outdoors, to move, to be physically active” (PM2:70), PV2 articulates that “one is physically active, so it is good for one's own health (PV2:52), and PV6 further emphasizes “and you also notice that it's actually good for your health, the fresh air, and up here it's just a bit fresher than down in the city” (PV6:32). Experiences in nature are associated by interviewees with 'switching-off' and balance to daily life. For instance, PV8 explains, “for me it is simply more of a 'switch-off'. [...] Therefore, it is certainly also a balance to life otherwise” (PV8:107), and another visitor similarly believes, “finally, above all, [it is] really the place of recreation where you can switch off, can come to other thoughts” (PV3:38). This recreational experience also links back to previously presented feelings of inner calmness and a peace of mind described by participants (cf. figure 4). For several interviewees, nature, but particularly being in nature positively affects mental health, thus contributing to an overall felt wellbeing.

*“And then of course that recharges my batteries. I think each of us functions differently. Maybe plenty of people also find their energy back from nature. That's the case for me.”* (PV12:50)

Contributions to mental health and overall wellbeing are frequently described as the possibility to “recharge the batteries, to calm down” (PM7:71), and “to fill up with energy, you do something meaningful” (PV2:52). What is interesting in the second quotation by PV2 is that being in nature (e.g., through outdoor activities) is regarded as something 'meaningful', where the 'meaningfulness' of the activity seems to foster a sense of wellbeing. The importance of letting thoughts wander and the possibility for entering a stage of self-reflection while experiencing nature seems to add to this sense of wellbeing. This comes through in interview excerpts such as “this monotonous hiking leaves so much space for thoughts” (PV9:17), or “you have time to look at things in detail, to let your thoughts wander. So, I can usually also think well outdoors” (PV5:61). Similarly, the contribution of nature providing a space for thoughts and intellectual pastime, and centering oneself through walking is pointed out in the following:

*“I also notice when I walk, walking for me is something purely mental, where simply a few wheels in the brain are still running [...]. Often also reflecting and kind of 'inner films' and so on. [...] I usually switch relatively quickly from an outside perspective to a view to the inside when I'm walking.”* (PM4:35)

*“I don't know if consciously or unconsciously, to bring myself to the center, to center myself. The satisfaction of being out in nature somehow, walking up a hill and looking down, so mental balances, how do you say, yeah balance.”* (PV9:63)

*“That is also a confrontation with yourself, there you have time to deal with yourself. This leads then to certain balance.”* (PM5:103)

Whereas some participants specifically refer to nature's contribution on corporeal-physical, or mental health, the value of improving an overall wellbeing is shared by visitors and members of the park. Indeed,

PM6 thinks, “in the end, many people would say, ‘yes, yes it's good for me when I'm out in nature’” (PM6:52). The argumentation is exemplary supported by the statements “[to] spend time in nature by myself, [...] at some point I learned to appreciate it and realized that it does you good” (PV3:55), and “every time I'm out in nature I realize how good it is for me” (PV9:107).

### 5.2.2 Privacy versus social relations and cohesion

As indicated in section 5.1.2, *Ruhe* was mentioned by participants in different contexts. ‘Privacy’ meaning the absence of disturbance through other people and having space for one’s own presents a recurring feature in interviewees narration and seems to play an important role in their experience in and of nature. In fact, “being alone is also part of it [being in nature]” (PM5:101), and “I think that's exactly what I appreciate a little bit, just this solitude” (PV4:56). The value of having privacy in nature is also expressed by a park member thinking “it's kind of nice to have my peace and quiet” (PM4:35), and another park member similarly arguing, “I think it's actually nice that you have a bit of solitude here, which you might not have in the city” (PM1:32). The experience of having space for oneself and the subsequent educed value of privacy is further expounded by PV4:

*“I think what I value most is this peace and quiet. So, if I would define my favorite recreational activity now, it would be just walking around on a rock ridge somewhere for 10 minutes and then sitting on a rock and kind of yodeling something or singing something and doing a little bit of something. I think that's almost what I enjoy the most, yes (...) enjoying this solitude and knowing that no one is listening to you.”* (PV4:50).

However, nature is also viewed as a space for social interaction (e.g., “let's go hiking somewhere with friends” (PV8:158)), thus partially contrasting privacy as nature’s contribution to participants who enjoy being alone in nature. For instance, PV12 believes that being in nature “also helps to contact with other people, you know [...] And I think it's easier to interact in nature than uhm yeah” (PV12:82). Moreover, the same visitor points to the value of sharing experiences in nature with others:

*“Well, it's also good when you hike with somebody else because you can share. [...] Also, when you go with friends, it's different because you're sharing, you enjoy it in a different way.”* (PV12:37;39)

Nature as a space for interactions with other people and sharing time with family and friends, thus presenting a stage for social relations and cohesion, is also illustrated in the quotation below.

*“Yes, and then with the children, we have three children and a two-year-old granddaughter. Uhm, you can see that when the question comes up, 'yes, what are we going to do then and there?', or something like that, the idea of 'going out' into the woods or going for a run comes up a lot.”* (PM3:24)

### 5.2.3 Intact nature as ‘life insurance’ and nature as resource

In contrast to recreation, wellbeing, and privacy as values of nature more or less actively experienced by participants when interacting in natural environments, nature is also valued by interviewees in a more fundamental manner, namely as ‘life insurance’. With regard to that, especially park members emphasize the importance of intact nature or functioning ecosystems for human beings (PM4; PM5; PM6; PM7).

*“It is our life insurance, so without nature we cannot live at all. Nature, and thus of course biodiversity and so on, is the basis for everything we need. In this respect, we haven't disengaged ourselves from nature, we can't live at all without functioning ecosystems. That's one thing, that's what you also always like to say to convince people why nature is so important.”* (PM4:35)

*“And just the great value, the great service that nature does to humanity or in general to the planet as CO2 storage, as just oxygen producing plants. Uhm yes, I think (laughs) the service of nature for the whole living world is just reassuring and it [nature] has to be diverse so that it is stable and so that it can survive crises. Yes, I think that is the great service uhm yes, to be there, to make sure that the planet, so this fragile balance between atmosphere and the whole system is maintained.” (PM1:36)*

Likewise, a visitor states “basically, I really feel like it's a basis of life and something where [...] we actually joined it” (PV4:25). Although the respective visitor speaks about basis of life regarding human beings, one could also interpret the statement of PV4 in terms of habitat creation for all living beings (cf. chapter 6).

Particularly, two park members expressed themselves rather critically about other people's tendency to focus primarily on the use and benefit of nature for humans. As such, PM5 believes that “most people are just very focused on us and 'what's the use' for us” (PM:54) and PM6 explains more detailed on nature's 'benefit' for people:

*“And of course, one then breaks down very quickly, what is our benefit of an intact nature? And then comes kind of water purification, and erosion control, and pollination, and uhm (...) clean water, etc. But I struggle a bit with this attitude that you only find it valuable if we humans benefit from it.” (PM6:54)*

In addition, few participants address the value of nature as a resource for people (e.g., PM3; PM5; PM7). That valuing nature for its resources was brought forward relatively little compared to other contributions might depend on the characteristic of the SNP as a place of go-along implementation. As for park members, the issue of natural resources in the SNP was sometimes implicitly raised regarding the historic utilization of the parks' area previous to its establishment. Nonetheless, the usage of natural resources is also of importance for PM5 in their daily life. In this specific case, using resources from nature is linked closely to direct activities in nature by the park member, thus influencing the value associated with respective resources.

*“So, for me a utilization now also belongs to it. Yes, so the direct use actually also belongs to it, although I have no problem with it if you say in one place, here you do not use it now. That's not the problem, but I actually always enjoy it when I use something from nature, whether that's when I collect mushrooms or something or hunting (laughs). But also at home I fire with wood that I got from the forest, that's also part of it for me, it always has such a special value.” (PM5:62)*

#### **5.2.4 Nature's own value, habitat creation, and fascination for life and processes in nature**

A different line in argumentation regarding the value or importance of nature contains of 'nature's own value' described by visitors and members of the park. This becomes visible in the statement of PM5 who asserts “but [...] it basically has a high value, anyway [...] regardless of what it is now for humans or so. And yes, that it creates habitats for other creatures” (PV5:85). Similarly, PM6 argues that “nature is so fascinating and just has the right to be there, even if in certain cases it's not clear for what benefit of ourselves” (PM6:76). Moreover, the same park member explains:

*“For me, the value is that it is simply there and exists. [...] But I have a little trouble with that attitude, you only find it valuable if we humans benefit from it. For me the worth is that it's just there and you see these ingenious adaptations.” (PM6:54)*

As a part of the considered inherent value of nature, its ability to provide habitat and a general fascination for all life is shared by several participants. In this sense, PM6 thinks that “the value is really just that it [nature] is. It's just awesome what can survive there, and these interplays” (PM6:54), and PV12 explains

regarding observed animals in the park, “you know, they are not at the circus, you know, they are not doing a show for us, it's their lives” (PV12:139). The fascination for life (e.g., non-human beings) perceived in the park is further enunciated by two visitors who point out, “here you also notice that it is like lively all around” (PV8:102), and “it's kind of alive, it's crawling, yeah it's beautiful” (PV7:20). The fascination of a living environment in the park is supported by the following perception described by interviewees:

*“[nature in the SNP is] just amazing. It's just, it's different, it's like full of life.”* (PV12:31)

*“But then it just has life everywhere and that's extremely fascinating.”* (PV5:24)

*“Yes, I always find it impressive how plants can survive at this altitude. [...] And there I think every time, that is quite ingenious, what kind of tricks plants have to be able to survive up here.”* (PM6:31)

For PM1, experiencing non-human life in nature is also a means to feel reassured of nature's presence and functioning: “There is nothing more beautiful than when you suddenly see a bird in the forest near you and you realize 'hey it's alive and nature is still there'” (PM1:34).

In addition, natural processes and the signs left behind them in landscape present a recurring topic in conversations with interviewees, both in terms of value and description of wildness. Whereas the linkage between intact ecosystems, process protection and imaginations of ‘Wildnis’ as wildness are delineated in section 5.4, the subsequent interview excerpts provide an insight into the perceived value of natural processes regarding variability and volatileness, different forms of life in nature, and a certain trust into nature for regulating and keep functioning ecosystems. As such, PM2 believes that “natural processes, nature already regulates that, so on its own” (PM2:104), and PV9 holds a “basic trust that nature, so to speak, if something goes wrong, will repair it or regenerate it, landscapes regenerate again [...], restore the balance, which perhaps - what we are seeing right now with climate change - is strongly influenced by humans” (PV9:54). Another park member refers to the importance of natural processes in the context of nature conservation:

*“Now purely as a biologist, as a nature conservationist such areas have an importance, because the processes can happen. In 20 years, if I'm still around, and you're more likely to be around (grins), then these trees will be big, then you won't see the edge of the forest here anymore [...] And at some point, it will be forest here and then a piece of forest will collapse somewhere over there, and then maybe there will be a meadow or some new form of vegetation. And that is just also important.”* (PM5:73)

The value of variability and change in landscape through the occurrence of natural processes is put forward by visitors and park members. Indeed, one visitor describes that nature “definitely reflects the volatileness, that is, the quickly changeable, the always changing, so for example with the seasons, with foliage formation and foliage decay, the whole thing” (PV9:57), and a park member explains as follows:

*“[...] how fascinating and valuable it is [when one] can look at and experience different phases and processes next to each other in a small place in nature: 'if, for example, a new, young tree grows, next to it perhaps a tree slowly dies, and next to it another already dead tree stump slowly decays, then you see the different phases all together'.”* (PM3:18)

Although natural processes are associated by PV9 with a certain unpredictability, it is “the unpredictable, which also carries a bit of this wonder in itself” (PV9:58).

### 5.3 Human-nature relationships

Research participants' experience in and the perception of nature, and their expression of importance or value towards nature are deeply informed by their relationship to or with nature. As such, human-nature relationships constitute an underlying construct in this thesis which has been addressed by interviewees explicitly in conversations but is also implied less directly in their narrations. Visitors' and park members' relation with and their perceived personal role in nature is shaped through various factors, such as *care and stewardship for nature, spirituality (and feelings of connectedness), the acquisition and sharing of knowledge, and parenting*. They are further interlinked with place attachments (regarding the SNP or beyond), memories, and previously presented results regarding interviewees' experiences in nature (e.g., 'being in nature', emotions and feelings; cf. figure 4). This results in multilayered and diverse human-nature relationships emerging from interviews with visitors and members of the park.

#### 5.3.1 Participants' personal relation with nature

In general, interviewees express to have a 'close' (e.g., PV7), 'good' (e.g., PV1:73) or 'intensive' (e.g., PM2) relationship with nature. Interestingly, they all talk about the latter in a positive manner, and there are no comments implying a neutral or rather negative relationship with nature. Yet, visitors' and park members' descriptions of their personal relationships differ in so far, as visitors' relations seem to be especially informed by their leisure experiences in nature, and park members' relation with nature is considerably influenced through their motivation in nature conservation, and their daily work in the park, particularly for park rangers.

*"I would say it's a close relationship because most of my hobbies are somewhere in nature. Um, sometimes nature is a bit modified as a fun place, be it a bike park or a ski slope, but also simply nature in its original form. So, I would say it's a close relationship, because you spend a lot of time and almost all hobbies are somehow connected with nature."* (PV7:72)

*"Yes, my relationship? (laughs) It's an intensive relationship, so it is a strong relationship, I am outdoors every day and also always in the same area, in the same nature. And yet it is also different, practically every day is different, also depending on the weather, depending on the season."* (PM2:72)

When talking about their relation with nature, participants reflect on the importance of being in nature and how this 'defines' their relationship, as stated by PV3: "now I have to think about, I would say, I very, very, very much like to be in nature" (PV3:53). 'Spending time' in nature is further emphasized by the same visitor in the following statement regarding their relationship:

*"I think, well yes, spending time in nature, I think a few years ago I did not have this relationship to it, about 10 years ago. For the simple reason that I probably still spent too little [time] in nature. But just, at some point I learned to appreciate it and noticed, but that does you good, that helps you, that brings you something so a bit to switch off. [...] so that really shaped my relationship to it [...] being in nature."* (PV3:55;57)

#### **Participants' roles in nature**

During go-alongs, participants were asked to describe their role taken in nature. The attribution of the following roles is more detailed than the general feeling of interviewees being part or not part of nature. Moreover, the same participants experienced themselves in different roles. Particularly regarding their position in the park, visitors and park members see themselves as 'guest' (PV2; PV3; PV6; PV8; PV9; PV11; PM2; PM4; PM6), 'observer' (PV1; PV2; PV5; PV6; PV8; PV13; PM6), 'consumer' (PV1; PV3; PM3; PM5; PM7), and 'protector' (PV1; PM1; PM2; PM6). To a lesser extent, interviewees describe themselves in the role of a 'gatecrasher' (PV1; PV7; PM6), and 'friend' of nature (PV2), or refer to other people's role of a 'designer /

influencer' (PV3; PV5; PV9). However, the perception of oneself in nature seems to depend on the context, such as the behavioral rules applied in the park, as well as the degree of interaction and activities happening during a stay in nature. Most frequently named roles regarding the park are briefly outlined by interviewees' statements in the following section.

- The majority of visitors sees itself as a *guest* or *observer* in the park. As such, PV8 states, "guest and observer, that would describe it well. I mean, we are not here to influence" (PV8:119), and PV13 specifies "[where the] nature is left to itself [there you are] actually as a visitor in nature and not the other way around" (PV13:22). This argumentation is shared by PV5 who "feel[s] very much like a guest, [...] it's more like 'I'm allowed to go there, thank you for the invitation', that kind of thing. And that I enjoy it very much and appreciate it, exactly, but that I also leave again afterwards" (PV5:87-89). Although several interviewees 'agree' on their role as a guest or observer, they feel differently about being part of nature or not. In the position of a 'passive' observer where one stays only temporary in nature and feels of not leaving human traces behind, visitors perceive themselves less part of nature: "If you stay here plus-minus on your hiking trails and you look that you actually leave no traces, yes, then you don't shape the whole image of nature. That's why I see myself less as a participant now" (PV3:59). In contrast and with reference to experiencing 'wild' nature in the park, visitors may consider themselves as part of nature but subordinate to the latter: "How the human being is actually just insanely small in this whole fabric. [...] you are a visitor who is allowed to perceive something, but the forces of nature are much bigger" (PV1:37). On the other hand, as a guest 'actively' experiencing nature through outdoor activities, some interviewees (e.g., PV2; PV5; PV7; PM5) perceive themselves as part of nature (e.g., through feelings of embodied awareness, spirituality).
- "*Consumer* - in all kinds of ways" (PM7:82). The role of a consumer or user of nature is linked to activities gathering resources from nature (e.g., fishing, hunting, collecting mushrooms, cutting down wood). Regarding the park more specifically, enjoying nature is also considered as a consumption of nature, and PV3 sees themselves as a "connoisseur of nature" (PV3:59). Using nature as an infrastructure is highlighted by PM3 for whom "[going outdoors] is an approach to these possibilities that you have as a human being to also let this natural space sink in on you, to use it like an infrastructure" (PM3:24). Aside from using natural resources for individual purposes, the role of a consumer is also applied on a collective level of discussion (e.g., energy production through hydropower at the dam of Livigno; PV4:29). Some participants feel more part of nature through using the latter, as pointed out by PM5(42): "But then it's also like, if you use nature, so you're not just walking, but somehow you go picking mushrooms or hunting or fishing, then I feel I'm part of nature. And those are probably the most intense experiences in nature. [...] So I would now consider myself part of nature." This contrasts the view of not being part of nature through 'exploitative consumerism'. Indeed, PM4 views the human being as "the absolute winner" out of the battle for survival, taking advantage through technologies. And "at that moment, we take out more than the balance of power can bear. From that moment on, for me personally, humans are no longer part of nature because they tip the balance" (PM4:33).
- In the role of a *protector*, it contains a key interest to protect nature from people. In this line of argumentation, PV1 has the feeling "I am rather the one who manages it, that is, the one who lets nature be nature with as little human influence as possible. Because humans ruin a lot of things" (PV1:77). In the context of nature conservation, PM1 explains, "I see myself a bit in a protective role of nature, as best as I can. [...] that is of course also part of my personal goals, that I protect nature" (PM1:60;62). Particularly related to nature in the SNP, PM2 declares "now professionally certainly also as a protector [...] that is also a duty that we have, where we really also look that all these strict rules are observed, that no one makes fire, that if possible, everything remains as it is (laughs). That really only nature has the possibility to develop, to change. And humans are actually only tolerated" (PM2:78). The human-nature relationship of interviewees protecting nature is informed by actions of care and stewardship. These participants see themselves both being part (but subordinate) of nature (e.g., PM1; PM2; PM6) as well as not part of it (PV1).

- “Sometimes you see yourself as a *gatecrasher*” in nature (PV1:74). Similarly, PV7 argues, “in nature I find one is always the intruder. So best, you would say of course as part of nature, but I think that's always difficult, you leave traces behind” (PV7:74). Considering other people as gatecrashers is associated with taking no care of nature: “the human being is rather an intruder and those who do not care” (PV1:75). The feeling of a gatecrasher is associated with perceiving oneself not really belonging to nature: “Honestly, when I'm somewhere [in nature], I also see myself more as a disturbing factor, even though I always try not to stand on the ants etc., I see myself as something that doesn't really belong here” (PM6:76). Yet, the same park member also considers themselves a part of nature in a different situation (PM6:76), thus indicating the multiple relationships with nature depending on the context looked at.

### 5.3.2 Decisive elements in the construction of human-nature relationships

#### *Care and stewardship*

Participants' relationship with nature is strongly shaped through feelings of care (e.g., PV1; PV2; PV4; PV5; PV6; PV7; PV9; PV10; PV12; PM1; PM2; PM3; PM6) and actions of stewardship (e.g., PV1; PV2; PV7; PV9; PV10; PM1; PM4). As for care, this includes feelings of being worried about nature as well as the importance to care about the latter. Indeed, PV2 describes their relation as “we are careful, we take uhm, how do you say it, care. You have to look after it” (PV2:89), and PV9 expounds “[...] and nature, i.e., our habitat in this critical zone, to make sure that it is doing well and not to look at my own well-being or the well-being of the human being, but to look at the whole” (PV9).

*“You know, nature does its life, it doesn't really care about us (laughs). Luckily, we care about nature.” (PV12:57)*

Likewise, the importance of care is brought forward by another visitor articulating that “even if we don't care about rocks, we should still care about animals [...] and unfortunately, the species, we have an influence on the species, on other species. So, it's a little bit sad that we are so ignorant” (PV12:61). Care and stewardship seem to become more present when being in nature, or experiencing its contribution to oneself, as it is expressed by PV7 and PM6 in the following:

*“I notice, the more I am in nature, the more present is then, for example, also climate change, so the more important it is to me therefore also somehow to do something against it with small things. I'm becoming more and more aware of that, and almost more so every time I'm in such beautiful places where animals and vegetation live.” (PV7:69)*

*“So, nature for me is something that I need, that will always be important to me, where I think I will also have more and more the need to make my contribution to it. So, I can't just come and consume and look and find, 'wow beautiful and I'm fine because I was here,' but if I can benefit from nature, I also want to give something back.” (PM6:64)*

From the perspective of visitors, actions of stewardship in natural places such as the SNP include sticking to the rules, and not leaving garbage behind oneself. As such, one visitor explains their motivation for environmentally friendly action as “the small things like just keeping the packaging in your backpack and not throwing things in nature” (PV12:54), and another visitor considers “the duties [towards nature] in the sense that one sticks to the rules” (PV1:81). For a park visitor, actions of stewardship are influenced through experiences in their childhood, saying “that [being in nature during childhood] has also shaped me somewhere, that I want to protect that” (PM1:58).

Care and stewardship are closely linked to participants' sense of respect towards nature. This includes both respecting nature for its own as well as treating nature respectfully. This is highlighted in a statement by PM1 who argues “I also simply have a huge respect for nature, and I think that is extremely important. [...] when I'm here, then I am very respectful of nature” (PM1:46;56). According to another park

member, nature is “something where you have a certain respect, a certain esteem” (PM5:62), and PV2 believes, “it's mutual, we respect it, and nature lets us go through it for that. It's such a give and take” (PV2:92).

### ***Acquiring and sharing knowledge***

Knowledge seems to constitute another important element in the construction of interviewees' relation with nature. On one hand, this contains the acquisition of knowledge about nature (including resources gained from nature), on the other hand, knowledge particularly regarding human-nature interactions is shared with other people. As such, PM1 states, “I have always been interested in everything [of nature] and I also inform myself a lot” (PM1:56), and PM4 similarly refers to the wish to gain knowledge about nature, e.g., “I always wanted to know a lot about nature” (PM4:35). The importance of knowledge in human-nature relationships is further expressed in the subsequent interview excerpt.

*“Of course, one value is that you can explore things, and I find that very valuable. [...] Yes, that nature is not just something beautiful and has the right to exist, but you can also explain why something is like that.”* (PM6:54)

Knowledge about nature constitutes not solely a value itself, as pointed out in aforementioned quotation, but also influences the perception of visitors' position within their relationship with nature. This becomes illustrated in the following experience shared by a park visitor:

*“I took a herbal course this spring and learned a lot about these herbs and plants. [...] That fascinated me very much. And of course, we have then also taken away certain flowers and afterwards also made such an ointment (laughs), but nevertheless it is like one knows then something about the plant, one uses it also, but it is like a respect there. [...] Therefore, through this course I have almost the feeling, I am more part [of nature], because I also know something more.”* (PV7:79)

Aside from acquiring knowledge, the sharing of the latter seems to be as important to interviewees, as PM1 argues, “I have also noticed that a lot of what is done that is not good for nature sometimes also happens out of ignorance, [...] Therefore, I also find environmental education extremely important” (PM1:60). Similarly, a park visitor explains “and if I can talk to people, well, without lecturing other people. But if I can give ideas to others to do the same as I do already” (PV12:118). Hence, sharing knowledge presents also an opportunity of pro-environmental behavior by interviewees, which links back to stewardship. From the perspective of the SNP, sharing knowledge becomes a key interest, as subsequently pointed out by a park member:

*“And I also see that a bit as my task as an excursion leader or generally as a biologist, to generally open people's eyes a bit (PM:16) [...] then I can just show a little bit of my view on nature, which then maybe also influences a few people, how they see it. Yes, I see that as my task - a nice task but not an easy task.”* (PM6:16;64)

Further, the sharing and acquisition of knowledge regarding nature are related to parenting which is considered by several participants as decisive in the establishment of their relationship with nature. When interviewees were asked about what influenced their relationship with nature, PV2 thinks, “actually mostly the earlier parenting. So, I also went hiking as a child, and we passed it on to our children again” (PV2:112), and PV7 believes, “certainly also the parenting” (PV7:81). The role of parenting (and being outdoors) in participants relation with nature also comes to the fore in the following:

*“I have the feeling that it has a lot to do with the raising by my parents, that we always went outdoors at an early age [...] And yes, that we were actually given something like that, I have the feeling that I already got that as a child. And (...) that's actually also what I appreciate a bit at the moment, that I was already aware of that back then.”* (PV4:54)

*“Certainly a large part, the education. A little bit of awareness of nature, when your mother or father says, “You can't just rip it off everywhere, but you can look at the little flower and consciously enjoy it and keep walking.” (PV9:103)*

From the perspective of parents, to pass this knowledge to the next generation is part of constructing human-nature relationships and maintaining certain values emerging from the latter. As such, PM2 states, “[it] is also important to me now, that one passes that on to the children, if possible, that one tries to pass that on as well” (PM2:74). Besides, the linkage between sharing knowledge and values about nature between generations is exemplary pointed out by PV13:

*“For me, in terms of value, it is something that is also important to me to pass on to my children: to take care of nature, but I would actually also like to go out into nature with them, so that they might have this place of recreation later too. Maybe not, maybe they will have something else. But it's very important to me to give them this opportunity, because it means so much to me.” (PV13:174)*

### **Place attachment, memories, and childhood**

The expression of (shared) memories and childhood experiences consists of a recurring element in participants' description about their relationship in and with nature. This becomes exemplary visible in the statements “So, I used to go hiking a lot, as a family and as a child we did it a lot” (PV2:83), and “I was also often outdoors as a child” (PV7:82). The linkage between ‘being outdoors’, ‘shared memories’, and ‘childhood’ (cf. figure 4) also played a role in another visitors' relation to nature: “For me, I think it [personal relation with nature] is connected with beautiful experiences and has always been something important. From an early age, I was always hiking or outdoors. And then I grew up with my parents in a big garden, where you were always out in the garden as long as you could” (PV6:45).

Frequently, these memories are attached to specific places, giving meaning to both the specific place and the relationship with nature. Whereas regular visitors and park members shared memories attached to the SNP, first-time visitors rather talked about past experiences related to other familiar places. With regard to the latter, PV7 points out the interplay between memories, place attachment, and meaning:

*“Well, we have quite a few places that are a bit of ‘power places’ to us, where we like to be, where we've been several times, that somehow have a special meaning for us, because we also had special experiences or because it just somehow touches us.” (PV7:58)*

Similarly, PV2 believes that shared experiences in nature “shape you and give you good memories and that's where you go back to these places” (PV2:118).

Place attachments<sup>8</sup> come out more clearly when specifically related to the SNP or single places within the park. For instance, one visitor explains, “I used to be in the area as well, so as a child on a school trip, and so in the region. So sometimes it's a bit of nostalgia in a certain sense” (PV8:79), and a park member thinks “that [SNP] has actually been such a magical place since I was a child” (PM1:24). Regular visits with family members result in a greater familiarity with the SNP for PV6, giving the place meaning through shared memories with people in their social environment: “I was already here as a child with my grandparents quite regularly [...] Yes, we [pair of interviewees] probably come up two or three times a year [...] and then I usually go one or two more times with the parents and the family. And we surely come once for this way” (PV6:16;99). Specifically for park members (e.g., PM1; PM2; PM3; PM5; PM7), their relationship with or in nature seems to be linked strongly with their work in the park, which is itself

<sup>8</sup> Place attachment entails an emotional, often positive connection between a person and a specific familiar place (Brehm et al., 2013: 523). It is frequently defined as “an affective bond that connects people to places” whereas the “affective bond implies a special emotional relationship” (Lewicka, 2013:49). According to Devine-Wright (2009: 428), place attachment means the “process of attaching oneself to a place” as well as the ‘product of this process’. Based on an established emotional relationship with place, individual and collective action can arise (ibid; Röhring, 2021: 80).

associated with meaningful places and memories. This can be illustrated by the following narrations of two park members:

*“And then certainly, these are also nice memories, let's say, when we build such a small hiking trail bridge, there are two of us, three of us together and then we build such a bridge [...] these are also nice things together with the colleagues who stay. And that's always nice, that you finish something together. [...] Then sooner or later you also walk over there (and think) ‘Ah, that was a cramp, but it was still nice’ (laughs).” (PM2:124)*

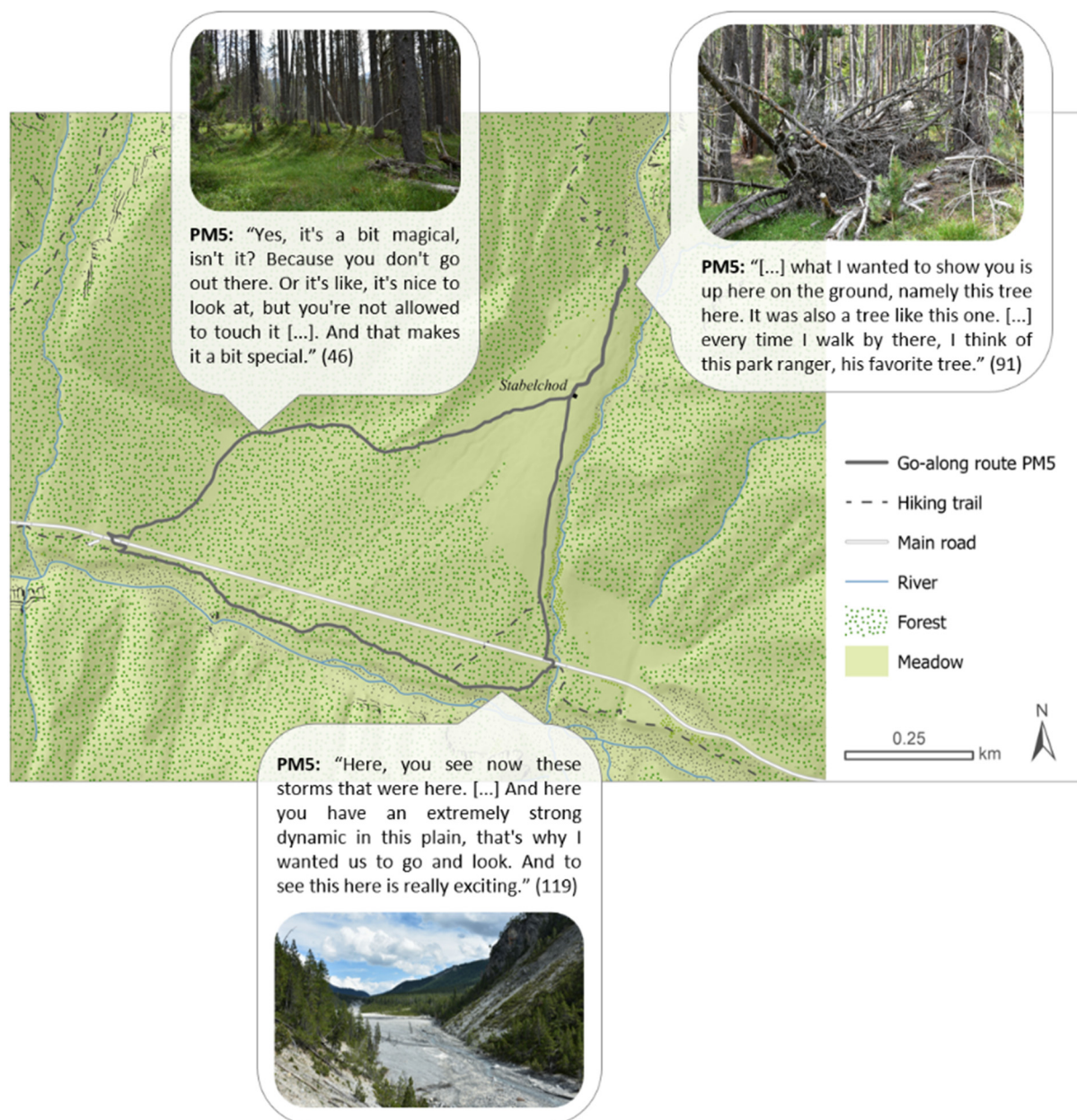
*“And after that we then went up here, a doe and a calf - as ordered - went through here in the morning, so in fact especially on this day. [...] I remember we counted 80 deer here; I remember that they were lying everywhere here, that was really impressive. I was six years old then [...]. Yes, that was really special. [...] And I was able to go with him for a week, and when he [someday] left [the park], I got this job.” (PM7: 31;33)*

As indicated in above quotations, these place attachments can be quite small scale and specific, such as meaning and memory attached to a built hiking trail bridge, a place of animal encounter, or a special tree, as explained by PM5 in the following: “What I wanted to show you is up here on the ground, namely this tree here. [...] It was much older than all the other trees around. And when I came here (to the park), it was almost dead. And then a few years ago it really toppled over and now it's completely dead and it's going to be here for another 100 years or so” (PM5: 89). While these places contain meaning by the interviewees for themselves, they also symbolize shared memories with or related to other people being important to the respective person. This is shown in PM2's shared working experiences with other park rangers, and further exemplary illustrated in the statement of PM5 (91) in figure 9, where the before mentioned tree remembers PM5 of their “fatherly friend” and this friends' favorite tree (PM5:91).

For several participants, including visitors and park members, nature and specifically being in nature is associated with feelings of homeland or belonging, and thus may be viewed as constituting a part of their personal identity. The construction of nature or being in nature as part of identity is closely interconnected with previously mentioned factors influencing personal relationships in and with nature such as memories, childhood, and actively being outdoors. For instance, one visitor explains, “so, you know, it's a bit part of me and the family and so on. So, you know, I grew up with it a little bit” (PV8:111), and another interviewee elaborates on their relationship by narrating, “the whole life we have actually spent in nature, we grew up in nature, lived [in/close to nature], we have many personal memories” (PV2:85). Further, PM2 declares “nature is really part of my life” (PM2:52). Aside from perceiving ‘being in nature’ as ‘part of life’, the following participant more explicitly highlights its meaning as ‘part of oneself’:

*“With me it is certainly so, [...] of course from the father's side in the family [it was] quite a bit ‘a lot of hiking’, I was a lot in nature, also climbing and everything. Then of course there's the connection to it, it's like part of life, you have to say. It's a bit of a part of oneself.” (PV8:107)*

Likewise, PM3 says “that this feeling of 'being in nature' is actually similar to a sense of homeland” for them (PM3:22), and PV6 reflects, “well, I don't know it any other way, I've always been outdoors a lot since I was a child” (PV6:32). Besides, considering activities in nature as a part of life or part of oneself influences interviewees' description of themselves in their relationship with nature (e.g., describing oneself as a ‘nature girl’). This is pointed out in the subsequent excerpt: “I have always been very much a nature girl. So, I think my relationship to nature is somehow very close” (PM1:56).



**Figure 9.** Conducted go-along interview with a park member (PM5) and exemplary georeferenced photographs with corresponding interview sections (*composed by author; geodata copyright: Federal Office of Topography swisstopo*).

### ***Spirituality***

Few interviewees share experiences and feelings related to spirituality. The latter is associated with the power or force of nature, the perception of ‘something bigger’, a fundamental bond with nature, and gaining strength from it. As such, one park member explains “I have the feeling, one feels very alive in nature and somewhere also small. You realize that you are somehow part of something bigger” (PM1:34). For PV13, feeling the power of nature in the park also calls for treating it with respect.

*“Yes, I find it exciting that nature has the upper hand here. So, that's what I think, that's what I always think when you're really a bit in the mountains, that you just feel a bit smaller and suddenly everything isn't so important anymore (laughs), or you realize somehow 'okay, there are greater powers at work'. [...] that you feel so small, like when you enter a church (laughs) or something. Where you sometimes realize, 'oh' [...]. I always have the feeling that you have to treat it with respect, somehow it gives off a little bit of that for me.” (PV13:22;25)*

Further, the importance of spirituality was particularly expressed by one visitor believing in nature as an origin where people always return back to. Indeed, what PV2 values when being in nature is to “get back to the origin a little bit, to get out of this city life, to unite more with nature again” (PV2:53). In addition, the very visitor emphasizes on the meaning of such a spiritual thought.

*“I am convinced that one always finds one's way back to nature. So, for me it also has something spiritual. I think we are connected with nature in a certain sense. Because it gives you so much and it's almost a bit of a spiritual thought.”* (PV2:143)

Besides, experiences of nature connectedness are indicated by PV7 saying “I feel a great connection to nature. Uhm, because it somehow gives me strength” (PV7:69), and by PM3 in the following statement: “It is often called ‘back to nature’ but for [me] it is actually not a coming back to nature. For [me], it is rather a bond that has existed since childhood, [I] feel grounded here and somehow connected to nature, to the earth” (PM3:22).

### 5.3.3 How human-nature relationships interweave with normative nature conceptualizations

Throughout conversations with interviewees, the term ‘nature’ was used implicitly in describing experiences, perceptions and values related to nature. For example, participants ascribed meaning to nature in the park (e.g., natural, intact, pristine) as delineated in the section on interpretative perception. However, they were also asked directly about their understanding of nature. In fact, for several interviewees, conceptualizing nature seems to immediately provoke the question of people’s place in nature. Hence, their understanding of nature is entangled with their relationship in and with nature, as well as their perceived ‘position’ within that relation.

*“It's a fundamental question, what is nature, right? And is nature always what human beings are not or is nature with human beings? That's always the question, I don't know it myself either.”* (PM5:42)

*“That is of course the big philosophical question whether humans belong to nature or not (laughs). If people are part of nature, then of course everything is natural, if it's just one of several mammals.”* (PV9:37)

*“But yes, it's still funny, [...] so you tend to take us humans out of it a little bit - you have nature and then ‘we humans’. But we are actually only a particle of it. Nevertheless, I say myself, [it's] there where we humans have done nothing, then I also take us out, yes. I have not thought about that before, but yes, that's how I feel. [...] the whole thing is very paradoxical.”* (PM6:58;76)

As participants often reflect on these kinds of questions during conversation, sometimes feeling insecure about answering them, their understandings of nature shall not be understood as complete and consolidated but rather highlight the complexity and plurality of the latter. Whereas for some visitors and park members, nature can already refer to near natural areas (e.g., PV1; PV2; PV8; PV12; PM1; PM5), such as cultivated meadows, urban forests, urban parks, or a tree along the road, others tend to understand nature as a natural, uncultivated place without (many) visible traces of people left behind (e.g., PV3; PV4; PV11; PV10). Particularly the second conceptualization is closely related to ideas of wild(er)ness (cf. section 5.4).

As indicated in above mentioned citations, some interviewees shared the philosophical underpinnings on their imaginations of nature. A common understanding of nature consists of the ‘balance of powers in a system’. For instance, one park member explains, “so nature is in principle with all its species, which occur in any area, an ecosystem, is for me very strongly a balance of power. So, every species is fighting in principle for survival. [...] and we humans have actually emerged as the absolute winner [...] and the question is a bit, are we thereby virtually away from nature?” (PM4:33). Whereas a visitor supports the

thinking of nature as a 'system', they argue differently regarding human's place in nature, e.g., "that we see ourselves as part of nature and not as a species that somehow stands above the whole, looking down from above. Of course, we are at the end of the food chain, so we don't have natural enemies. [...] But nevertheless I would see it in such a way that we belong to nature" (PV9:39).

As a matter of fact, few interviewees seem to criticize conceptualizations separating humans from nature. This is expressed by PV9 who states, "but one can also strongly question whether this boundary [between culture and nature] has to exist at all" (PV9:42). The criticized 'boundary' is something which is also specifically experienced in the SNP through clearly differentiating between the inside and outside of the park by the park border (PV4; PV9; PM5). As such, PV4 argues, "for me it is nevertheless always a little bit this thought that one makes such a clear line and has evenly such extremes, although actually what one wants to protect is in my opinion actually something, which does not know such borders at all" (PV4:11).

*"I just had a thought, it is officially not allowed to leave the paths in the SNP [...] but that would be for me now a classic reason, where exactly there humans are not part of nature, because everything in nature is allowed to move freely in the SNP, every animal is not restricted, the chamois is not kept away extra with a fence, the plant may also grow here and then one runs over it and the human being is the only one who is quasi excluded from nature [...]. I really understand the problems that there would be if you would allow it, but that reflects again these small things where you draw a boundary." (PV9:128)*

The experienced boundary in the park also seems to conflict with an understanding that humans are part of nature as highlighted in the quotation above.

#### 5.4 Understanding *Wildnis* – between normative imaginations and embodied experiences

Wild(er)ness formed a central issue of conversations with both park visitors and park members. As notions of wild(er)ness are deeply cultural and the applied linguistic term influences (e.g., wilderness, wildness) our understanding of the topic as well as its contextualization in specific normative patterns of thoughts, the following explanation of research participants' view on wild(er)ness uses the Swiss German word '*Wildnis*'<sup>9</sup>. This allows the presentation of findings close to interviewees own reasoning without imposing existing theoretical discursive directions of thought. Yet, normative imaginations and embodied experiences of *Wildnis* expressed by participants are not considered to be detached from existing theoretical conceptualizations and thus may link to ideas of both wilderness and wildness. Besides, park visitors' and members' argumentation on *Wildnis* is situated in the SNP as a particular 'wilderness area' and interview narratives include place-based experiences by interviewees (e.g., "[...] here nature is very wild, so it is very wild, as wild as it can" (PM1:28)). Simultaneously, descriptions of *Wildnis* are not exclusively restricted to the SNP in a geographical sense but reveal normative understandings which go beyond the context of field site (e.g., "[*Wildnis* is] somewhere, let's say, where people touch as little as possible" (PV12:54)). As they partially influence the way how *Wildnis* is perceived in the SNP by visitors and members of the park, the rather normative imaginations shall be delineated in the first part of this section.

<sup>9</sup> Etymologically, the German term *Wildnis* is related to *Wald* (forest) and *Wüste* (desert). These words both share the original meaning of uncultivated land (Kupper, 2020). Although the meaning of *Wildnis* changed over time, the term has been used in the sense of an "other place", a place of difference, distinct by its very separation from society's cultivated spaces" (ibid: 43). The English term *wilderness* has its etymological roots in the combination of words referring to 'wild animal' and 'place', but also 'wild' and 'place' (Chipeniuk, 2020: 23). The oldest meaning of the English word 'wild' contains of "land beyond the settled, farmed landscape", describing a hazardous and lawless place (Adams, 2020: 27).

#### 5.4.1 *Wildnis* as untouched nature and counter-pole to cultural landscape

When research participants talked about their general understanding of *Wildnis*, both visitors and members of the park seem to construe *Wildnis* in the sense of an antipole to cultural landscape and civilization on a more general line of argumentation. Indeed, one visitor (PV9: 42) expresses *Wildnis* as a counterplay to “[...] culture. So, the extreme difference, culture as the one created by people, nature as the one not influenced by humans, not created by humans.” Whereas *Wildnis* is frequently associated with ‘no civilization’ (PV2; PM1; PV5; PV6; PV8; PV9; PV13; PM2; PM4) and “pure nature” (PM4:27), some interview participants emphasize the absence of human impact in *Wildnis* more specifically. As such, a park member (PM6:58) defines *Wildnis* as “an area that was not used by humans. So really the extreme, because it also exists the definition, where it is an area which was relatively little influenced by people.” Moreover, several park visitors articulate *Wildnis* as untouched nature.

*“Wildnis is in that sense when it is not humanly touched.”* (PV8:56)

Similarly, two visitors define *Wildnis* as “completely untouched nature” (PV9:73) and “actually the untouched” (PV7:49). However, interviewees also argue that *Wildnis* as untouched nature is “really more of an ideal” (PV7:49) and rather “a lost cause” (PV12:54). According to park visitors, this is partially also a matter of spatiality. As such, and with reference to Switzerland, the closeness to traces of civilization and resulting difficulty in ‘finding *Wildnis*’ is based on the lack of large, connected natural landscapes without human infrastructure. This is exemplary expressed in the two following quotes of park visitors: “In Switzerland it's difficult, I mean, you know, if you walk for five minutes, you can already see where the next street is” (PV8:60) and “It is also something that you find only very limited in Switzerland. Well, we have very beautiful nature, but really *Wildnis*? You're better off in other countries. I always associate it with how quickly you can get back to civilization, and that's also something, in Switzerland there is probably rarely a point where you wouldn't be back at a mountain hut or a village within one or two hours of walking” (PV6: 37). Therefore, *Wildnis* is frequently described in regard to an experience having abroad, such as “we have been in Africa in the *Wildnis*” (PV2:71), “make a real *Wildnis* trip in Canada” (PV6:41), “Lapland is the last great wildness area of Europe” (PM6:58), or “when you go to the Amazon” (PV8:75).

In some of interviewees’ reasoning, *Wildnis* is rather understood as a continuous scale regarding the absence of civilization and human influence as emphasized in the following: “So, the *Wildnis* is greatest where the distance to the nearest civilization is longest (laughs), I would say so now. Or there you have the most *Wildnis*. It's not like, ‘this is *Wildnis* and this is not *Wildnis*,’ such a clear line, but the wilder it gets, the less it is. So, people are allowed to be there, but the more transmission towers there are in the area, the less *Wildnis* there is” (PV9:74). Or as stated by another park visitor “and I would also say that there are things like the fact that you have no infrastructure, no cell phone reception, just any overnight accommodation such as SAC huts, etc. Actually, for me that's the supplement” (PV3:42). Although specifically referring to the SNP, the subsequent statement also points out a general way of thinking wild(er)ness as a scale: “Now if I had to define it on a scale of 1 to 10, maybe kind of like 6 to 7, or so” (PV8:59).

However, whereas the recurring features of ‘untouched’ and ‘absence of civilization’ seem to be a defining element in participants’ understanding of *Wildnis*, interviewees declare a certain paradox between the idea of absent people in *Wildnis* and the wish to still experience the latter. This is nicely point out by both a park visitor and a member who explain the contrariness between *Wildnis* as untouched nature and the simultaneous exploration of the latter by people when being in ‘wild nature’:

*“Well, I have to be honest, I don't really experience Wildnis at all. For me, Wildnis is nature without people, and as soon as too many people go in and want to experience this Wildnis, Wildnis is no longer wild. And that's why I've never been lost in the jungle, where you could say, this is now the real Wildnis around me. The most likely place is really this high alpine area, where the human being is almost, yes, so small compared to these natural forces, that one has practically no influence. But with every peak that you climb, which is wild, uhm, you just bring human civilization up there anyway. And that's also such a contradiction, isn't it? That a lot of people are looking for*

*that and want that, to go somewhere as far as possible without [having] other people [around], because they then perceive this as wild or natural. And yet, they make a summit cross on a thing everywhere, or build a cairn, or leave an entry in the summit book. Somehow, we are such walking opposites. In my understanding of Wildnis, I always have the feeling that humans can't live it out because they have to make themselves so small next to nature, and that's just not in our nature. So, I have the feeling that it is to some extent in our nature that we want to dominate nature and not vice versa." (PM4:23)*

*"But Wildnis for me is also something that I somehow never experience (laughs). So, I don't know, Wildnis is something you know from fairy tales or something where you know it's there, but you never see it. Because there is usually no Wildnis where you are." (PV9:75)*

Subsequently, *Wildnis* seems to be "a place where the human being doesn't really belong, uhm where you can visit but somehow also must have a certain respect that nature rules over there" (PM1:38). Put differently by PV5, "I feel like you see it more and are less in it" (IPV5:74). Aside from the contrarian relation between framings of 'untouched nature' and experiencing *Wildnis*, the above cited quotation of PM4 illustrates how notions of *Wildnis* are intertwined with the perceived role of humans in that specific nature. In fact, the very park member asserts the role of humans as subordinate to nature when speaking about *Wildnis*, yet also indicates how this contradicts people's desire to dominate or control nature. Further, as the following quotation shows, understandings of *Wildnis* are interwoven not only with participants' notion of humans' place in nature but consequently with conceptualizations of nature itself:

*"Wildnis is, there are also like two definitions. The one, which we do here, is that we exclude the humans and say, one lets nature really be without the humans. And on the other hand, Wildnis is something wild and that's where people actually are part of it too. And that is actually, yes that is always the way of looking at it, whether we humans belong to nature or not. Uhm, in our culture, humans rather don't belong to it, and in others, if you read reports from indigenous people like the Indians or so, they are part of nature. That's just the way it is." (PM5:42)*

Interestingly, the association of *Wildnis* with transformability and change (e.g., active natural processes discussed in section 5.4.2) present not only a counterpart to controllability and statics but seems to be important for research participants, when asked about the importance (or value) of *Wildnis*. While a female visitor highlights the meaning of *Wildnis*' variability by saying "and it just keeps changing, the *Wildnis*, the *Wildnis* doesn't stay the same" (PV1:42), she considers this also valuable as contrasting her structured daily life:

*"For me it forms an antithesis to the regulated life we normally lead, everything [is] organized, concreted, and I don't know what else." (PV1: 43)*

The perceived meaning of *Wildnis* as a counter-pole to structuredness and controllability is not limited to the personal life of interviewees but comes into play when speaking about land usage. Park member PM5 states "[the meaning of *Wildnis*] is in my opinion an important antipole to the cultivated landscape and the more or the more intensive you have a cultivated landscape, the more counterbalance you have to give again. If you had an extensive cultural landscape, then you wouldn't need so much *Wildnis*, would you? It needs a balance. But that's why it's important that you don't have to be everywhere" (PM5: 72). Here, the rationale of *Wildnis* as a counter-pole is no longer solely related to culture but contains bearing (or value; cf. chapter 6). This argumentation is shared by other park members as indicated by PM6 who addresses the 'frequent discussion of *Wildnis* or cultural landscape':

*"Uhm and cultural landscapes are extremely valuable and there is always a dispute when somewhere in the Ticino uhm a pasture is abandoned because it is too tedious to manage it. And then it becomes overgrown. And then certain people are not happy when it overgrows too much, and that this was a pasture for centuries and should remain open. And others say, 'well no, the forest is the natural biocenosis here, and it should return to what it actually was without our*

*intervention'. Uhm, yes and just the frequent discussion 'Wildnis or cultural landscape'. So, this very hesitant willingness to understand, yes, that it just needs both.'* (PM6: 37)

#### 5.4.2 *Wildnis* as an intact ecosystem allowing natural processes

A second understanding of *Wildnis* as normative imagination brought forward by interview participants relates to intact ecosystems where natural processes may run. The notion of *Wildnis* as an intact ecosystem is expressed by both visitors and members of the park but particularly by the latter. In fact, one park member especially highlights the need for conceptualizing *Wildnis* "from a landscape perspective, from an ecosystem perspective" (PM4:29). Besides, PM2 argues "[...] and nature is really intact. Or even in the forest, these forests are really jungles, so trees are criss-crossing. That is *Wildnis* (laughs)" (PM2:62). Similarly, the following quotation stresses the meaning of *Wildnis* as an intact ecosystem: "Yes I really think the importance [of *Wildnis*], there, nature is intact and yes, intact nature is extremely important for the planet" (PM1:48). In addition to approaching *Wildnis* from an ecosystem perspective for definition purposes, participants also point towards the meaning (or value; cf. chapter 6) of *Wildnis* as intact ecosystem, namely by expressing the need for those:

*"I think Wildnis should prevail much more or be much more accepted compared to what we perceive as normal in the end, namely that civilization has to be everywhere. So [...] for me it is very important. Wildnis is ultimately (...) how should I put it? Yes, it simply still needs intact ecosystems. So, in the sense of retreat. And in many places one actually already takes quite an influence on it and there I just think that nature should have more retreat and one should be more condensed, build condensed and actually give nature more space, especially in the alpine region."* (PV7:54)

*"And I think I'm convinced that it would be good for the ecosystem if we just let it be a bit more, as a matter of principle. And for me, Wildnis is also part of it, so that you just leave it as it is or at least as little as possible, we are also still part of this world. But that you also really leave places that don't belong to people first and foremost."* (PV5:79)

Both quotations approach *Wildnis* from an ecosystem perspective, yet their understanding of *Wildnis* is also connected to previously presented imaginations of absent civilization, and the role of humans in nature more generally.

Following the line of argumentation of *Wildnis* as intact ecosystem, a park visitor explains "so for me *Wildnis* is just really something that has been left to its own devices, where no one per se cares about it and accordingly nature just looks after it by itself" (PV3:42). Likewise, PM1 asserts that "*Wildnis* for me is [...] where really the elements and animals can decide for themselves, so self-determine what is going on" (PM1: 38). The pattern of thought 'nature looks after itself' appears frequently in participants' explanations in terms of natural processes and the perceived force of nature in *Wildnis*:

*"So, when water is in motion with material [referring to mudflow], you can't stop it, you can't imagine it. [...] Exactly, that is impressive. Just there was the whole forest before and now three years ago, you can't imagine that. [...] And now it is, by the trees you can still see it. [...] And just, if people had been here, then well yes. Here it is now actually Wildnis, from that point of view."* (PM7:45)

*"This is also Wildnis now, isn't it? Things where you have to say, it's of no use building another bridge here now, it's just nature, the forces of nature are here."* (PM7:61)

*"That too, the glaciers, that is also somehow Wildnis. This huge force of an ice stream, from a glacier or now here from a rock glacier, which still carries a lot of rock and just flows along very slowly."* (PM1:40)

Yet, the following quotation also indicates a certain value (cf. chapter 6) of natural processes and related process protection, thus going beyond a primarily descriptive understanding of what *Wildnis* means. In fact, PV3 states "I would basically appreciate it if there was more of that [*Wildnis*]. So, where you really leave things to their course, where nature can do what it wants, yes. Most of the time it doesn't come out badly then, yeah. The natural course of an area" (PV3:85).

### 5.4.3 *Wildnis* as sensory experience and feeling

Turning from normative imaginations to direct experiences of nature, *Wildnis* is particularly comprehended as feeling by interviewees. Yet, understanding *Wildnis* as feeling was an issue in interviewees' narratives which developed during the conversation when reflecting about their own experience in or with *Wildnis*: "I was also wondering just now if *Wildnis* is a feeling in that case [camping experience at night]? Because if you had been there during the day, it probably wouldn't have felt like *Wildnis*, would it?" (PV9:88). Hence, according to participants' line of reasoning, *Wildnis* can be considered as a situated feeling in the moment, where *Wildnis* as feeling is not necessarily bound to previously presented ideas of human absence, uncivilized land, or functioning ecosystems. *Wildnis* as feeling is mostly but not exclusively mentioned by park visitors. For example, PV7 narrates:

*"But at the same time, if you are in the alps during a mountain storm, then it is also quite wild again, then it is Wildnis too. Or if you get into a snowstorm while ski touring, then you have the feeling that it's quite wild or unpredictable and you're again so fully in Wildnis. It's just, it can come quickly [...] It can already be a thunderstorm or something like that. And then you somehow feel the force of nature like that."* (PV7:49-50)

Interestingly, thunderstorms or quick shifts in weather in general consist of a recurring element in explaining *Wildnis* as situated feeling in the moment (e.g., PV4; PV7; PV9; PM1; PM4). These situated feelings are described as a feeling of 'be on one's own', a sense of unpredictability and loss of control, overburdening, and place of longing. The following citations illustrate both an experienced feeling of being on one's own, as well as a loss in personal control and exposure:

*"Maybe that is added, I would also say that belongs to the Wildnis for me: To be exposed to something else and then you have no option to do anything against it, but you have to be able to deal with it."* (PV3:51)

*"Yes uhm (...) exactly, when I have the feeling that I experience Wildnis, is when you cannot tame the elements. So, for me Wildnis is also a landslide that was unforeseen or when a thunderstorm comes up or so, that is when I really experience Wildnis."* (PM1:46)

According to park visitors, feelings of being all on one's own and a loss of control in *Wildnis* can also lead to the experience of overburdening (PV4; PV5; PV6; PV9; PV12). As such, one participant elaborates as follows: "that came to mind earlier when you asked about *Wildnis*. It's a question of how much you want it. So, you say it always, but it can quickly turn into the negative, for example, if you're just somewhere in Canada and then you're probably quickly overwhelmed if you no longer have cell phone reception, and the next civilization is two days upriver" (PV6:111).

These feelings are closely connected with (a loss in) the corporal, sensual perception of the surrounding environment through interviewees. For instance, a park member explains, "often, I still feel that when you're out alone in the late autumn and winter, and the snow also silences all the sounds, then I feel like it's really wild. Even if it's not so wild, but then it's really wild" (PM5:70). The combination of physical and emotional experience seems to lead to an overall embodied perception of *Wildnis* which comes particularly to the fore in the subsequent statement:

*“Wildnis is actually when I feel like I’m all on my own [...] In that situation I had the feeling that now I’m on my own, now I have to pull myself together so that I can get out again somehow. So be that, when you just get somewhere outside in a thunderstorm, or often when it [weather] just quickly shifts and gets foggy, you can’t see a meter far and you actually realize what a small part you are and that you actually have no chance when your orientation senses, when the eyes are no longer useful and so and you don’t notice whether it’s going uphill or downhill.” (PV4:33;35)*

Finally, *Wildnis* seems to present a ‘place of longing’. However, in contrast to previously delineated feelings, the feeling of longing is not considered to be a situated feeling in the moment. As such, PM6 believes that “somewhere inside us there is actually this desire for *Wildnis* (laughs). But for me this is also the case” (PM6:58). On the question what *Wildnis* may be, one visitor responds: “A feeling of longing. But something that doesn’t exist very often anymore” (PV7:47). Similarly, the feeling of longing is experienced by PV9, yet with the additional specification of *Wildnis* as a place distant to civilization.

*“So, on the one hand, I personally have the feeling that I am always longing for areas that are exactly away from civilization, so to speak ‘Wildnis’. [...] But it has a certain charm, the tendency that you, or I long for it again and again. So somehow it has something appealing about it.” (PV9: 95)*

A second element which frequently occurs in the description of *Wildnis* experience refers to human-wildlife encounters when actively being in nature (e.g., PV2; PV4; PV6; PV9; PV10; PV13; PM7). This narrative can be found in interview transcripts with both members and visitors of the park; however, wild animals were mentioned more explicitly by visitors. Indeed, and with regard to a *Wildnis* understanding, one visitor specifies “for me it has a lot to do with animals, [...] and also with big animals and wild animals” (PV13:68), and another participant reflects, “somehow, I still have this classic image of *Wildnis*, where an animal comes, where I would certainly also be considerably weaker, i.e. where I would have no chance to defend myself against it” (PV4:33). Similarly, the imagination of wildlife encounters and the subsequent perceived subordination of people to animals play an important role in experiencing *Wildnis* for PV2: “Humans are small, and nature and animals big’. So, we are subordinated, we [have] to adapt absolutely and respect the rules of the animals. That also means not to go out of the tent at night, but really pay attention. It is quite different from here [the park]. There [Africa] it is just, if you have an elephant in the neck (laughs)” (PV2:75). Further, PV6 shares some thoughts on experiencing *Wildnis* in Canada by telling, “you know, you go up there on some trail and you’re there by yourself. And then there’s a sign, it has pumas and bears and it’s like ‘uhm, okay’ (laughs)” (PV6:113). Aside from the ‘animal narrative’, this quotation also links back to the previously discussed pattern of experiencing *Wildnis* somewhere distant and abroad (cf. section 5.4.1).

#### 5.4.4 How ‘wild’ is the park? Perception of *Wildnis* in the SNP

When research participants were asked how they feel about *Wildnis* in the SNP in particular, *Wildnis* perception in the park was largely guided by ideas around *Wildnis* as intact ecosystem or intact nature (e.g., PM1; PM2; PM4), observed ‘wild’ features in the landscape (e.g., PM1; PM6; PV1; PV6; PV13), the relative absence of human influence (e.g., PM2; PV3; PV9; PV12), and process protection (e.g., PV6; PV12; PM1; PM4; PM6). Members of the park generally describe nature in the SNP as something slowly developing towards *Wildnis*. For example, one park member believes that “[...] nature is on the way, it’s a secondary *Wildnis*, if you will, it’s a secondary near-natural nature (laughs). And it’s just a bit funny when that’s sold as ‘real wild’, so that’s our slogan. [...] I think it’s definitely marketing technically and also important that we somehow transport this *Wildnis* idea. But uhm, strictly ecologically it’s a bit greenwashing (laughs). It’s wild now [...] in that state, when you look at the animals, that’s okay. [...] So, the animals are undisturbed, and they appreciate that, that’s why so many are here. But the vegetation is not *Wildnis*, it’s secondary *Wildnis*” (PM4:21). “Similarly, PM6 declares in the following:

*“This is kind of a nature, which is on a good way to become wild, so it is already wild to a certain extent. So, if you now look at the dead wood and the (tree) is also quite, yes already relatively far in the decomposition, and ingrown and everything. Yes, so it is really on the way to become even wilder uhm. I mean, it's not really untouched, but for Swiss conditions quite wild.” (PM6:31)*

The second quotation particularly refers to deadwood as an example of process protection and wild element in nature. This line of argumentation is supported by another park member who enunciates “here, nature is very wild, so it's 'very wild', so it's as wild as it can. You let nature unfold, you have let the trees lying that are supposed to remain and that is really nature for me” (PM1:28). These perceptions of park members are shared by visitors mentioning deadwood as something special and a sign that nature takes its course. For instance, visitors express their fascination about deadwood by saying “what I find special is that it has quite a lot of dead wood” (PV7:12; cf. figure 10) and “what is quite fascinating are all those trees lying around everywhere” (PV13:39).

Whereas the two aforementioned quotations serve primarily as an example of deadwood as a ‘wild’ feature in nature, the following participants’ statements go beyond a visual description of the ‘wild’ and allude to the importance of deadwood as part of process protection and nature more general. As such, PV6 argues “it's much wilder than when you go hiking normally in Switzerland, because you just leave all the fallen trees, you let nature take its course and you feel that” (PV6:9). Deadwood as a particular valuable element in and for nature is highlighted in the conversation with PV1:

*“So, it has relatively a lot of deadwood around, but that is just valuable for nature.” (PV1:30)*

This argumentation also occurs in a statement by another visitor who addresses the value of deadwood for other organisms: “[...] and you know that poor tree which is dead there, but it still has some fomes that uhm take advantage of it. You know, nature does its life, it doesn't really care about us” (PV12:57).



**Figure 10.** Deadwood perceived as a ‘wild’ feature in the park by PV7.



**Figure 11.** Deadwood described as a symbol of transience by PV13.

By specifically pointing to the advantage for other organisms, the respective participant seems to emphasize the value of deadwood for non-human beings. Besides, there seems to lie an interest in the perishability of plants (and maybe nature more general): “I think that's insane how many [fallen trees] there are, if it's not removed, how much plant material and tree material is actually perishing, or dying, or rotting” (PV13:40; cf. figure 11). In the course of conversation, the interviewee further reflects upon this idea:

*“The decomposition is also shown to you in that way. We are not so used to this, that stuff just remains lying around, right? So, it's actually very cool [...]. It's also a bit of a confrontation with this transience and so, and it's also maybe something that we're missing a bit in our 'brushed' world, it's something that we totally blank out.” (PV13:144)*

Turning from deadwood to natural processes more general, the latter are perceived by visitors during their hikes in the park and the (partial) knowledge of the park's ideology can also be found in visitors argumentation, as for example expressed by PV3: “It is just very wild because you actually do nothing in the

national park, except the trails. And you don't have much influence from humans but leave the whole thing just as nature does it" (PV3:18). The course of natural processes seems to be especially defining in the understanding of *Wildnis* in the SNP: "So we define wild, or a part of *Wildnis* which we have here as process protection. That we allow this, that somewhere debris flows come down, we do not build anything, we just watch it. And then at the same time, because you want to preserve the path and uhm we also, yes one of our tasks is also to make this accessible to visitors, you are then constantly fighting against this process, in which you build these bridges and must build and rebuild them again" (PM4:27).



**Figure 12.** Mudflow at Stabelchod described by PM7.



**Figure 13.** Small wooden bridge referred to by PM4.

During one go-along with a park member (PM5), the traces left-behind of nature's power were directly visible in a river channel, which is illustrated with a corresponding quote in figure 9. Whereas the meaning of process protection in understanding *Wildnis* consist also an issue in visitors' narratives, the challenge of balancing process protection and accessibility for visitors is solely pointed out by park members.

Aside from intact nature and the course of natural processes, the perceived relative absence of human impact as well as people themselves considerably influences research participants' evaluation of the state of *Wildnis* in the park. For instance, PV12 argues "of course, we have a path so we can cross, so it's not completely wild" (PV12:56) and another visitor states "it's at the beginning of *Wildnis* already, you can say that. [...] But here it is, I have the feeling that a little bit of civilization is still there" (PV2:68,73). One visitor emphasizes on the deeper meaning of hiking trails and official behavioral rules as a 'civilized product', thus contrasting the experience of *Wildnis*:

*"[...] it's certainly not the biggest Wildnis there is in the world now, but it certainly has wild features (laughs). But walking on a paved path makes it a little less wild. Now, if we would turn right here, which you're not allowed to do in the national park, and would go into the Wildnis there, then it would feel a lot more like Wildnis. Because you're probably getting further away from a civilized product. And the path is more or less the product of a country that creates a national park, in which there are paths that are maintained, that are official, and which you're not allowed to leave. And to get away from all this 'official', you get closer to Wildnis."* (PV9:78)

Further, PM1 comments on the experience of *Wildnis* in the SNP by expounding "I do feel that you can kind of experience *Wildnis* there and that the SNP may just develop as it wants and is also very wild. But I think *Wildnis* actually starts about 30 meters from the trails" (PM1:44). Another park member shares his experience of *Wildnis* in the SNP related to his daily work:

*"There are also valleys where actually no one is allowed to go, where there are no hiking trails, no people are allowed to go. And I as a member of the park, I actually have the privilege to go there as well, to observe wildlife, to look for something. And then that's Wildnis. I think Wildnis, depending on that, I'm out for a whole day and I don't see anybody, you don't meet anybody. That's Wildnis for me. And also, no roads, no cars, no civilization."* (PM2:62)

What is interesting in both argumentations in above cited quotations, and which seem to be representative for several interviewees, is the combination of different features of *Wildnis* when it comes to experiencing the latter in the park. As such, imaginations of 'wild' elements in the landscape, 'wildlife, process protection, and the seemingly absence of human artifacts or 'civilized products' make the highly complex idea of wild(er)ness tangible for research participants.

## **5.5 The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on people's experience and perception of nature**

To examine the influence of the Covid-19 Pandemic (hereafter CP) on people's perception of nature beyond a superficial level of knowledge proved to be a challenge during the fieldwork, as discussed in chapter 4. To approach potential changes in visitors' and park members' perception of nature, talking about their experiences in nature during the CP as well as current encounters in and with nature at first turned out to be a valuable starting point for further discussion. Indeed, seemingly hidden patterns were frequently unraveled in the course of interview talks, especially when participants entered in modus of more thorough reflection during the go-alongs. Hence, the following results include both interviewees' experiences and perceptions of nature which have been influenced more or less by the CP. Whereas responses by park members refer primarily to their perceptions and interactions in the park, visitors' narrations include place-based descriptions as well as accounts for interactions with nature at places beyond the SNP. This is particularly the case due to the sampling composition of first time and recurring visitors. Yet, park members also shared experiences as private persons independently of their work-related role in the SNP.

Aside from participants' appraisal of CP's impact on their own experience and perception of nature, they often rather reported about perceived changes in other people's behavior. Indeed, 'chatting' about others became a recurring feature in conversations with research participants. However, the back and forth shifting in lines of argumentation between personal and perceived societal changes of humans' engagement in and with nature, and the subsequent positioning of participants (as the self) to society seem to illustrate the interdependency and complexity of relationships between the self and the environment including both non-human others and other people. Subsequently, personal changes (or no changes) in nature experience and perception shall be presented in the first place, before turning to described behavior patterns of other people, associated chances and challenges for humans and non-human others arising through the CP, and questions of the sustainability regarding these potential transformations.

### **5.5.1 Appraisal of personal changes in nature experience and perception**

Several research participants including visitors (e.g., PV2; PV4; PV5; PV6; PV7; PV9; PV13) and members of the park (e.g., PM1; PM2; PM3; PM4; PM5; PM6) felt no change in their perception of nature during or through the CP, at least regarding their initial responses in interviews. For instance, PM4 mentions, "so for me personally that has actually not made a big difference, purely the nature perception. Exactly, I have always been in nature before, it is not something that I have started now" (PM4:37), and a park visitor believes "But nothing has really changed regarding nature [...]. So, I don't think anything has changed for us" (PV2:127;137). Similarly, a park member describes, "I don't think it [changed] very much, because that was already the case anyway and during the pandemic we actually went out and enjoyed nature just as often as before" (PM3:26). As participants see themselves close to nature or frequently engage in activities in nature, they seem to feel rather no change regarding their own perception of nature:

*"[It didn't change] much, because I had already been out in nature a lot before. Uhm, I didn't go out even more [...]. But how I perceive nature has not changed. I already considered it as something valuable before and yes (laughs), I don't think of it as something more valuable now."*  
(PM6:78)

This is also highlighted in the following statements, “But well, I was already very close to nature before (laughs), so it hasn't changed that much. I don't know if I can become much closer to nature” (PM1:72) and “[...] but I think now my own experience of nature has not changed very much” (PV5:122). Whereas PV5 refers to no change in experiencing nature, another interviewee reflects on the long-term relationship with nature: “In the long run, for me personally, it has not changed the relationship with nature much” (PV9:133). The aforementioned quotations indicate that participants not solely thought about their perception but that the latter was mixed up with experiences in nature, their relationship in or with nature, and whether they consider nature as something valuable. Yet, one needs to consider that this may also be partially caused by the interviewers' way to ask interview questions.

### **Activities in nature**

Although several participants refer to no real change in their perception and sometimes also experience of nature during or through the pandemic, they report a variance in their activities in nature: “So the experience in and of itself didn't really change for me, but we went out into nature more than normal. So, among other things, a lot more skiing than normal, because that was about the only thing you could still do sports-wise, right? You couldn't train in the gym anymore and so on. And that's why we went running and skiing more than normal (laughs)” (PV1:49). Being outdoors more often as an alternative to sports inside constitute a frequent argument of visitors. As such PV4 remembers, “what certainly came in addition, it certainly became more like these fast [activities], so be that a quick jog from home or so, as a workout substitute” (PV4:60) and PV9 narrates, “For me it was definitely an invitation to go out into nature, because that was a phase where I was climbing and bouldering a lot, and it was hard to boulder [indoors], so I just climbed trees. And then I thought, ‘okay, what else can you do, ah yes, it's just wild garlic time, oh come on I haven't picked nettles in ages to cook things with nettles’. I did it all again, so just at the beginning of March [2020]. So, the whole short-term reaction was ‘hey cool, that's allowed, this is so nice, then I'll do that’” (PV9:113). Whether activities in nature increased was – not surprisingly –also dependent on participants' degree of perceived personal affection through the CP. As an example, a visitor largely working indoors points out, “So, you just sit at home a lot, the more you just look for the balance, right? Whether you then say, ‘hey, I'm going for a walk’, or you go somewhere with your colleague, just go on a trip, just to do something again. Yes, because otherwise you're just sitting within your own four walls, staring at the screen, depending on what you're doing (laughs)” (PV8:137). The same visitor emphasizes later on:

*“And therefore, one is actually more out in nature than before. Above all, one is consciously more in nature, not that one simply runs through, but one absolutely wants to get out.” (PV8:143)*

Besides, a general shift in daily routines caused by shutdowns (interviewees usually spoke about lockdowns) further led to being outdoors more often. This was observed by PV6 who states, “what you almost enjoyed a bit during Corona was that you had a bit more time to spend outside during this whole lockdown period. And with studies only from home, you could go out a lot during the week, which means that you tended to go outdoors a bit more than normal” (PV6: 55). Similarly, another visitor explains more frequent outdoor activities during the CP “because you had more time, maybe you worked a little less or short-time work or things like that. Or you had less to do and still had a little more time and then you just went outside a little more” (PV7:96).

However, there are also visitors who seem to have not changed or even reduced their activities in nature during the pandemic. In regard to shifts in activities, PV6 negates “no, I have been outdoors a lot before, been running a lot, so no” (PV6:53), “that was not the case for me at all. It's not that I would have discovered nature anew through corona” (PV6:61), and PV9 declares “I would say, I didn't go more or less into nature now” (PV9:125). As there were generally more people perceived to be in nature, some participants felt disturbed in their outdoor habits, leading to a reduction of their activities in nature: “I must say, so for me personally it takes a little of the charm to do these things. So especially ski tours I no longer do that often because there were just so many people. Otherwise, you were always by yourself. For me, this part of the whole thing has fallen away a bit, so I honestly do it a bit less, that's certainly one reason” (PV5:132). This line of argumentation leads to two further elements identified in shaping personal changes

of nature experiences and perception which are delineated in the following, namely the 'sharing of nature with others' and 'too many people'.

### ***Sharing nature***

Other people engaging in activities in nature play not only a role in how interviewees perceive others in nature, but also in how they experience and value nature. The need to share nature or natural places with people during the CP due to an increase in visits to these places in the pandemic presents a common feature in participants' talks. The 'sharing' narrative is well put forward by the following statements of two visitors:

*"The only perception is perhaps that you have to share it with more people, because somehow more people were on the road. Especially during Corona, there were sometimes so many people on certain mountaintops outside, as actually never were before, where I thought 'there was no one there before, why does it have so many people?' (smiles). [...] and you share it with even more people now." (PV7:86)*

*"I think it has changed mainly that I must share nature with more people. And I welcome the fact that people are interested in it and at the same time I think every nature enthusiast, or many also like to be alone in a place." (PM1:64)*

Visitors and park members seem to feel ambivalent about the need of sharing nature with more people. 'Too many people' can change the perception of a place as not natural or wild anymore, as PV5 points out:

*"And then you look into the valley, and it feels like on every hill a group runs up (laughs) right? So, it's really not normal anymore, it's almost no longer nature. [...] and it's then not so wild anymore, if we have it now about 'Wildnis'. Or if you then look into the valley and it feels like x-people are running up everywhere, then maybe it's not so wild anymore." (PV5:140;142)*

These thoughts are shared by a park member who is concerned that too many people may hinder a 'real nature experience' as "the problem is that people want to see nature, not other people, right? And if you have such an over-tourism, then depending on that, it is also something that turns people off. I always thought at the beginning, it is also a chance, you now reach people that you may not have reached before. And they somehow see the many beautiful things along the way, the many butterflies, the blue butterflies that are around here and so on. But uhm, maybe they have imagined something else, now they have to share this nature with so many others" (PM4:47). The following quotation of a park visitor seems to affirm this concern: "[...] if everyone does the same thing, it's also nothing special anymore. So, if you're walking on a hiking trail and suddenly, stupidly put, you're standing in line so you can go on the hiking trail (laughs). So, in that sense, on the other hand, of course, there's also the hope that you still have the space that you want or need" (PV8:146).

Yet, the new and partially undesired sharing of nature results in a perceived loss of what participants value when being in nature. In fact, interviewees refer to privacy in nature, thus emphasizing the meaning or importance of experiencing nature (or *Wildnis*) on one's own. PM5 explains regarding his personal experience in nature "that [it] is disturbing, when there are many other people around, then it's no longer the same (laughs). So, being alone is also part of it. That's why I also hear people when they talk while they are hiking (laughs). Then I ask myself, 'is that really necessary?'" (PM5:101). Likewise, one visitor noticed that "it got more people, in my opinion quite clearly. [...] I'm also honest, I sometimes got a little upset about it because I just appreciated the other" (PV4:60), thus alluding to the personal importance of experiencing nature without too many other people and the value of felt privacy. Moreover, PM4 believes that "this individualization, the fact that everyone wants to have their own piece of nature for themselves, where they share less, which I also have to a certain extent and therefore don't necessarily go to the park privately, also leads to the fact that people don't want to sit on a rest area with other people" (PM4:43).

However, both, visitors and park members, refer to the right of all people experiencing nature as long as they treat these natural spaces respectfully. Thus, the sharing of nature with others seems to be accepted

by participants but the tolerance is bound to conditions regarding people's behavior in nature, as indicated by PV7 and PV5, "on the other hand, it's also just fine (laughs) [...]. People should see it and be allowed to see it, and if you treat it respectfully" (PV5:134).

*"Uhm yeah, I think as long as they don't kind of leave litter and kind of behave okay and with respect for nature, I think that's absolutely legitimate that you have to share it with other people as well."* (PV7:88)

With regard to the SNP, one park member especially counters the argument of 'too many people' in the park by saying "so, it certainly had more people, it had more people, more people were out and around in the park, that was certainly noticeable, but it also surely had room for all. So, one heard then also immediately questions like 'yeah has it too many people?', 'yeah, that are way too many!'. But then I always said, 'yeah too many? All have space, it has not too many.' There were maybe just on the hiking trail a little more people crossing, but not too many" (PM2:84). Concluding, the sharing of nature with others seems to be two-sided from the perspective of visitors and members of the park. Whereas the element of 'too many people' was discussed in relation to 'sharing nature', it also has implications on participants' appraisal of risks for nature, which are presented in section 5.5.2 on challenges pointed out by interviewees.

### **Commercialization of nature**

Talking about changes in the perception of nature, interviewees and park visitors in particular frequently articulate an increased commercialization of nature and outdoor sports specifically. A perceived increase in nature commercialization is exemplary depicted by PV4 who states, "but for me, nature has clearly become a bit of a business in the last few years. And I'm convinced, I just know, for some it's a good business. So, for those who can currently earn money with any activities outside, they are making pretty good money at the moment" (PV4:66). Likewise, PV12 believes that "the sports stores, you know, the sports clothes, the mountain clothes, they made a very good business" (PV12:67). Aside from 'commercialized' (PV5), participants used the words 'business' (PV4), and 'money' (PV4; PV5; PV12; PM4). With regard to outdoor sports as a particular possibility to experience nature, visitors tended to comment rather ironically on the consumption of outdoor clothing. For instance, one participant explains "and it's just consumption involved (laughs), it's just abnormal on a Saturday at this sport shop-X in Zurich (laughs). That's just huge what's consumed there, thousands of francs for something like, "I want to try ski touring" and then there's just 3000 CHF of equipment on the body. [...] yes, it has indeed become quite commercialized, i.e., all the equipment and so on. Where on the one hand I think that's good, and on the other hand you can also go to the mountains with a normal rain jacket (laughs), that's not tragic" (PV5:132-133). Besides, a park member declares:

*"[...] and you also hear that the sports stores had quite a good season because people actively decided 'we're going hiking now', which they may not have done so before, 'but then we also need the right equipment'. I always have to smirk a bit when people appear with matching pants, T-shirts, shoes and hiking poles (laughs), where you realize that they just went to the sport shop-X once and left thousands of francs behind and bought everything [...] full package, exactly (laughs)."* (PM4:41)

One visitor especially seems to criticize such a 'bought nature experience', as they feel that a certain competing character of newly discovered outdoor sports somehow contradicts what it means for this person to be in nature:

*"And today that's actually, it became more of a competition, that no one passes you and you can show everyone that you have the latest skis. And there I felt that this has changed quite abruptly, that you actually bought this experience of nature. Be it through someone who guides you or sometimes you try it yourself with the purchased material or so and afterwards you get the feeling that you have now 'enjoyed nature'."* (PV4:60)

Although referring mostly to other people's behavior, the topic of commercialized nature is integrated in the section 5.5.1, as it seems to influence individual experiences and perceptions of nature. Yet, this also leads to the subsequent section which aims to address perceived changes in other people's behavior in nature.

### **5.5.2 'Chatting about others' - Perceived changes in other people's behavior in nature**

Whereas research participants found it sometimes difficult to articulate the impact of the CP on their personal encounters and views on nature, interestingly they seemed to feel more confident when talking about how other people's experience and interaction in nature transformed during the pandemic. Hence, what I call 'chatting about others' consists of a recurring element in interviewees lines of argumentation and refers to interviewees' subjective perception of new, inexperienced people in nature, the behavior of them in respective natural places and an associated loss of written and unwritten laws, and the importance of nature as (re)discovery and hideaway.

#### ***(Re)discovery of nature and nature as a hideaway***

In line with the general perception of more people being in nature, several interviewees argue that nature served as a hideaway for people, such as "I can also imagine that through Corona nature has indeed become a huge hideaway for a lot of people" (PV6:58) or "Well, you've certainly had one or two years in which everyone ran into nature for lack of alternatives" (PV3:72). Further, PV5 remembers "that maybe you realized that being inside all the time is really a pity, nature was like the only option" (PV5:122). For PV1, nature served not solely as a hideaway but being in nature positively affected the visitor's wellbeing: "So, I was just insanely happy when I saw the beauty. And so, I could get out and I could enjoy the freedom. I felt free. Just these experiences, you simply can't have them indoors, can you? And for me that was really incredibly important, that fulfilled me. So, I thought, at least you can still do that" (PV1:48). A sense of freedom seems to be perceived as a deciding factor in people's decision to visit natural places as argued by PV2, "so I just think people were looking for freedom (laughs). They felt they were locked up during the Corona time, and that's why they had to break out somehow, I felt that way" (PV2:126). The subsequent quotation nicely summarizes some of the different reasons and motivations for considering nature as a hideaway:

*"I already have the feeling, so you have the feeling, when you go into nature, you are alone and you just wanted to move and not see too many people because of Corona, because you didn't want to get infected. And I don't know if really everyone went into nature for nature itself or more to find a place where they can move freely and not disturb anyone and also not be disturbed [by others]." (PM1:68)*

Through increased stays in nature as a hideaway, nature seems to be newly or again discovered by people who otherwise would have less engaged in nature-based activities. The recurring pattern of 're-discovery' can be illustrated by PV6 who states, "I can just imagine that there are a lot of people who have rediscovered it a little bit" (PV6:63). Similarly, another visitor asserts, "I can also imagine [...] many people sometimes didn't even know what was immediately around them, which parks, which forest. [...] Well, I mean, I remember, sometimes I was also in Zurich and then thought to myself, 'oh yes, that's right, there's also still that'. I think that happened quite a bit and remains somewhat, because you just know, [...] because it is more in the consciousness. But it is also very much limited to one's own radius" (PV5:152). Further, PV3 elaborates, "I think humans have, or many people have now had more points of contact with nature, maybe it has sparked a little interest" (PV3:87), and PV9 argues that "you may have become more involved with nature in your walking or driving environment again" (PV9:136). The notion of nature discovery comes also to the fore in the following quotation:

*"I think a lot of people have discovered that now, 'ah actually that's totally cool to go out into nature like that'. And all these people who have bought campers, who are now on the road with it and find it great to wake up in the morning somewhere in the forest." (PM6:92)*

Interestingly, visitors and park members express such a rediscovery of nature as a natural way of reaction. As such, PM1 argues, "I think it has shown a little bit that the way back to nature is actually a pretty natural way. So that this also comes from the people themselves and I think one should remember that" (PM1:88), and PV2 shares this argumentation by believing that "there were just more people who found their way into nature, I think now" (PV2:127). The 'rediscovery' is also associated with getting closer to nature (again), as pointed out by a visitor: "I think corona brought many people closer to nature because the options were very limited" (PV12:67).

Specifically for the SNP, both visitors and members of the park referred to more people visiting the park during the pandemic as well as brought this together with a 'rediscovery' rationale. Whereas a visitor states that "I think there are more people in the national park. Perhaps many Swiss people have also become aware that Switzerland actually has a lot of beautiful things, right?" (PV1:69), a park member emphasizes, "but actually, it's also nice, I found that really nice too. Many have perhaps heard, 'yes actually in Switzerland, yes there is somewhere a national park', 'yes there is somewhere [...] in the Engadin a national park', 'yes then we go there to see how it is'. And that's also nice" (PM2:86). The positive shift of discovering nature and particularly the SNP is also addressed by PM1 who explains "And people came who perhaps live further away. So, more people came here, for example, from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, who took this route to discover this and that is also very nice that you have discovered the near [nature], or the nature in your own country" (PM1:66).

### ***'New' visitors and the loss of (un)written laws***

During the pandemic (participants mostly referred to summer 2020 and 2021), people seem to be attracted to nature who otherwise are expected to would have been less engaging in outdoor sports and activities in nature more generally.

*"So exactly, of course I perceived that extremely. With all outdoor sports, there were people who couldn't do it and have never done it (laughs) [...], these are all people who have never been outside, I have the feeling." (PV5:128)*

The perception of 'new visitors' in natural places is mentioned by both participant groups, but members of the park particularly shared their experiences with new visitors in the park (PM1; PM2; PM4; PM5; PM6; PM7). Usually, these new visitors are described by interviewees as inexperienced regarding nature-based activities, appearing with specific or lacking equipment, as well as not complying with behavioral rules. For example, PM2 remembers "what was also striking, you really noticed that many people also came to hike in the park or went to the mountains, who normally don't go very far. So really people who are perhaps rather like, really more used to beach vacations than to go to the mountains, that they do not have so much experience. Also already from the equipment, how people met one, then one saw immediately, yes with white sneakers and some sort of plastic bag they wandered around. That was still striking" (PM2:86). Similarly, another park member explains "[...] when it [restrictions] was relaxed, it just really had a lot of people in 2020, so really. And also at Grimmels, there were many. And then, there at this [info] board, I photographed a woman with half shoes and a shopping bag. So, she wouldn't have been up there if Corona hadn't been there" (PM7:92). With the perception of 'unusual hikers', associations about their otherwise travel and vacation behavior were frequently mentioned by participants.

What is further salient is that these new visitors in the SNP have been identified by park members based on their appearance (e.g., clothing) amongst their noncompliance with rules.

*"I was wondering what kind of people you suddenly see in such a place. So, it seems to me also compared to now, where all the people we met today were wearing hiking boots, were well equipped, [wore} outdoor clothes. But in 2020, in the summer, I was once in Trupchun and there*

*were people with sequined T-shirts and glittery shoes, and I don't know what. So, people where you have the feeling, yes, they seem a bit of a foreign body. So, the normal sight is that people are dressed in an outdoor style. Maybe extra, you know (laughs), so put on the good shoes because they go hiking. Uhm and just, you can afford it in Switzerland to somehow go to the sport shop-X and buy the latest branded T-shirts and then they also belong when you go hiking (laughs). Well, I often wear good hiking shoes myself, but when I know I'm going through here, I put on my sneakers or sandals. So, I don't have to go hiking overdressed (laughs). And personally, I always think you can tell by looking at people when they have some old worn-out backpack, and maybe bad shoes but know how to walk with them (laughs). Those are the real outdoor freaks (laughs)."* (PM4:41)

However, the clothing feature as an indicator of new visitors is also described in an ambiguous way, as illustrated in the quotation above. Indeed, a lack in typical hiking clothing such as hiking boots or backpacks is not always associated with inexperienced visitors. In contrast, buying branded clothing and professional outdoor equipment is also viewed as a sign of people newly attracted to sports in nature. This links back to the aforementioned rationale of increased nature commercialization and a 'bought' nature experience. On the other hand, old and outworn clothing is rather associated by PM4 with 'real outdoor freaks', thus people being frequently in nature and having considerable outdoor experience. The notion 'foreign body' referred to by PM4 is shared in the following quotation of a park member who believes that new visitors first have to find their role within the appropriated space in the SNP:

*"But I think we also had a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't go hiking, who previously had little interaction [with nature] because they didn't do anything like that. [...] and now they had the idea that they could go to the SNP. And I think with them it can have had quite an effect, that they are unfortunately not necessarily fascinated and respectful, but perhaps it is first simply something new and you cannot yet classify yourself. I have seen people who seemed totally lost in the national park (laughs) [...] they also need more time to maybe find their role a little bit."* (PM6:84)

Moreover, participants' perception of new, less familiar visitors in contrast to 'normal visitors' in the SNP and other alpine regions seems to disclose imaginations of 'typical hikers' and others who seem to belong less into the specific environment. Hence, interviewees' shared stories reveal hiking stereotypes (or maybe outdoor stereotypes) which have been challenged through different types of people engaging in and with nature during the CP.

A second pattern identified in interview transcripts consists of a loss in written and unwritten laws associated with these new visitor types. While park members specifically express the non-compliance of pre-given, written rules in the park, visitors primarily emphasize on the loss of unwritten principles when being in nature. As such, a park member states, "what I have noticed is certainly that many people came who perhaps did not know that you cannot carry a dog or so that this has increased. Uhm maybe people who were biking even though they're not allowed to do that in the SNP. [...] maybe there's been a little bit more fines handed out in the last two years. So, from that I think just a little bit more people didn't comply" (PM1:66). Likewise, another park member shares a similar experience by telling, "what I noticed is that more people just in the park (find), 'yes, now I come here and now I have a dog there and now I walk with the dog'. [...] and a kind of handling, which I don't like, so disrespectful. I have the feeling that has rather increased" (PM5:113). A lack of respectful behavior when being in nature is also reported by PM6: "I simply saw it more (laughs) that people were walking in the SNP who were not behaving in such a respectful manner. So, you saw more litter, there were clearly more people who went off the paths, who then were also not reasonable when you explained to them why they couldn't get off the path. This is really noticeable, so I had more to do with such people" (PM6:82).

Yet, park members tended to be tentative when talking about the extent of non-compliance with park rules as also "more people came, so I think proportionally it's still very few people who then don't respect it" (PM1:66). Even though "you hear, more people who don't follow the rules [...] it's kind of certainly also that if it has more people and if maybe you look at it more, possibly because it's expected. So, I don't know

if it's such a self-fulfilling prophecy or if it's really a fact that people are paying less attention to rules" (PM4:43).

In contrast to written codes of conduct, visitors perceived a loss in unwritten principles of how one should behave in nature. This comes to the fore in the following excerpt of an interview with PV4 in which keeping unwritten laws seem to constitute an important part of practicing activities in nature such as outdoor sports:

*"And as a result, many things, such as natural, unwritten laws were lost. I find that when you're on a ski tour and you meet someone else, you say hello to them. And that just got lost, so you walk past people. You come up and when the track is newly prepared, you look for the person and thank him for having skied ahead."* (PV4:60)

In addition, some interviewees felt that new visitors treated their environment with wanting respect and particularly referred to waste left behind in nature (refers to places outside the SNP). For instance, PV7 argues "that it was just over the top and the trash was not cleaned up or yes, little respect was there" (PV7:112) and PV2 points out "[...] they had extremely high levels of litter in the meadow, everywhere" (PV2:128). The perception of loss in unwritten principles goes beyond primary 'chatting about others' and evokes concern about nature, which will be further addressed in the section on challenges associated with people-nature interactions through the CP: "But then, you know, it really saddens me when I see that people cannot mind their business. They're always to rip something, to leave garbage on the floor" (PV12:80).

To summarize section 5.5.1. and 5.5.2, when talking about the personal and societal change in experiences and perceptions of nature during or through the pandemic, a common pattern rather constitutes a transformation of people-nature relationships and the positioning of the self (i.e., individual research participants) within this transformed relation than a change regarding nature itself: "Especially that has changed for me: more like people are in nature than nature itself" (PM1:64).

### **5.5.3 Challenges and chances for nature and people**

When participants were asked about challenges and chances for nature and people arising through the CP, it seemed to be a double-edged issue and opinions diverge between interviewees or are less consolidated. Whereas some argue for an increased interest in nature and subsequent positive effects on environmental consciousness and pro-environmental behavior of people, others allude to a peril of nature. In the following, perceived positive changes are delineated first, followed by challenges mentioned in go-alongs. It is worth to notice that in some conversations with interviewees, opportunities and challenges are often discussed regarding the 'environment' more generally instead of talking solely about 'nature'. Whether positive or negative trends outweigh each other also seem to depend on participants' assessment of how sustainable these transformations effectively are (cf. section 5.5.3).

#### ***Chances and opportunities for humans and non-human others***

Positive shifts regarding human-nature interactions are frequently associated by visitors and park members with a general change in lifestyle and travel behavior due to the pandemic's restrictions. Indeed, two participants believe "that perhaps it has also opened the eyes a little on certain points. And even people who flew five times a year became aware of this or thought about it to some extent" (PV6:70), and "[...] that this Corona time certainly also [showed] people who perhaps also realized, 'yes, you actually can also make nice vacation in Switzerland. You don't necessarily have to fly to America three times'" (PM2:88). Following that, PM3 assumes that "quite a lot of people now, through novel experiences in nature during the pandemic in their own country, came to appreciate that a little bit better, what is available nearby" (PM3:30). Aside from an orientation of travel behavior inside Switzerland, changes in lifestyle also contain the consumption of local products and self-supply. According to PV8 "people's lifestyles have changed quite a lot" (PV8:137) and PV9 specifies "that you suddenly realized, 'ah okay, then I'll try to use my garden better again, use it

differently' [...]. So, to head in the direction of self-sufficiency. And [...] maybe going shopping locally" (PV9:140). This statement is supported by PV12 who explains, "it was also a big fashion to consume locally, to go to the farmers" (PV12:133).

As different groups of people have been more actively in nature, interviewees argue for a stronger interest in and enhanced awareness about nature. As such, PV12 argues, "then on the other hand, you say 'okay, people come in nature so that's good for them'. So maybe, you know, there's a hope that they become more aware of certain things" (PV12:80), and PV13 thinks that "it has really created a bit more of an awareness" (PV13:260). Similarly, PM1 states "well I think some awareness has come up" (PM1:92) and PV4 emphasizes "so perhaps I see chances in this respect, that people who have not been involved with it so far may now perhaps deal with it and then at some point perhaps also see for example what is worth protecting or what isn't or what is changing there" (PV4: 66). Importantly, the respective visitor associates an increased interaction of people in nature with an enhanced appreciation of the latter. Moreover, PV7 considers the CP as a 'catalyst' for raising environmental consciousness: "I think maybe if more people are outside and perceive that, they also have a more conscious handling of the whole thing. Certainly, also the whole climate issue, so Corona was surely a catalyst that climate issues became even more topical" (PV7:116). Based on a perceived increase in environmental awareness, one visitor in particular articulates pro-environmental action as a positive effect supported during the pandemic:

*"So that's a thesis I'm putting forward now, because more people were in nature and paused and realized what it gives to them and are now also ready to stand up for it, to fight for it, and also to push through these concerns politically or at least to support them. Therefore, it is perhaps something positive that a return to nature took place in the corona pandemic. And one hopes now that this 'green wave' will last a little longer, yes."* (PV7:116)

A slightly different line in argumentation consists of perceived benefits of nature for human wellbeing. Thus, interviewees (e.g., PV2; PV5; PV10; PV12) share the opinion that being in nature has generally positive effects on people and this may not only strengthen environmental awareness but support the wellbeing on a societal level. This argument is exemplary brought forward by PV2:

*"But for the people (it is) of course a chance, those who have found to nature, who then also notice that they feel better when being in nature [...]. And this is also good, because that contributes to the human being's mind. And humans are then, I don't know, maybe less aggressive, less loud. And this again contributes to a better community. So, those who really feel it. Those who just walk through without thinking much about it, I think they are the others. [...] yes, exactly who then may not enter this connection, exactly. [...] Maybe if they can really go to nature, immerse themselves in it and draw energy and strength from it, for them it is a chance, or also to become calmer and canny."* (PV2:149)

As also illustrated in the subsequent quotation of PV10, raised environmental awareness, increased care for nature and pro-environmental actions are considered to be the main opportunities for human-nature relationships in regard to the CP.

*"I have the feeling that through the experiences that one has made in nature or just that people who are perhaps otherwise rather a lot indoors and do not go outside so much and went outdoor afterwards, that they have just perceived the beauty of nature and have noticed like 'wow, that makes me feel totally good' or so. And maybe this also gives people the chance to realize that you have to care about the world. Uhm, because they have experienced how beautiful it can be, or maybe they have experienced that there is a lot of waste in one place and were shocked or thought, 'that can't be'. And I think such things, if you experience it yourself[...] it brings you much more to really take care of it afterwards or to proactively do something or to ask other people to do something, whatever. It can also be very small things. I think this has been an opportunity or is an opportunity when people experience it themselves."* (PV10:216)

Furthermore, the respective visitor highlights the many aspects that may lead to such an improved awareness and pro-environmental behavior, thus linking back to previously presented results and summarizing well the most important points raised by interviewed visitors. In particular, active experiences in nature, aesthetic appreciation and perceived wellbeing are pointed out by PV10 in the above statement.

### ***Challenges emerging from people-nature interactions***

In contrast to positive effects on human-nature relationships, visitors and park members also referred to challenges arising from people's interaction in and with nature during the CP. In fact, participants share the opinion that people's handling with nature has not necessarily turned to the positive based on increasingly being in natural places, thus diverging from the perception of fostered environmental awareness and pro-environmental action. This is expressed by PM5 who thinks "humans did not become more sensitive to nature. So, you know that they would have more respect" (PM5:113), and by PV9 questioning an increase of environmental consciousness: "But the consciousness of humans, I don't know. Do you think that has changed a lot? I don't have the feeling" (PV9:135).

Several interviewees argue for a challenge regarding the many people suddenly engaging in nature-based activities without the required respect towards non-human others. As such, PV10 declares that "the challenge is certainly also that a lot more people are outdoors, especially camping, for example, is something that I think has increased extremely, a kind of wild camping and leaving stuff lying around and so on, which I see as a challenge, I have the feeling, and perhaps also as a burden for nature" (PV10:212). This perception is supported by a statement of a park member who noticed "that many were on the road and unfortunately also, for example, how nature then got harmed, because people went out and ran there, where you should not and left waste" (PM6:78). Similarly, PV12 associates more people in alpine nature with the risk of additional waste, and the person expresses "it also saddens me when there's a lot of garbage in nature. You know, it comes with more people in the mountains, the more mess they do" (PV12:80). Moreover, one visitor has "the feeling that the handling was perhaps somewhat intrusive. Yes, I think many people underestimate nature and just go, [...] it is difficult to describe, yes, one has just simply taken it (nature), right?" (PV5:148). Hence, a park member formulates the following challenge regarding future people-nature interactions:

*"I think the challenge will be that now just more people go out into nature. On the one hand, we want people to go out into nature, but on the other hand, we don't want too many people to go out. On the other hand, again, we don't want them, we just want respectful people. And I think the challenge will really be that more people will go to nature and just a part of them unfortunately will not be so respectful. And I think the challenge for our society is to get such people to be more respectful. Nature can't do anything about it (laughs), uhm yeah, it's like the stage."* (PM6:92)

Notions such as a 'burden for nature' (PV10:212), 'nature suffers' (PV8:153; PM7:100), 'bad for nature' (PM1:90), and 'nature got harmed' (PM6:78) point to interviewees' perception of nature at peril. The risk for nature to get harmed due to less respectful or simply 'too many' people is also described as a pattern observed particularly in the SNP by park members:

*"Well, in certain places, nature has suffered. Because let's say on Alp Grimmels, if it had lasted even longer, we should have 'asphalted'. So [...] the lawn was then quite [worn out]."* (PM7: 100)

Interestingly, the respective park member reflects on the differences of people's relation with nature in the park with other sites of nature experiences: "But here [SNP] it was different than in Zurich or at the lakes or I don't know where. Those who then went into nature there, who maybe had never been in nature, but because they could go into nature, they were free and otherwise yes, that was then quite a different relationship" (PM7:100). Additionally, PM4 names the example of trail erosion in the park caused by increased numbers in visitors: "this mass of people, the erosion of trails is maybe one of those stories where I'm not sure if that's going to happen. But it's probably going to happen as soon as there's somehow a lot more people on the trail" (PM4:49).

According to few park members (PM2; PM4), a second concern or challenge consists of a 'superficial nature experience', meaning the loss in a 'real nature experience' due to the amount of people visiting natural places. As such, PM4 indicates:

*"And just because people aren't getting the experience that they're hoping for because all the other tourists are there, the nature experience isn't happening, or only superficially. [...] If you just walk by here once quickly, all you really see is 'there's a hut, a grazed meadow, and a lot of people lying around or standing around or sitting around.' And you don't have the feeling that this is so super close to nature anymore. [...] In principle, I think one of the big challenges in everything in the world is that everything remains so superficial, so the instagramization of perception. And uhm, I don't know how it's feasible to counteract that."* (PM4:49)

The above quotation further highlights the opinion that the presence of other people changes the perception of a natural to a less natural place, thus hindering people in experiencing nature. Although not explicitly articulated by interviewees, such a superficial nature experience might challenge the development of a long-lasting respectful handling with nature.

#### 5.5.4 Temporal dimension of change - questions of sustainability

When it comes to participants' appraisal of the sustainability of described shifts in people's behavior in and interaction with nature, visitors (e.g., PV1; PV3; PV7; PV8; PV9; PV12) and members of the park (e.g., PM1; PM2; PM3; PM4) tend to agree on an a rather unsustainable development, as exemplary pointed out by PV1, "[...] but I do not believe in a great sustainability of this" (PV1:70). This temporal dimension of change applies to both the SNP and places beyond the park. As such, PM1 explains "at first, I saw an opportunity and now what I observe is more that it is not as sustainable after all, that many people feel they have to catch up. And that's rather bad, at least for nature" (PM1:90). This perception can be found too in the following narratives of PM2 and PM3:

*"It's just that people are so vain or eager to consume that now everyone is flying again or traveling far away, well, me too [...] like a three-day fever, so on the whole, unfortunately it's only of short-term meaning."* (PM3:30)

*"It has been normalized so far. So, you also notice that the people, the Swiss, can travel to the beach, to the sea again. [...] But this summer you immediately noticed that these people are actually no longer here, that many went abroad again."* (PM2:12;86)

Likewise, another park member perceived "a bit of a relaxation" as "there are certainly not as many visitors as there were before" in the park (PM4:47). The perceived short-term dynamic contrasts participants' initial expectation, as "in the beginning, it looked as if it was somewhat 'back to the roots' with Corona. But I don't think that's really sustainable" (PM4:51). Instead of going 'back to the roots', PV12 assumes that "people are very attached to their habits" (PV12:133) and PV3 does not "feel like it's going to be particularly long term. Therefore, my feeling tells me that soon you go back to the old habit, and you will be less in nature, as you were in the last few years" (PV3:87). Hence, PV5 argues "I also have the feeling that it's over again for many people. Or those who have now only done it during Corona" (PV5:139).

However, few visitors shared more optimistic thoughts with regard to the pandemic's long-term effects on the human-nature relationship. Indeed, PV13 states, "I think it certainly has some lasting effects, so I'm sorry but people can't be that stupid. So no, something certainly triggered it, but yes, and you can only see that over time, right?" (PV13:291). Particularly for outdoor sports, one visitor believes in a rather sustainable development: "I have the feeling, outdoor sport is sustainable. Well sustainable? It has certainly changed so that it also remains a little, I have the feeling. So, I don't think that there will be fewer bikers again in a year, I can almost not imagine that" (PV5:153). Furthermore, the same visitor argues, "if now not everyone discovers that, but only every second one, then that's already a lot. Yes, I think that remains

somehow” (PV5:155). Interviewees’ appraisal of the pandemics’ influence on people-nature interaction regarding a temporal dimension is particularly interesting when it comes to suggestions and ‘hopes’ in terms of long-lasting sustainable effects through the CP (cf. chapter 6).

## Chapter 6

# Discussion

## Intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values associated with human-nature-wildness relationships in the Swiss National Park

---

This chapter provides a more condensed discussion of previously presented research findings. The discussion particularly focuses on conceptualizations of wilderness and wildness within the experiences and perceptions of the park's nature. Hence, in the first part, 'ecosystem wildness', 'place-specific determined wildness', and wildness as 'embodied feeling or affective event' are expounded as identified understandings of wildness with reference to related scientific conceptual approaches (section 6.1). Secondly, the different contributions of nature to people and other non-anthropogenic values experienced and articulated by participants during their hikes are addressed by using a relational values lens. As such, relational values emerging from participants' relationship with nature in the park are discussed more thoroughly amongst the intrinsic and instrumental values associated with the SNP (section 6.2). This serves as a basis for a better understanding of the possible influences of the CP on these values, as proposed in section 6.3. Thirdly, section 6.4 illuminates some methodological considerations based on fieldwork experiences regarding the suitability of go-alongs in identifying values emerging from being in nature. Finally, the chapter concludes by acknowledging the limitations of this study and providing an outlook on further potential research directions.

### 6.1 Embodied perception and normative understandings about nature, wilderness and wildness

“*Wildnis' is nature*” – this statement of a park member (PM3:20) exemplary illustrates the strong interlinkage of nature and wild(er)ness conceptualizations in the SNP found in interviewees' narratives. Whereas perceptions and underlying understandings of these very two concepts were presented separately in the results, the following discussion will address them together, with a particular focus on *wilderness* and *wildness*. As for 'nature' and 'wild(er)ness', embodied experiences and perceptions merge with normative, discursive imaginations held by participants about the latter. In that sense, site-specific sensory perceptions of 'natural', 'diversified' and 'wild' elements in the landscape come together with culturally rooted ideas about what constitutes the 'wild' and 'natural' (Backhaus, 2010; cf. chapter 5). Nature in the SNP is thus experienced and subjectively perceived on a corporeal, sensory dimension, intertwined with aesthetic feelings regarding specific biophysical and environmental elements in the landscape such as deadwood and mountain scenery, but also roads, buildings, and hiking trails. Fundamentally entangled with these in-situ, place-bound perceptions and normative notions seems to be the view of 'human's place in nature'. The latter presents a recurring and underlying theme in visitors' and park members' argumentation of wild(er)ness in relation to 'nature', non-human others, and the human being itself.

Trying to account for at least some guidance in discussing these concepts in the following, I define 'nature' in the broadest sense and in line with Rose and Carr (2018: 270) as a term loaded with socially constructed meanings, but simultaneously including the biophysical materiality of the non-human world (e.g., plants, animals, rocks). Thus, 'nature' and 'humanity' are understood as rather not presenting delimited entities (ibid). I consider such a broad definition of nature as particularly important because interviewees themselves bring forward different and sometimes 'conflicting' understandings of 'nature',

frequently referring to the non-human world (excluding human artifacts) when talking colloquially about nature but tend to include human beings in the latter when asked explicitly about the meaning of nature. As expounded by Deplazes-Zemp (2022: 100), the two interpretations of nature including or excluding human actions and products play an important role in the contemporary Western discourse of nature. While results of this thesis are not based on discourse analysis, the interweavement of human-nature relationships with nature conceptualizations in interviewees' narrations picked up some of these aspects inherent to this discourse.

As for wild(er)ness, I differentiate between *wilderness* and *wildness*. Whereas I refer to the former in the subsequent discussion as the imagination of 'pristine', 'untouched' nature, a specific Western notion of wilderness rooted within the historical-cultural context of patriarchal colonialism (Cronon 1996; Ward, 2019), often accompanied by problematic ideas of remote nature as '*terra nullius*' (Fernández-Llamazares, 2020), and a dichotomous human-nature understanding (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020), I use the term *wildness* as an alternative to account for an understanding based on intact, functioning ecosystems, natural processes and the 'self-willed', non-human autonomy of nature (Ward, 2019). Besides, *wildness* can also describe a specific place-based and corporeally experienced 'affective event' (Vannini & Vannini, 2020: 3). As elaborated in the results, *wildness* as 'situated embodied feeling in the moment' presents such an affective event. In contrast to wilderness which is frequently understood as a counter pole to civilization (and culture; cf. chapter 4), *wildness* does not categorically exclude humanity but presents a 'social relational achievement within human and more than human worlds' (Ward, 2019: 44). Besides, I consider wilderness and *wildness* not as separate from nature, but rather as an allocation of meaning towards a specific space in nature or characteristics of the latter (see also Kangler, 2009; 2021). Even though I argue that the kind of '*Wildnis*' strived for in and by the park is closer to *wildness* and this notion is shared by several participants, ideas of wilderness are still inherent in some of visitors' and park members' argumentations, as the following rather 'extreme' statement exemplifies:

*"Wilderness? Completely untouched nature; nature, flora, fauna, (...) maybe humans? (laughs) So uncivilized [...] people who still live in a very primordial way, perhaps some indigenous peoples, for me they also belong to it [wilderness]." (PV9:73)*

While the very quotation particularly well highlights the separation between wilderness and civilization, the underlying problematic process of othering 'us' as *civilized* versus 'indigenous peoples' as *uncivilized* seems to be most striking. Yet, it needs to be considered that statements such as the above present rather an exception in participants' argumentation in this thesis. Particularly inspired by the work of Kangler (2009; 2021), Vannini and Vannini (2020), and Ward (2019), I will discuss participants' perception and underlying understandings of *wildness* in the park as 'ecosystem-wildness', 'place-specific determined wildness', and *wildness* as 'embodied feeling or affective event'. As *wilderness* imaginations are addressed in section 5.4.1 and rather seem to constitute general discursive ideas instead of park specific experiences and perceptions, notions of wilderness by interviewees are not discussed in further detail.

### **'Ecosystem wildness'**

The notion of *wildness* as functioning ecosystems is especially present in park members' argumentation from a nature conservationist perspective. Yet, ecosystem *wildness* is also inherent in visitors' expression of *wildness*, although they applied less specific scientific related vocabulary. Importantly, ecosystem *wildness* is not understood as geographically limited to the SNP but rather constitutes a place-independent understanding of *wildness*, thus being transferable to any natural space where nature can freely develop by itself without human management impacts. According to interviewees, *wildness* as functioning ecosystems include the perception of a dynamic self-willed nature, where natural processes are allowed to take their course. There exists an underlying belief and trust in participants' narratives that reducing or easing human management of ecological processes and non-human others foster functioning, 'healthy' ecosystems. Regarding the SNP, the 'autonomy of the more-human world' is perceived by visitors and park members through events and the traces of these left behind in landscape (Ward, 2019). As such, mudflows (e.g., PM7), rock glaciers (e.g., PM1), a natural streambed (e.g., PM5), or deadwood (e.g., PV1; PV7; PV13; PM6) and

natural bush encroachment (e.g., PM5), or unrestricted animal moving (e.g., PV4; PM1) are described as examples of natural processes and the perception of self-determination and force of intact nature.

In line with von Atzigen and Bauer (2019) engaging with wildness from a socio-scientific perspective, the SNP portrays an example of active, free nature development, enabled through the political decision to set aside land with the purpose to regain a state of wildness through process protection (e.g., secondary wildness) (Kupper, 2012). Paradoxically, although people are not actively steering nature in the park, humans are simultaneously part of wildness, as they 'allow' nature to 'look after itself'. Indeed, a similar argumentation was found in interviewees' talks (cf. section 5.4.2). Moreover, the results of this thesis indicate that the idea of "letting nature be nature" leads to 'wildness' does not exclusively appear in a nature conservation discourse (Kangler, 2009: 263), but also occurs in non-conservationist visitors' approach to wildness. However, as briefly addressed in chapter 4, visitors who participated in go-alongs are considered to have a rather high level of education and seemed to be mostly familiar with some of the ideologies behind the park label, thus presumably have been (well) informed about process protection.

### ***Place-specific determined wildness – park wildness***

With place-specific determined wildness I refer to the perception of wildness in the landscape in and around the SNP. This may include the whole landscape itself or single elements in the landscape which are perceived by participants as wild features. Drawing on Kangler (2009; 2021), determined wildness means the subjective perception of a wild landscape. In contrast to ecosystem wildness, wildness based on the specific landscape perception in and around the park constitutes an understanding which is situated and cannot be applied universally. However, I would argue that memories and the relationship of participants to specific landscape elements (e.g., the type of vegetation) can allow a partial transferability to similar perceived places or landscapes. Moreover, park-specific determined wildness is experienced and perceived in an embodied manner. For instance, during a go-along with a park visitor (PV3), the hiking trail was covered with debris, no longer visible and walkable that easily. Through searching the path and the need to bypass some of the bigger rocks, debris as a natural process became embodied by the respective visitor (and me, as a researcher).

Aside from natural processes which seem to be constitutive for both ecosystem wildness and determined wildness in the park, deadwood in the SNP is highly recognized by visitors (and park members) and evokes a general fascination, as well ecological and aesthetic appreciation (cf. section 5.4.4). Deadwood in the park is perceived by visitors as rather unique and holds symbolic meaning of wildness alongside the ascribed ecological relevance for non-human others by interviewees. This finding might be especially of interest for the park, as it enriches previously conducted research on visitors' perception of deadwood (Hunziker, 1997; Backhaus et al., 2013). Whereas the perception of deadwood as being relatively aesthetic is shared in results from a quantitative study by Backhaus et al. (2013), interviews of this thesis newly highlight the recognition of deadwood as an important element naturally belonging to intact nature. As such, I argue that deadwood is not simply a merely accepted element but presents a unique and wildness associated experience for visitors in the SNP.

In general, the SNP is perceived by the visitors in this study as relatively wild compared to other alpine regions in Switzerland. Yet, both visitors and park members tend to rather not speak about complete wildness in the SNP. Whereas park members' perception of the parks' 'wildness state' is influenced through the recognition and knowledge of legacy effects in the landscape due to intensive land management previous to the park establishment, visitors primarily point to visible or hearable traces of civilization (e.g., park infrastructure, road noise) leading to a reduced wildness experience. This type of argumentation seems to reveal again notions of wilderness in the sense of a counter pole to civilization and human artifacts.

### ***Wildness as affective event and embodied feeling***

As pointed out by Vannini and Vannini (2020: 3), "wildness is more than a geographical abstraction. For many people it is simply a 'personal feeling'". Indeed, the meaning of wildness as an affective event is mentioned by several visitors and few park members. Yet, wildness is more than a personal feeling, as it

involves an encounter between human and more-than-human others (whereas the latter are understood as autonomous and self-willed) (ibid). An understanding of wildness as a situated embodied experience (e.g., human wildlife encounters, being caught by a thunderstorm) or feeling (e.g., being on one's own, feelings of exposure and loss of control; cf. section 5.4.3) in a specific present moment differs from previously discussed conceptualizations. As such, the experience of wildness is neither necessarily bound anymore to 'wild' biophysical elements in the landscape nor characterized by a 'distant relationship' between humans and nature. Instead, the very relation of participants with the non-human world in that specific moment in time seems to be decisive for wildness as an affective event. Whereas understandings of wildness as ecosystem rather tend to focus on the non-human world where humans are in the role of an observer, wildness as embodied feeling much more emphasizes the (active) co-presence of non-human others and human beings. Partially through the spontaneous nature of wildness as an affective event and embodied feeling, these experiences are not limited to the SNP but in fact may be encountered also in places which would otherwise not be considered as wild.

Finally, examining perceptions of nature and wildness (and wilderness) in the SNP highlight the mutual interlinkage of both concepts as well as their construction through culturally embedded imaginations and situated, embodied experiences. In line with Plumwood (1998) and Vannini and Vannini (2020: 7), I argue that wild(er)ness as a value laden and multilayered concept should not be abandoned completely, but rather needs to be critically discussed in situated contexts, to create "new, non-colonizing understandings" that acknowledge the co-presence of humans and more-than-human others in what we perceive as spaces of wildness.

## 6.2 Values emerging from visitors' and park members' relationships with nature

As delineated in detail in the result section, different environmental values (EVs) unfold implicitly and explicitly in participants' narratives. Intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values emerge from embodied experiences in the parks' nature itself as well as from the multiple underlying relationships of interviewees with nature. In line with other empirical studies on relational values, I found that different types of EVs often coexist in visitors' and park members' argumentation. Thus, I argue that the theoretical framework of relational values as a third category of EVs provides a useful perspective to account for these plural values and forms of valuing nature, human-nature and people-people relationships (Arias-Arévalo et al., 2017; De Vos et al., 2018; Hoelle et al., 2022). As such, the following discussion aims to offer primarily an empirical insight into EVs within the geographical context of the SNP going beyond the intrinsic-instrumental value dichotomy frequently appearing in nature conservation practice (Himes & Muraca, 2018: 1). Indeed, amongst intrinsic and instrumental values, relational values as "preferences, principles and virtues" deriving from participants' "meaning saturated relationships" with nature considerably account for identified EVs during the fieldwork (Chan et al., 2016: 1462; Chan et al., 2018: A3). For this reason, non-anthropogenic intrinsic and anthropogenic instrumental values associated with nature and wildness<sup>10</sup> will be addressed first, before discussing relational values of visitors and park members more thoroughly in the subsequent section. An overview of all EVs addressed by both visitors and members of the park is provided in table 4. The discussion focuses mostly on the content of identified EVs and how they emerge from embodied experiences and relations (instead of emphasizing on the valuing process itself).

<sup>10</sup> The term wildness is applied as identified EVs regarding 'Wildnis' in the park are based on an understanding of the latter being closer to wildness than wilderness (e.g., EVs associated with intact ecosystems and natural processes falling into the understanding of wildness as 'non-human autonomy'; Ward, 2019). For the subsequent discussion, I understand wildness as part, yet specific element of nature. Thus, when referring to values about nature or human-nature relationships, this does not necessarily exclude wildness. Whenever values refer to the latter in particular, this will be indicated respectively. This is partly due to interviewees' tendency to speak about nature in a colloquial manner, sometimes including meanings of wildness without framing them as such.

### 6.2.1 Intrinsic and instrumental values of nature in the SNP

Intrinsic (valuing nature for its own sake) and instrumental (valuing nature for the sake of humans) reasoning for protecting nature still constitute a critical argument in nature conservation and should not totally be neglected in favor of relational value (Chan et al., 2016). The idea that non-human or more-than-human others as part of nature have a good as an end in themselves is deeply rooted within Western conservation practice where the ascription of intrinsic value to nature seems to remain at ‘the heart of conservation mission’ (Batavia & Nelson, 2017: 373). However, as pointed out by O’Connor & Kenter (2019: 1252), intrinsic values themselves can be interpreted in multiple ways and are frequently understood in an abstract and generalizable manner (e.g., biodiversity constitutes a good in itself). Less often, the complexity inherent in these intrinsic values gets explicitly addressed (Batavia & Nelson, 2017; Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). Based on the perspective of relational values applied in this research, the discussion of these complexities remains limited.

Nonetheless, through the nature of this case study, namely presenting a strict nature reserve (cf. IUCN nature protection category; Dudley, 2008; Parc National Swizzer, 2022) with key interests in process protection and wildness development (or secondary wilderness) amongst research and informational purposes, intrinsic values are strongly related with the park and brought forward by visitors and park members themselves. Intrinsic values assigned to nature in the SNP by participants include ‘*the right of nature*’, ‘*habitat creation/living environment for all species*’, and ‘*natural processes and the creative transformability of nature*’. As for the former, nature as an end in itself is expressed by interviewees in the sense that all non-human beings have the right to live, and “that it [nature] is simply there and exists” (PM6:54). Simultaneously, through ascribing rights to non-human others, this contains a moral claim, as “the entity [non-human others] must be morally considered for its own sake; it has moral standing” (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023: 4; brackets adjusted by author). Yet, the intrinsic value of non-human species often seems to be linked with a general fascination for different non-human beings and ‘all life in nature’, thus also going into the direction of the biophilia hypothesis (which is rather relational than intrinsic) originally proposed by Wilson (1984). The latter shall not be discussed further in this thesis, as it opens up different conceptual spaces of discussion.

Additionally, nature is valued by interviewees for creating habitat to all species, including non-human and human beings. This differs from a solely instrumental perspective on nature as ‘life insurance’, where habitat provisioning is primarily valued as a means to secure human’s lives instead of understanding human and non-human beings together as a ‘whole of living beings’ (cf. table 4). However, one could argue that in participants’ argumentation of habitat creation for both human and non-human beings, the intrinsic value is not entirely non-anthropogenic anymore, thus leading to a certain inconsistency in value categorization between non-anthropogenic and anthropogenic intrinsic value.

Besides, natural processes are considered to be important for a ‘healthy’ and intact ecosystem. Following that, natural processes are believed by participants to belong to nature and thus should be allowed to take their course, at least in places such as wildness areas or national parks (cf. section 5.2.4 and 5.4.2). These intrinsic values may also be viewed more specifically as values ascribed to wildness, as they address the “the self-willed and self-sustaining qualities of non-human nature” associated with the latter (Ward, 2019: 46). The intrinsically valued autonomous, ‘self-willed’ aspect of wildness (or wild spaces) is also illustrated in interviewees language when speaking about the ‘rights of nature’ (cf. table 4). Likewise, the running of natural processes or natural cycles is regarded as a specific quality and ecological value of wildness by Fisher (2016). Interestingly, natural processes are also associated with a creative transformability of nature by visitors in particular. Indeed, I argue that the creative ability of nature is not only intrinsically valued, but also involves a relational aesthetic sensation experienced by visitors when perceiving wild features in the parks’ landscape (cf. section 5.1.1). Hence, there is also a relational element inherent in valuing natural processes and the creative transformability of nature.

**Table 4.** Overview on identified intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values deriving from participants' relationship with nature in the SNP. Values marked with an asterisk (\*) are considered to have been especially relevant in the context of the CP.

Value type	Value	Description of value	Sample quote
Intrinsic Value (intr. V)	<i>The right of nature*</i>	Nature's holds a value in itself; all non-human beings have a right to live	"[...] what the own value of an intact nature is. So not simply for the benefit of us humans, but yes, these plant and animal species simply have the right to live here and that has a value in itself." (PM6:94)
	<i>Habitat / living environment for all species</i>	Nature provides habitat for all species, including non-human and human beings; differs from 'life insurance' through an intrinsic instead of instrumental valuing process	"But that it basically has a great value, anyway [...]. Regardless of what it is now for humans, or so. And yes, that it creates habitats for other creatures." (PV5:85) "I really believe the meaning (of wildness), there, nature is intact and yes, intact nature is extremely important for the planet, for all living beings including humans and that's why wildness is really very, very important for me. But not in a selfish sense, but for the planet I think it's very important." (PM1:48)
Relational element inherent in intr. V	<i>Natural processes and the creative transformability of nature</i>	Natural processes are considered to be important for a 'healthy' and intact ecosystem; natural processes belong to nature and should be allowed to take their course;	"[a mudflow] is a natural process, it's part of it, it's part of nature." (PM2:100). "I would basically appreciate it if there was more of that [wildness]. So, where you really leave things to their course, where nature can do what it wants, yes. Most of the time it doesn't come out bad then, the natural course of an area." (PV3:85)
Instrumental Value (inst. V)	<i>Monetary benefits of nature-based tourism*</i>	Considering nature-based activities as a source for industry and economy; 'nature as a business' in tourism	"And there I felt that this has changed quite abruptly, that you actually bought this experience of nature. Be it through someone who guides you or sometimes you try it yourself with the purchased material or so and afterwards you get the feeling that you have now enjoyed nature." (PV4:60)
	<i>'Life insurance' and resources for human life</i>	Valuing nature as functioning ecosystems for providing livable space for human beings	"It is our life insurance, so without nature we cannot live at all. Nature, and thus of course biodiversity and so on, is the basis for everything we need. In this respect, we haven't disengaged ourselves from nature, we can't live at all without functioning ecosystems. That's one thing, that's what you also always like to say to convince people why nature is so important." (PM4:35)
Relational Value (RV)	<i>Individual identity</i>	Nature is considered to be part of one's own identity	"Then, of course, there's the relation to it [nature], it's like part of life, that's how you have to put it. It's sort of part of one's own." (PV8:107)
	<i>Place attachment</i>	Meaning attachment to a place in nature based on situated memories, emotions, and activities (work) associated with this place; emotional bond to a place in nature	"And he coached me like a fatherly friend and then I spent a lot of time in the Mingèr, also with the park guard who was on duty there. And there was a tree like this one. He said, "Oh you know, this is my favorite tree". It was also a tree like this one, but it was a spruce and not a mountain pine. [...] every time I walk by there, I think of that park ranger, his favorite tree (laughs)." (PM5:91)
	<i>Care*</i>	The desire to look after nature or aspects in nature that matter to someone; includes feelings of affective concern about nature, as well as practical action, i.e., care for nature	"Yes, also that you have to take care [of nature], I think many got this again. Or why one must take care." (PV6:68) "Somehow it showed again even more that nature is really fragile and that you have to take care of it." (PM1:72)

Continuation of table 4.

Value type	Value	Description of value	Sample quote
Relational Value (RV)	Stewardship*	An action in the pursuit of sustainability, including pro-environmental behavior; actions of stewardship are often motivated through principles of care and respect towards nature	<p>"So, also the waste, that is not an issue for us to take the waste, we have it now also in the backpack. Yes, also not picking plants, that one does not pull off these (plants) (PV2:89-90)"</p> <p>"I am very active in nature conservation, now also on the board of a nature conservation organization, so I see myself kind of in a protective role of nature, as best as I can. And I also have the feeling that I must and should fight for this. And that it is also good and that these are also values that I can stand behind and that it fits my values to do this and that is why I want to do it." (PM1:60)</p>
	Knowledge*	The value of personal knowledge acquisition in and about nature; the sharing of knowledge about nature with other people	"Also, another value is, of course, that you can research things and I find that very valuable." (PM6:54)
	Spiritual	Includes feelings of connectedness with or being a part of nature; feelings of being part of 'something mightier'	"I am convinced that you always find your way back to nature. So, for me it also has something spiritual. I think we are connected with nature in a certain sense. Because it gives you so much and it's almost a bit of a spiritual thought." (PV2:143)
instrumental element inherent in RV	Aesthetic*	Perceiving and recognizing the beauty of nature; aesthetic appreciation as a means of achieving wellbeing	"People [...] went outdoor afterwards, that they have just perceived the beauty of nature and have noticed like 'wow, that makes me feel really good" (PV10:216)
	Embodied awareness	A form of actively perceiving and understanding the body and the environment in a specific present moment, resulting in a simultaneous awareness of oneself and its surrounding; this combined physical, mental, and affective experience in nature is considered to be of value	"And then, when you're by yourself, it's just peaceful (laughs), you're there in that moment in that place. And uhm, it also forces you to be very aware, aware of where you are, of your body, of your environment, which is just different." (PV12:39)
instrumental element inherent in RV	Recreation*	Nature as a place for bodily experiencing active and passive leisure; humans understood as interactive agents rather than solely responsive to the natural world	"[...] to recharge your batteries, you're doing something meaningful, you're engaging in physical activity, so it's good for your health. Yes, just relaxing. And in the evening, you have a languorous feeling, you have done something." (PV2:52)
	Social relations and cohesion*	Nature as place of social interaction, where people connect with others, building people-people relationships while being in nature	"I think a lot of people have noticed that they feel more comfortable outdoors when they're out with other people. So, that uhm, for example, walking with people or friends or something is a way to be with people safely." (PM4:39)
	(Eudaimonic) wellbeing*	Activities in nature promote mental and physical health, supporting a general sense of wellbeing; Embodied experiences can lead to individual and collective wellbeing	<p>"Well, I always find that it contributes to wellbeing." (PV6:45)</p> <p>"But for the people [it is] of course a chance, those who have found uhm to nature, who then also notice that they feel better when being in nature [...]. And this is also good, because that contributes to the human being's mind. And humans are then, I don't know, maybe less aggressive, less loud. And this again contributes to a better community." (PV2:149)</p>
	Fulfilling life for future generation	The importance to enable future generations experiences in nature; to maintain nature's contribution and values for future generations; altruistic reasoning	"For me, in terms of value, it is something that is also important to me to pass on to my children: to take care of nature, but I would actually also like to go out into nature with them, so that they might have this place of recreation later too." (PV13:174)

In contrast to intrinsic values, the value of nature as a means to certain ends is less strongly articulated by interviewees with respect to the SNP. This might partially be due to the characteristics of this case study, where the park label is rather associated with intrinsic motivation in nature conservation and relational values linked with recreation and wellbeing experienced when being in the SNP, which will be discussed in the subsequent section. Drawing on Deplazes-Zemp (2023: 6), instrumental values in this thesis and based on interviewees' reasoning are understood as values that develop from considering an entity [e.g., nature] useful for certain (anthropogenic) purposes [e.g., fulfilling basic needs of human beings]. In participants' narratives, '*life insurance*' for human beings as an instrumental value of nature is mentioned by visitors and park members, where intact nature and functioning ecosystems are valued for life ensuring, provisioning functions and 'services', such as the supply of energy, water, nutrition, and so on. Although intrinsic values lie at the core of many conservation strategies, instrumental arguments for protecting nature are especially brought forward to convince other people (e.g., non-conservationists) about goals in nature conservation. As such, a park member argues "we can't live at all without functioning ecosystems. That's one thing, that's what you also always like to say to convince people why nature is so important" (PM4:35; cf. table 4). Whereas this quotation presents an example of anthropogenic oriented instrumental valuing, functioning ecosystems are also construed to hold intrinsic value, as shown in the discussion above. Valuing nature instrumentally for its specific resources consisted rather a small part in interviewees' talks and were usually mentioned with reference to the usage of natural resources outside the park. Yet, as indicated in the results (cf. section 5.2.3), the pure instrumental valuation of nature is also criticized by few park members. Nonetheless, a second type of instrumental value associated with the SNP (monetary benefits of nature-based tourism) pointed out by participants particularly emerged in the context of the CP and will thus be addressed in section 6.3.

## 6.2.2 Relational values of park visitors' and members' relationship with nature

As prominently articulated by Chan et al. (2016: 1463), "although intrinsic and instrumental values are critical to conservation, thinking only in these terms may miss a fundamental basis of concern for nature". Indeed, values regarding 'concern for nature' identified in research participants' talks seem to be best explained relationally. Relational values expressed by interviewees derive from their relationship with nature, their experiences in nature, or sometimes emerge through a combination of both. In fact, I would argue that the third case seems to explain the formation of relational values in the SNP most appropriately, as experiences in nature ('being in nature', being outdoors') shape people's relationship with nature and vice versa (cf. chapter 5). However, relational values such as *recreational value*, *aesthetic value*, (*eudaimonic*) *wellbeing*, and *embodied awareness* seem to be more closely related to direct interactions with nature through nature-based activities, whereas *care*, *stewardship*, *knowledge*, *spiritual values*, *individual identity* and *place attachment*, *social cohesion* and forms of *altruism* (*fulfilling life for future generations*) are strongly linked with interviewees' relationships with nature and other people (e.g., people-people relations). Several of these types of values have been identified in different empirical studies on relational values (e.g., Arias-Arevalo et al., 2017; Britto dos Santos & Gould, 2018; Chapman et al., 2019; Riechers et al., 2021; Skubel et al., 2019). Subsequently, they shall briefly be discussed with reference to embodiment and self-people-nature relations as underlying themes developed based on the ACA earlier in this thesis.

### ***Recreational and aesthetic values, embodied awareness, social relations and wellbeing***

*Recreational value* arising from embodied outdoor activities in the park such as hiking or wildlife observation, and feelings of joy, happiness, relaxation and a peace of mind can be considered as relational in the sense, as they emerge through participants' interactions in and with nature. The relational argument is particularly relevant, if nature is understood as a place for bodily experiencing active (e.g., walking, hiking, biking) and passive leisure (e.g., reading a book, enjoying the view) where humans are considered as interactive agents rather than solely responsive subjects to the natural world (Arias-Arévalo et al., 2017). Moreover, recreational value is linked to further relational values such as aesthetic appreciation, social cohesion, and eudaimonic wellbeing.

However, one could discuss whether recreational value stems from relational or instrumental valuing. Indeed, there also inheres an instrumental element in recreation, in the sense as nature is valued by participants as a means to experience recreation (Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). In this case, experiences in nature in the park would be seen primarily for the satisfaction of participants' needs and interest (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). On the other hand, valuing recreational experiences in nature relationally occurs when being associated with achieving a "meaningful, virtuous life" (ibid: 677). Moreover, I argue that recreation may for example present a relational value, if park visitors consider 'being in nature' / 'being-outdoors' as unique in the sense that they do not feel the same recreational effect when going to the gym (e.g., un-substitutability of recreational experience when hiking in nature). This seems to be likely the case for one visitor, as they express, "for me it's really an extremely important recreational factor. [...] and I just have had somehow the feeling, there is almost nothing that makes me so happy, or it just makes me happy in some way when I can simply go hiking somewhere in nature" (PV13:48). Furthermore, recreational value may emerge from participants' meaningful relationship with nature informed by respect, care and conscience towards nature (cf. chapter 5), thus unfolding from a two directional, reciprocal relation.

*Embodied awareness* might serve well to account for relational values emanating from embodied in-situ experiences in nature. Both visitors and park members shared their experiences of mindfulness and simultaneous attentiveness regarding their senses, their body moving through nature, and their environment within a specific present moment in time (cf. table 4). Similarly, Humberstone (2011: 495) points to the importance of personal embodied nature-based experiences and the "connections between body, affects, emotions and the senses as the body engages with natural elements". This experience of embodied awareness through actively 'being in nature' and perceiving non-human others is considered by participants as something special and meaningful during their stay in the park. Yet, embodied awareness is certainly not limited to the SNP. I propose that embodied awareness can also be linked to wildness more specifically, as experiencing wildness as a situated feeling in the moment (cf. section 5.4) enfolds "a kind of atmosphere, an emergent and contingent affective event that is place-based and corporeally felt" (Vannini & Vannini, 2020: 3).

Drawing on a phenomenological approach on relational values brought forward by Gilliland (2021: 721; brackets adjusted by author), "values [may] come into existence in the concrete and direct experiences of living subjects". In this line, I argue that embodied awareness emanates from the specific relationship of the 'body' with nature and non-human others in the lived moment when being in nature. As Ingold (2000: 226, 230; brackets adjusted by author) states, "people see as they move" and "our knowledge of the environment undergoes continuous formation in the very course of [our] moving in it", which is why embodied awareness both emerges from participants' direct experiences and encounters in nature as well as informs their relationship with nature through making sense of the self and the environment. As such, I argue that some relational values derive from a relationship where the subject (e.g., a visitor or park member) and the object (e.g., a place of animal encounter in the park, an anthill) are clearly defined in that relation. This differs for embodied awareness which emanates from a multilayered relationship with the environment and may include different 'physical, affective, and mental realms' of the subject, and 'physical realms' of the object (all things perceived in the environment, including of the self in that environment) (Gilliland, 2021).

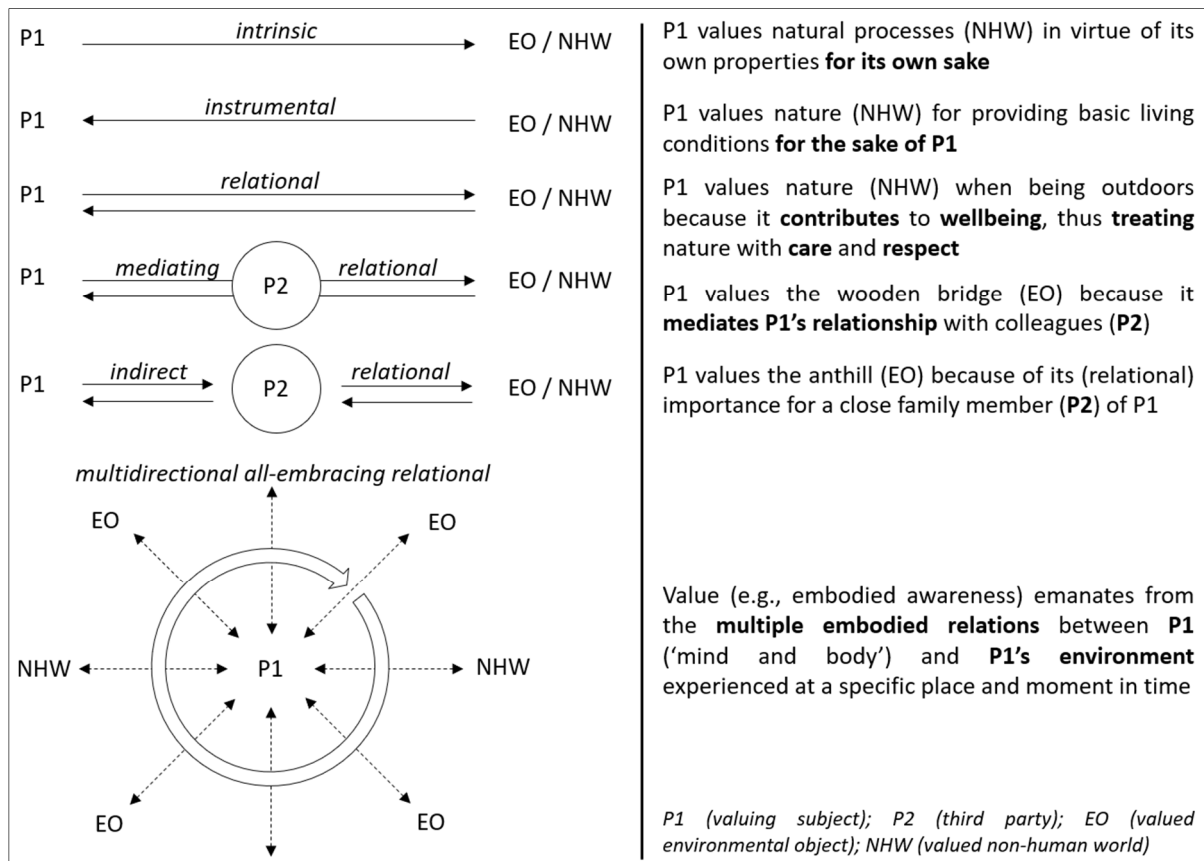
Whereas *aesthetic value* is sometimes understood as a primarily instrumental value (e.g., 'seeing the beauty of nature brings people satisfaction'; Chan et al., 2016: 1462), aesthetic values are frequently included in eudaimonic values which contribute to a good quality of life (Himes & Muraca, 2018: 3). Brady (2022) accounts differently for aesthetic value, yet similarly points to it as a relational value. Following that, the author argues that aesthetic value "emerges out of a variety of relations with the world", involving "perceptual, sensitive, meaningful, and temporal" relations (Brady, 2022:1). For instance, and regarding perceptual relations, aesthetic appreciation seems to stem primarily from in-situ perceptual experiences (ibid). When perceiving something in nature aesthetically, the latter comes into existence "when the subject is in a perceptual (and spatial) relation to something in the world" (Brady, 2022:1).

From a constructivist perspective, the way we consider something as aesthetically is embedded in cultural discourses and practices, thus not exclusively a product of momentary visual perception (Backhaus, 2010). When interviewees described their perceptions of nature and wildness in the SNP, the ‘momentary’ sensory perception of deadwood became immediately entangled with interpretative, culturally embedded ideas about ‘wild’, ‘natural’, and the ‘beauty of nature’. Besides, an example of aesthetic value arising from a meaningful relation is brought forward by a visitor who associates the recognition of aesthetic value of nature with the will to take care about nature: “I used to be a teacher and [...] I have actually always tried to make the beauty [of/in nature] visible to the children, because I think, many just don’t see it anymore. And if you don’t see it, then you don’t care about it” (PV1:79). In this sense, I would articulate that aesthetic value is no longer limited to the personal relationship with nature but seems to inhere in a meaningful people-people-nature relationship.

Linked to a recreational value (and place attachments), *social relations and cohesion* as a relational value arising through being in nature and deriving through people-people relationships in nature appear in participants’ narrations. As such, nature is meaningful to interviewees as a place of social interaction with other people. The importance of social relations as an example of people-people relationships facilitated by nature is well brought forward by a visitor believing “when you go with friends [into nature], it’s different because you’re sharing, you enjoy it in a different way” (PV12:39). Thus, the very nature experience becomes meaningful through enjoying and sharing it with people of importance to you. An association between recreation and social cohesion was also observed in a study on relational values in cultural landscapes by Reichers et al. (2021:1040). Embodied experiences in nature (e.g., the visual, haptic, and olfactory perception of an anthill; cf. chapter 5) often evoke memories of similar experiences shared between the respective interviewee and a person important to the latter. Drawing on Bergson (2004: 170; brackets adjusted by author), “perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present [e.g., an anthill, a tree]; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it”. In this sense, the anthill described by PV9 (cf. chapter 5, figure 6) serves as a symbol of their meaningful relationship with a family member as a ‘third party’, thus indicating the value of social relations through ‘indirect relational valuing’ (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021: 684). Although non-substitutability is viewed as a defining element for relational values (Himes & Muraca, 2018), I would argue that for indirect relational values, the environmental object (e.g., an anthill) is partially substitutable in the sense that it is place independent. This means that the anthill itself cannot be replaced by another type of environmental object, but all anthills may trigger the same memories shared with the respective family member independently of the location where an embodied interaction with the environmental object takes place (e.g., for that person, relational value can equally emerge from an anthill encountered either in their neighborhood or the SNP). Moreover, I argue that memories and shared experiences especially allow us to approach values emerging from people-people-nature relationships. Not at least, memories seem to allow the unfolding of relational values for entities one does not necessarily interact on a regular basis, which enriches existing studies about relational values in the context of human-nature interactions as part of people’s everyday life and livelihoods (e.g., relational values of farmers, see Chapman & Deplazes-Zemp, 2023).

*Wellbeing* consists of a relational value frequently mentioned by both visitors and members of the park, specifically referring to improved physical and mental health through being in nature, but also highlighting a general, all-embracing sense of wellbeing described by interviewees. ‘Being outdoors’ or ‘being in nature’ has not only turned out to play an important role in participants’ personal life (e.g., being outdoors during childhood, sharing memories of experiences in nature; cf. chapter 5), but they are associated with what makes a good quality of life (Pascual et al., 2017; Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). Feelings of wellbeing can be based on a range of physical and emotional experiences in nature. Moreover, as Humberstone (2015: 65) argues, “our senses affect our emotions and co-construct our perceptions of wellbeing”. Regarding the SNP, visitors’ visual perception of nature and landscape in the park, their aesthetic appreciation, resulting feelings of joy, happiness, gratitude, or fascination, and embodied awareness can serve as an example of these different physical and affective elements in the construction of wellbeing. Activities in nature may foster individual wellbeing but also lead to an improved wellbeing on a

societal level of discussion, which is well articulated by PV2(149) in table 4. In fact, a positive and close relationship of other people with nature (which can include intrinsic, instrumental, and relational valuing) is meaningful to PV2 as a ‘valuer’, because these relationships are understood as fostering the collective wellbeing of a community (PV2:149).



**Figure 14.** Examples of different types of EVs identified in visitors' and park members' narrations (composed by author, partially adapted from Deplazes-Zemp and Chapman (2021: 682)).

### ***Spirituality, identity, and place attachment***

*Spiritual values* are mentioned almost exclusively by visitors and sometimes seem to be linked with direct affective experiences in nature as well as individual identity, particularly when consisting of feelings about connectedness with nature and non-human others. Spiritual approaches to meaningful relations between humans and non-human others have long been part of indigenous worldviews, thus not presenting a ‘new’ type of relational value (Gould et al., 2019). Aside from spirituality in the sense of people’s felt connectedness with nature, spiritual value includes also a feeling of being part of ‘something mightier’ (cf. table 4), which is especially experienced by interviewees considering themselves in a subordinate human-nature relationship in wildness (cf. section 5.4). Similarly, ‘spiritual inspiration’ is mentioned by Bauer (2016: 109) as a value emerging from people-wildness relations.

Turning towards identified relational values particularly linked to participants’ relation with nature, the latter is considered to be meaningful and significant in constituting part of interviewees *individual identities* (cf. table 4). Relational value types associated with personal identity are frequently found in empirical studies on EVs and human-nature relationships (e.g., Arias-Arévalo et al., 2017; Britto dos Santos & Gould, 2018). Valuing the relation with nature as important in regard to one’s own identity (e.g., considering it as a “part of one’s own”; PV8:107) is a pattern put forward by both visitors and park members. Although sometimes linked with specific places through memories and emotional attachments, this type of value does not have to be place-dependent (in contrast to place attachment). For instance, first time visitors

expressed the importance of their relationship with nature in constructing part of their identity when referring to ‘being in nature’ or ‘being outdoors’ since their childhood (cf. chapter 5). Memories of experiences in nature seem to considerably account for human-nature relations and a recurring feeling of belonging, familiarity, or individual identity when being in nature.

Unlike individual identity, *place attachments* emerging from a meaningful relationship with nature in a specific place present mostly a relational value pointed out by park members and few recurring visitors. In chapter 5, place attachments to a tree, a place associated with shared experiences in animal encounter, or to a wooden bridge symbolizing teamwork and shared memories with colleagues were delineated as examples of decisive factors in park members’ relation with nature in the SNP. These individual values deriving from place attachments are specific and situated in the SNP. The example of a park members’ relation to a specific tree in the park (cf. section 5.3.2; figure 9) serves well as an illustration of *indirect* relational values in these place attachments (Deplazes-Zemp & Chapman, 2021). Indeed, the specific value emerging from this park members’ relationship with the tree “is not found in the person or tree, but in the connection between the two” (Mattijssen et al., 2020: 403). In this case, the very tree is not only meaningful to the park member, as it is much older than the surrounding trees and will still outlive the park member themselves, but because the tree reminds them of their “fatherly friend” (PM5:91) and this friends’ favorite tree. The ‘connection’ is no longer exclusively between the park member and the specific tree but includes a third party, namely the park members’ friend (and their favorite tree). This differs from the example regarding the wooden bridge as environmental item, which *mediates* relational value between the respective park member and their colleagues working together in the park (PM2:124). According to Deplazes-Zemp and Chapman (2021: 682), this type of value can be defined as ‘mediating relational value’ (cf. figure 14).

### ***The entanglement of care, stewardship, and knowledge***

The examination of participants’ relation in and with nature in chapter 5 indicates the role of *knowledge, care, and stewardship* in both constructing these human-nature relationships as well as emerging from them as relational values. As actively being in nature is regarded by interviewees as a positively influencing factor in evoking or fostering notions of care and stewardship (cf. section 5.3.2), the identified themes of embodiment and self-people-nature relationships are inherent in motivations, attitudes and practices of care about (or for) and stewardship of nature. These relational values frequently occur in studies on relational values and nature’s contribution to human wellbeing, and are specifically addressed by West et al. (2018) and Jax et al. (2018). West et al. (2018) point to the interlinkage of knowledge, care, and agency in accounting for a holistic understanding of stewardship. Whereas agency will not be discussed in this thesis, the role of acquiring and sharing knowledge, and care in relation to stewardship shall be addressed in the following. In the scope of this research and based on participants’ expressions, I understand the relational value ‘care’ primarily as emanating from concern about and attitudes of care for nature. In contrast, stewardship is referred to “an action in the pursuit of sustainability”, including pro-environmental behavior (West et al., 2018: 30). However, stewardship seems to be frequently grounded in attitudes and practices of care (Jax et al., 2018: 24).

According to feminist theories, notions of care as an affective concern or practical action are informed by empathy and emotions such as feelings of connectedness or sadness, but also respect towards nature (Jax et al., 2018: 23). This links well to findings of this thesis, where embodied experiences in nature are highlighted by both visitors and park members in developing care about and for nature. While in non-Western and indigenous narratives nature and people are often considered as both care-giver and care-receiver, Western ideas primarily understand humans in the role of a care-giver and nature respectively rather as a care-receiver (ibid). This is exemplarily pointed out by a visitor who states, “nature does its life, it doesn’t really care about us [...]. Luckily, we care about nature” (PV12:57; cf. section 5.3.2). When speaking about care, most interviewees reveal such an understanding of a ‘caring human-nature relationship’. Yet, thinking of good relations (including care) with other people and non-human others as an important part in what constitutes a good life is still rooted in western philosophical conceptualizations (e.g., virtue ethics; Jax et al., 2018). This leads to a multilayered perspective on care about and for nature, as it involves “what

humans do *for* nature” as well as recognizing ‘caring’ as constitutive in the construction of a good life and meaningful relation with nature (ibid: 27).

As for park visitors, the very relational value of care is pointed out as concern about nature in terms of climate change and disrespectful treatment through other people. Besides, several visitors and park members express the desire to look after nature, such as “you have to look after it” (PV2:89). Although care for nature in human-nature relations is often understood as an active practice for nature, it is important to notice that care may also include ‘non-interference’ (Jax et al., 2018: 24). This pattern of caring for nature is especially present in the case of the SNP as wildness area, where caring for the latter implies “an attitude of ‘letting nature take its course’” (Jax et al., 2018: 24; cf. section 5.2.4 and 5.4). In this sense, relational and intrinsic arguments become intertwined, as interviewees assign intrinsic value to wildness (as non-human autonomy) but also care for it relationally. Such a form of caring for nature is particularly articulated by participants who see themselves in the role of a protector in the SNP (cf. section 5.3.1). Moreover, practices of stewardship of nature mentioned by park members and visitors in particular include environmentally friendly behavior in the park (e.g., sticking to the rules, not leaving the trail, taking your trash with you during hikes) as well as pro-environmental behavior more general and beyond the SNP (e.g., consuming locally produced food, eschewing air travel). This differs from park members where values of care and stewardship are linked with place attachments in the park and daily experiences in nature through their work.

Besides, I argue that the acquisition and sharing of nature-related knowledge by participants are entangled with care and stewardship (West et al. (2018). For instance, acquiring knowledge about nature contains for some visitors a way to strengthen their relation with nature, expressed by feeling closer to the latter through knowing more about the non-human world (e.g., PV7; PV9; PM6). Gaining knowledge can (but does not have to) be associated with embodied experiences in nature (e.g., studying medicinal herbs through actively seeing, smelling or tasting them in nature; PV7, PV9). This in turn may evoke feelings of care for and about nature, as the relationship with nature ‘gained’ meaningfulness and importance. On the other hand, sharing knowledge particularly unfolds in people-people-nature relationships. Sharing knowledge brings along the possibility for interviewees to share and pass on preferences, principles and virtues that are considered to be meaningful for their own relationship with nature (e.g., “when I lead excursions, I can show a little bit of my view on nature, which might also influence some people how they see it”; PM6:64). The importance of sharing knowledge about nature in the park to enhance visitors’ awareness for nature is especially pointed out by park members. Thus, one could argue that sharing knowledge presents also a way of caring for nature.

Finally, several of above discussed relational values expressed by interviewees seem to motivate altruistic patterns of argumentation when participants were talking about the value about nature. Indeed, nature is valued for enabling a *fulfilling life for future generations*. For example, and regarding interviewees’ imagination for future people-nature interactions, one park member argues for “a certain respect and preferably look that our future generations can also have nature and nature can also be used for recreation by them” (PM2:116), and a park visitor expresses that “the most beautiful thing would be if there would be as little change as possible in the next decades so that the coming generations can still experience this in about the same way as we are now” (PV6:76). Personal experiences of recreation, spirituality, or aesthetic appreciation when being in nature, as well as specific memories and meanings attached to a place seem to serve as participants’ motives to care about and for nature, sometimes even leading to practices in the pursuit of sustainability. Moreover, the very altruistic eudaimonic value is informed by and derives from participants’ own relationship with nature as well as their relations to other people, whereas these relationships are considered to be important for an individual meaningful, worthy life as well as collective eudaimonic wellbeing. Forms of altruistic motivations are similarly pointed out by Chan et al. (2016) and Arias-Arévalo et al. (2017).

### 6.3 How 'self-people-nature relations' shape experiences, perceptions, and values in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic

The analysis of the pandemics' impact on participants' perception of nature and wildness points out that the CP especially influenced interviewees' experience of 'being in nature'. In particular, people-people relations seem to play an important role in how visitors and park members experience nature, how they position themselves relatively to other people in nature, and which values emerging from these self-people-nature relationships are especially relevant in the context of CP. For instance, the involuntarily sharing of nature specifically in the park but also in other Swiss alpine regions with different, often newly attracted people regarding nature-based activities influenced participants' own nature experience and even led to a change in perceiving places in nature as not as natural anymore (cf. section 5.5). Moreover, according to interviewees, the sudden presence of more people in natural spaces during the CP shaped visitors' and park members' sensory perception of landscapes, particularly in alpine regions, sometimes resulting in a reduced aesthetic appreciation and general loss in recreational experience (cf. section 5.5.1). However, there is also an underlying acceptance and general support inherent in participants' narratives that all people should be able to enjoy experiences in nature, as long as these interactions happen in a respectful and responsible way, considering nature's own needs (cf. section 5.5.2).

Based on the changes in subjective nature experience and perception through the CP discussed in chapter 5, values emanating from interviewees' relationship with nature and other people in nature have been influenced as well (see also Morse et al., 2020). The findings suggest that EVs not only gained importance as a result of different experiences in nature (e.g., recreation, wellbeing, social relations, care) but some of these values or aspects inherent in them were also 'lost' (e.g., privacy experienced in nature, loss of unwritten laws associated with nature-based activities). Particularly relational values amongst few instrumental and intrinsic values seem to have been emerging from altered human-nature relationships during the pandemic.

'Being outdoors' or 'being in nature' presented an important source of recreation and provided a general feeling of wellbeing for participants during the CP. Likewise, McGinlay et al. (2020: 2) refers to the "crucial role" of remote natural spaces such as PAs in "improving physical and mental health, assisting in the improvement of people's wellbeing" during the pandemic. This finding is internationally shared in a number of studies investigating the impact of outdoor recreation on humans' wellbeing throughout the CP (Hansen et al., 2022; Jackson et al., 2021; Morse et al., 2020; Pouso et al., 2021). Not surprisingly, these relational values were highly present in conversations with most interviewees. Embodied experiences such as sensory perceptions, physical activities, and feelings of individual freedom in nature considerably contributed to a sense of wellbeing (cf. section 5.5.1). Yet, whereas wellbeing is frequently mentioned in relation with individual recreational experiences in nature during the pandemic, the meaningfulness of wellbeing in the context of the CP is also pointed out on a collective level of discussion. This is exemplarily pointed out in table 4 by a visitor arguing that increased experiences in nature not solely contribute to the individual human beings' state of mind but positively affects the wellbeing of a community, thus also highlighting an eudaimonic value.

As Hansen et al. (2022: 9) reason in their study on changes in Swedish outdoor recreation during and after the CP, "socializing in nature" especially gained importance for younger adults, and limited indoor social gatherings due to CP-restrictions resulted in "outdoors [as] an alternative place to socialize". The increased meaningfulness of nature as a place for social interaction, fostering social relations and cohesion is similarly expressed by research participants (cf. chapter 5). As such, there was not solely a change in individual outdoor activities perceived by some park visitors, but they experienced a shift in social events to natural places. This is exemplarily shared by a visitor who explains "the only places where we could see friends were on the mountain [...] since everybody wanted to keep distance, also with friends we mostly met outside in the mountains. We even made a fondue in the mountains, we also celebrated birthdays on the top of the mountain" [PV12:65;67]. The perception of an enhanced appreciation of nature as a place for enacting social relations is supported by a park member believing that "a lot of people have noticed that they feel more comfortable outdoors when they're hanging out with other people. So, for example, walking

with people or friends, or so is a way to be with people safely, to go for a walk” (PM4:39). Indeed, an underlying belief in reduced risk for Covid-19 infection outdoors by interviewees as an essential motive for socializing in nature has also been shown in Hansen et al. (2022). These findings give reason to argue that social relations and cohesion as a relational value of nature have gained importance during the CP.

As indicated by Morse et al. (2020), the value of social relations during the CP is linked with values of wellbeing, as the latter was maintained through socializing in nature despite social-distancing restrictions (e.g., also reducing a sense of loneliness). However, at least in the context of the SNP, visitor numbers considerably decreased again in summer 2022, and it remains an open question whether nature as a place for socializing and enacting people-people relations will stay meaningful in the same way in post-covid times. Based on participants’ appraisal of the sustainability regarding the pandemic’s influence on people’s relationship in and with nature, as well as the regained accessibility of indoor spaces for social events rather point towards the opposite direction.

Several studies reported a rise in a broader and younger visitor group engaging in nature-based activities, resulting in opportunities for these people to (re)discover and connect more closely with their local environment (Wipf, 2021; Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2020; Ferguson et al., 2022). Furthermore, Dobson et al. (2021) highlight people’s increasing subjective connectedness towards nature during the pandemic. Whereas younger visitors newly discovered the SNP during the summer seasons 2020 and 2021 (Poelsma, 2020; Wipf, 2021, Wipf et al., 2023) and several first-time visitors fitting into the group of younger visitors (20 – 40 years old) were interviewed during fieldwork in summer 2022 in the scope of this thesis, participants’ opinions on chances related to an increased connectedness with nature diverge. Indeed, as pointed out in the results, (local) nature has been rediscovered by participants themselves as well as by people in their social environment. Besides, some visitors and park members believe that such a ‘turning back to nature’ consists of a natural reaction of people to the pandemic’s restrictions, as exemplified by the statement “it also showed somehow that the way back to nature is actually a pretty natural way. So that this also comes from the human being itself” (PM1: 88).

A ‘superficial nature experience’ is perceived as a challenge through the CP by a park member (PM4) and might rather limit the fostering of new visitors’ connectedness with nature. Similarly, few visitors (e.g., PV2; PV10) more explicitly argue for embodied experiences as a need to establish more thorough people-nature relationships (e.g., PV10; PM6). Besides, the results of this research also indicate that people who already have been engaging in outdoor activities in nature before the CP and perceiving themselves in a close relationship with nature not really experienced a shift in the personal feeling of connectedness with nature. Yet, as observed in another study, nature often constitutes an important priority more generally for people having a higher level of education (da Schio et al., 2021), which largely is the case for participants who took part in go-alongs in the scope of this thesis.

Linked to a superficial nature experience and the perception of higher numbers in inexperienced, new visitor types in the SNP, the instrumental value of ‘nature as a business’ and more generally the monetary benefits arising from nature-based tourism are explicitly perceived to have gained relevance during the pandemic. As such, an increasing interest in outdoor sports and nature-based activities throughout the CP is associated by several participants with a rather undesirable commercialization<sup>11</sup> of nature. The perception of nature as a business being concomitant with a commercialization of nature is well put forward in a statement by a visitor in table 4. As such, the ‘unnecessary’ and ‘excessive’ purchase of branded equipment for hiking, biking, or skiing amongst other outdoor sports, or the booking of guided

---

<sup>11</sup> The term ‘commercialization’ is applied by participants in a colloquial manner without defining the latter specifically. As this thesis does not discuss commercialization as a major theoretical approach, I suggest drawing on the work of Margaryan and Fredman (2017: 85) who describe commercialization in outdoor recreation as the process of turning a certain phenomenon (e.g., a nature experience) into a commodity, ‘integrated into the market economy’; an “object or experience become evaluated primarily in terms of its monetary (or symbolic) exchange value”. Furthermore, Varley and Semple (2015: 81) discuss such a commercialization of outdoor activities in nature through the objectification, ‘fetishization,’ and promotion of new branded outdoor equipment and activity subcultures.

tours are considered as examples for a 'bought nature experience' (cf. section 5.5). Interestingly, by rather criticizing such a 'bought nature experience' and 'superficial nature experience', interviewees simultaneously seem to imply that there exists such a thing as a 'real nature experience'. Indeed, different studies in nature-based tourism research similarly point to the contrastive relationship between the commercialization of nature and what seems to constitute an 'authentic' nature experience (Cohen, 1988; Varley & Semple, 2015; Margaryan & Wall-Reinius, 2017).

Whereas the very instrumental value is present in several visitors' and park members' talks, the respective value is not understood in a positive way. In fact, and particularly linked to new and inexperienced visitors, certain aspects such as obeying unwritten laws in nature (e.g., not leaving trash in nature; being considerate of other people and non-human beings) which constitute an important part in people-nature relationships enacted in the SNP (and beyond) are perceived to have been lost. This is not only regarded as a peril for nature itself but sometimes also negatively affected participants' individual nature experience. The risk for nature due to higher visitor numbers and infractions of the parks' codes of conducts partially through new, inexperienced visitors is reported by park members, yet challenges for nature are considered to be moderately and still manageable by the park team compared to natural spaces in more densely populated areas (cf. section 5.5.3). By addressing the peril for nature arising from suddenly engaging in nature-based activities without the required respect towards non-human others in the context of the CP, both visitors and park members refer to the intrinsic value of nature's rights and needs. This can be exemplified in a statement of a park visitor arguing for an "intrusive" handling with nature, where "one has just simply taken [nature]" (PV5:148), thus disregarding the 'rights of nature'.

As delineated in chapter 5, participants did not necessarily express a change in perception of nature itself but rather refer to a transformation of people-nature relationships and how this has been affecting their own position and attitude towards nature. This finding seems to be confirmed by results brought forward in a study on the impact of CP on people's attitudes towards urban forests and green spaces by da Schio et al. (2021). According to the authors, "most respondents have not altered their view on nature during the COVID-19 pandemic, but that the situation merely reinforced their beliefs" (da Schio et al., 2021: 9). Indeed, a reinforcement of beliefs and principles through embodied experiences also presents a common pattern in this research and relational values such as care, stewardship, and sharing knowledge seem to have gained importance for several visitors and members of the park (cf. table 4). As such, both interviewees' personal appreciation of (increasingly) being in nature during the pandemic as well as feelings of concern and sadness provoked through other people's behavior and handling with nature, and the perceived suffering of nature seem to have consolidated participants' desire to care about and for nature. In relation with changes in lifestyle (e.g., a more sustainable travel behavior, sustainable food consumption, etc.) the pandemic seems to present a possibility for fostering environmental consciousness and pro-environmental behavior, as suggested by several studies engaging with immediate impacts of the CP on human-nature relationships (Beery et al., 2021; Dobson et al., 2021; Jacobs et al., 2020). The sharing of knowledge about nature and a respectful interaction with non-human others became particularly important for members of the park, as excursion guides, park members, and volunteers increasingly took the role of 'informants' in the park as a response to higher numbers of visitors in 2020 and 2021 (Wipf et al., 2023).

Even though notions of care about (or for) and stewardship of nature have been raised at least as an immediate reaction to the CP, they are rather not considered to be sustainable by both visitors and members of the park (cf. section 5.5). Indeed, what is called by a visitor (PV7:116) as a "return to nature" and a "green wave" induced through the CP is much more believed as a "tertian fever" by a park member (PM3:30). Moreover, participants feel ambivalent and unsure about the long-term effects on people's behavior in, and interaction with nature. Hence, the findings of this thesis contrast some of the initial suggestions and 'hopes' regarding the generation and fostering of pro-environmental attitudes. Besides, the qualitative results of this study may serve as a reference to the question whether or not these developments present the expression of a new trend towards an enhanced interest in nature and human-nature interaction in the long term (Schnabel-Jung & Wipf, 2021). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that an additional quantitative study

would be needed to establish more grounded arguments regarding the sustainability of environmental awareness and pro-environmental actions in the Swiss case and SNP in particular. As for this thesis, the visitor monitoring conducted by the park during the season 2022 (1. July – 31. October) shows that visitor numbers in the SNP dropped again to the level before the first shutdown in 2020 (Blass, 2022). Compared to 2020, the number of visitors decreased about 30 percent in season 2022, at the time where go-alongs for this research were conducted (ibid: 1). This might serve as an indication towards Swiss citizen's interest in traveling again abroad, resulting in fewer visitations of national and local nature parks. Yet, the visitor monitoring alone does not provide sufficient information about changes in visitors motives, attitudes, and environmental behavior.

To conclude, EVs that seem to have gained meaningfulness through the pandemic based on different experiences in nature and transformed self-people-nature relations in the SNP (and beyond the park) include recreational and aesthetic value, social relations and wellbeing, principles of care and stewardship, as well as the instrumental value of 'nature as a business' in outdoor tourism, and the intrinsic value of nature's own rights and needs. Interestingly, although intrinsic and instrumental values present a crucial part in the discussion on the pandemics influence on peoples' relationship in and with nature, the findings of this thesis illustrate the importance of relational values in the human-nature nexus in context of the CP. As similarly argued by Morse et al. (2020: 16), the time scale upon these changes in meaningfulness of values emerging from people-nature relationships will sustain, remains uncertain, yet, results of this thesis seem to point towards rather short-term transformations.

#### **6.4 'Going-along' to identify values in embodied experiences in nature**

Throughout analyzing the transcripts of go-alongs with visitors and members of the park, embodied experiences constituted a recurring theme in several thematic parts of this thesis. The importance of a certain form of 'embodiment' in experiencing, perceiving, and making sense of nature and wild(er)ness in the SNP, in the construction and performance of participants' relationship with nature, and in the articulation of EVs deriving from these relations was further emphasized in the discussion above. For this reason, it seems to be worthwhile to grapple with the very theme more explicitly. Thus, the subsequent section aims both to briefly illuminate on the conceptual role of embodied experiences for relational values as well as discuss go-alongs as a suitable research method to identify these values in embodied experiences based on the insights gained during fieldwork. Although this thesis is primarily informed from a social constructivist perspective, the following discussion also draws on phenomenological approaches to better account for these situated and lived experiences.

As delineated in chapter 5, actively 'being in nature' or 'being outdoors' presents not only a fundamental condition to experience and perceive nature for interviewees but constitutes a decisive element in the formation of people-nature relationships and is strongly linked with memories, emotional place dependent and independent attachments, and identities of visitors and park members. Put simply, embodied experiences are thus both expressions of value as well as a means to discover specific values and underlying human-nature relationships. This is similarly put forward by Kinkaid (2019: 52), believing that a focus on the "visceral and embodied – to perceptions, sensory experiences, and other aspects of subjectivity" may facilitate a more nuanced perspective on people's interaction with and valuation of their environment. As illustrated in interviewees' narratives, perceiving nature through 'being in nature' is strongly linked with a more or less active movement of the body through respective natural environments, such as walking and hiking in the SNP or biking, climbing, and skiing beyond the park area. Through these embodied, sentient activities in nature, participants can "engage with diverse natural spaces and places engendering non-cognitive affective feelings and emotions" (Humberstone, 2015: 63).

Moreover, perception-experience processes always occur in a specific situation, as embodied nature perception is mostly immediate, and meaningful actions are spatially and temporally located (Raymond et al., 2018: 783). Hence, what Chemero (2009) refers to as 'perception-action processes' ubiquitously yields

“information about ‘here’, ‘there’, ‘me’ and ‘now’ alongside socially and culturally constructed meanings” (Raymond et al., 2018: 783). As previously depicted, culturally constructed meanings especially are both visible in interviewees’ description of nature in the sense of a ‘natural’, ‘wild’, ‘aesthetic’ landscape in the SNP, as well as in their conceptualizations of nature and wild(er)ness and humans place in the latter. Conversations with participants also revealed that conceptual understandings of nature sometimes contradict with situated, embodied experiences. This can be particularly illustrated in interviewees understanding of human’s place in nature, the (ideal) imagination of their own position in nature, and the effective embodied experience of feeling part or not of nature in the park (cf. section 5.3.3). Consequently, using the words of Raymond et al. (2018: 778), “human–environment connections are not solely produced in the mind, but through relations between mind, body, culture and environment through time”.

Johnson (2015: 875) argues that an embodied understanding is not solely a conceptual activity of mind, but rather accounts for “our most basic way of being in, and engaging with, our surroundings in a deep visceral manner”. In line with Humberstone (2011: 507; 2015: 69), I would argue that the consideration of embodiment in and through physical activities in nature in research enables to explore more thoroughly how “the body comes to know” through these practices, and how such embodied experiences influence people’s formation of attitudes, beliefs, and values about nature. An experienced embodied awareness by participants during their hikes in the SNP might serve as the most obvious form of embodied relational value going beyond “‘source–location’ metaphors” (e.g., clearly defined subject–object relation) and rather emerging from the ‘in between’ (Gilliand, 2021: 727) and a “dynamic web of relations” among the mind, body, culture, and environment (Beery et al., 2023: 472).

Turning from conceptual discussions towards methodological thought, I consider go-alongs as a suitable method to capture values emanating from such in-situ embodied experiences in nature, namely through the nature of embodied walking in go-alongs themselves, the opportunity of in-situ environmental stimuli, and a natural atmosphere of reflexivity allowing a combination of situated material and symbolic (discursive) meanings arising in talks (Sattlegger et al., 2023; Teff-Seker et al., 2022). Yet, I certainly acknowledge that other qualitative methods can similarly facilitate the investigation of people-nature relationships in a dynamic and embodied way, as pointed out by May and Lewis (2020: 139), thus not intending to present go-alongs as a “sensory panacea”.

Go-alongs as ‘emplaced interviews’ conducted within the place of research interest (i.e., the SNP) afford the researcher to witness participants’ interaction in nature and the embodied and emotional practices undertaken by them (Anderson & Jones 2009: 299). Moreover, as the interview space (SNP as an IUCN wilderness area) and interview subject interlock with each other, nature and wild(er)ness become materially and symbolically present through ‘talking about it’, but also ‘being in and with it’ (Sattlegger et al., 2023: 26; translated by author). The concurrence of embodied sensory perception of non-human others in nature as stimuli and the expression of more conceptual understandings and values can be illustrated in the following shortened excerpt of a visitor’s interview transcript which was also discussed earlier in respective result sections but shall be used here for methodological purposes:

**PV1:** “Oh look, it has an alpine aster. That’s just what I like, suddenly you see something again. That’s what I think, nature is also ‘seeing’. And *Wildnis* for me is already one level more than just nature. Well, it’s certainly something very similar, *Wildnis* and nature.” [...]

**Interviewer:** “How do you feel, has the pandemic affected your experience of nature or being in nature?”

**PV1:** “Well I was just insanely happy when I saw the ‘beauty’. And I was able to get outdoors, and I was able to enjoy freedom. I felt free. Look, there’s another anthill. [My life partner] always holds his hand on it and then it stinks like this (laughs). He sticks his hand into it and afterwards, when you take your hand away, it really stinks, it smells like acetone, right? Exactly, these experiences, you just can’t have them inside, can you? And for me that was incredibly important, that fulfilled me somehow.” (PV1:46-48)

Besides, findings of varying studies (e.g., Anderson & Jones, 2009; Sattlegger et al., 2023; Teff-Seker et al., 2022) applying mobile interview techniques such as go-alongs support the argument of this thesis that embodied interviews enable novel insights regarding the characteristics of EVs, as the methodology allows “the representation of simultaneous appreciation of physical, mental, cultural, and ecosystem-based composite impressions, which in turn can provide new and different data that reflects the intricacies and depth of human-nature experiences, relationships, and values” (Teff-Seker et al., 2022: 7). Hence, go-alongs hold the opportunity for better understanding linkages between experience, perception, human-nature relationships and articulation of value, as exemplified in the transcript excerpt above. Through the inclusion of the very ‘spatial-material environment’ and non-human others (e.g., a flower at the wayside or an observed animal nearby) in interview conversations, participants’ relation in and with nature may be ‘grasped in their complexity and relationality’ (Sattlegger et al., 2023: 52; translated by author). Finally, although these values emerging from embodied experiences in the park are identified site-specific, some of them (but not all) can be transferred to comparable contexts. As such, values emerging from place attachments are bound to the SNP or region of the lower Engadin, but recreation, aesthetic appreciation, embodied awareness or wellbeing serve as examples of conferrable values that can be experienced in similar environments.

## 6.5 Limitations and Outlook

Not least due to the complexity of the thematic sub-themes addressed and the results gained in the scope of this thesis, several challenges and limitations arose during the research process. Hence, in the following, these conceptual and empirical limitations will be delineated before providing an outlook on further research directions.

Firstly, as this study focuses specifically on nature and wild(er)ness perception in the SNP, the findings regarding the perception of nature, wilderness, and wildness as well as underlying conceptual understandings are presumably influenced by the national park label and imaginations and expectations associated with such a label. The results are thus primarily limited to the SNP as a strict nature reserve and wilderness area and cannot simply be generalized to different types of natural areas. Besides, in this case study, ‘nature’ and ‘wildness’ as experience, perception and concept turned out to be closely intertwined, which may differ if the same or similar study were conducted in relatively natural, green spaces perceived as less wild, e.g., an urban park. Indeed, the interlinkage of nature and wild(er)ness conceptualizations inherent in the collected data seems to simultaneously present a result and a methodological limitation, as the differentiation between values informed by one or the other was only partially achieved. Yet, regarding the validity and transferability of research findings, it can be assumed that similar relationships of visitors with nature in comparable places, such as regional nature parks, might emerge. A comparative study would have enabled a better evaluation of the influence of site-specific nature perceptions on the development of EVs through visitors. As discussed above, several of the identified values in this thesis are supported by other related studies (e.g., see Arias-Arévalo et al., 2017; Riechers et al., 2021), thus indicating a partial transferability of results.

Secondly, findings regarding the pandemics’ influence on nature perception and values emerging from potentially altered relationships with nature are restricted in the sense that respondents were not surveyed before the CP and thus could only reflect on their memorized situation prior to the shutdown. Based on these retrospective appraisals, it is not possible to determine whether a change in nature perception and interaction accurately reflects an actual change in activities, attitudes, and behavior, or rather constitutes a self-perceived change by interviewees.

Thirdly, due to the qualitative design chosen for this thesis, the results offer an insight into diverse opinions and perceptions, but their generalization is limited. As such, the data gathered during fieldwork is based on a specific sample, whereas particular visitors were selected based on the described sample characteristics. Research findings may be representative of this specific visitor group but not necessarily of

others. As such, with few exceptions, the focus lay on younger visitors' perceptions, thus potentially differing from those held by older visitors in the park. Although the sample includes first-time visitors who were at least indirectly motivated to visit the SNP due to the CP, they did not fall into the category of 'inexperienced' visitors as an increased visitor type during the pandemic. Thus, results might not be representative of the latter. Partially due to the limited language skills of the researcher, the sample predominantly includes interviewees living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. This is not only relevant in terms of CP restrictions applied differently between Swiss cantons and thus could have influenced participants' behavior in nature during the pandemic, but might have also impacted linguistically the articulation of thoughts and meanings. The latter is considered to be especially relevant in the examination of wildness and wilderness understandings.

The sample composition also links to my first suggestion regarding future research directions. As the collected data is based on participants perceived to be rather in the role of privileged Swiss citizens (e.g., white, able-bodied, rather high level of education, being able to access the park's region financially, 'having time to enjoy hikes in the Alps'), I argue for additional research on both the subject of changes in nature perception through CP as well as relational values including different societal groups according to age, gender, language, and cultural background within Switzerland. I propose that follow-up studies might address a lack of representation of different societal groups in studies on relational values to build more inclusive policy arguments (see also da Schio et al., 2021: 9). The inclusion of less privileged voices and their relationship with nature seems to be especially important in establishing recommendations for future sustainable nature conservation practices in the Swiss context and beyond. Interest for future research may thus lie in the identification of these societal groups and the analysis of their interaction with nature through a relational values lens.

Besides, evaluating the collected data pointed out that some understandings of *wilderness* are not exclusively but still linked with imaginations rooted in colonialism. Although this thesis aimed to critically engage with the concept of wilderness, it might be interesting to examine whether similar *wilderness* imaginations exist in other Swiss nature parks or if these are primarily brought forward in the context of a national park. Follow-up studies might engage more explicitly with decolonial approaches in the context of Swiss nature conservation.

A rather surprising result of this thesis is the perceived and criticized increase in the commercialization of nature during the pandemic by interviewees. Similar to studies about 'nature experiences' as a commodity in the field of Swedish outdoor recreation (e.g., see Margaryan & Fredman, 2017), the discussion of nature and wildness integrated in processes of commercialization could present an interesting research gap in the case of Switzerland, as nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation, particularly in alpine regions, seem to considerably account for Swiss culture. Linked to that, this thesis supports the findings regarding hiking stereotypes in the park (but probably also beyond) pointed out by Wipf et al. (2023). A feminist political ecologist perspective on hiking stereotypes and associated processes of othering (e.g., see Stanley, 2020) in Swiss outdoor recreation might enrich existing leisure studies and examine the potential contrariness between outdoor experiences in nature as "exclusive, expensive, and difficult to access" and the underlying philosophy of being in nature as "basic outdoor life, living comfortably in and with nature", a space that should be accessible for all people (Varley & Semple, 2015: 81).

Finally, from a conceptual point of view, I believe that investigating the role of embodiment and memories in the emergence of relational values could complement and support the further development of the theoretical framework. Particularly phenomenological and more-than-representational theory perspectives might add to the discussion of values deriving from people's embodied relationship with nature. For instance, based on findings in this thesis, the question of 'Which implications have these more all-encompassing values somehow transcending the clearly defined duality of subject and object in ethical discussions on value and valuing processes?' could be of interest for future research in the field of relational values.

## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

---

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown a profound impact on people-nature interactions around the world (McGinlay et al., 2020; Ferguson et al., 2022). Reduced transnational mobility and social restrictions led to an 'outdoor recreation renaissance' as an immediate reaction to the pandemic (Ferguson et al., 2022: 1063), characterized by increased visitations of local nature parks and PAs. A sudden increase in visitor numbers and changes in the composition of visitors in the years 2020 and 2021 were also observed in the Swiss National Park (SNP), which served as an initial motivation for this Master's thesis. Contextualized within the Swiss 'outdoor recreation renaissance' and spatially focusing on the SNP, presenting an IUCN strict nature reserve and wilderness area, this thesis aimed to examine park visitors' and members' perceptions and values of nature and wild(er)ness, and to what extent these have been influenced through the CP. Thereby, the primary goal of this thesis lay in the investigation and analysis of perceptions of and experiences in nature and wildness in the park, as well as the identification of underlying EVs emerging from participants' relationship with nature in the broader context of the CP. The empirical foundation of this thesis consists of qualitative go-along interviews conducted with visitors and park members in the SNP. Interview transcripts were analyzed through ACA and discussed through the lens of relational values. This framework was applied as a theoretical concept to approach the diverse values emerging from park visitors' and members' meaningful relationships with nature and wildness.

Regarding the first research question – *How do Swiss National Park visitors and park members perceive nature and wild(er)ness?* – results highlight the entanglement of individual, subjective sensory experiences and perceptions, and normative, culturally embedded imaginations about nature and wild(er)ness. Embodied experiences in nature provided a starting point to approach more conceptually anchored perceptions and were frequently linked with feelings and emotions evoked through 'being in nature'. As such, nature in the park is experienced and perceived by interviewees through different senses, often including direct interactions with the non-human world. Simultaneously, understandings of 'nature' and 'wild(er)ness' turned out to be closely intertwined in the specific context of the SNP, and interpretative descriptions such as 'natural', 'wild', 'diversified', or 'pristine' assigned to whole landscapes or some of its elements frequently overlap between the two. For both concepts, 'humans' place in nature' was identified in participants' narratives as an underlying theme that was decisive in the articulation of nature and wild(er)ness understandings as well as interviewees' own relationship with nature. In this thesis, 'wild(er)ness' is applied as an umbrella term for both *wilderness* and *wildness*. The conceptual distinction between the latter allows for a more differentiated and critical discussion of the discursive imaginations inherent in both terms.

Specifically regarding wildness as 'self-willed autonomy of the non-human world', three park-related perceptions and underlying conceptualizations were identified. Firstly, in '*ecosystem wildness*', wildness is understood as a functioning ecosystem and intact nature, where the self-willed autonomy of the non-human world is perceived by participants mostly through natural processes (e.g., mudflows). Secondly, in contrast to this rather universally applicable notion of wildness, '*place-based determined wildness*' refers to the perception of specific 'wild' elements in the park. Although this notion includes natural processes similar to *ecosystem wildness*, it constitutes a more park-specific perception of wildness (e.g., deadwood as a symbol for process protection in the SNP). Thirdly, wildness is perceived by park visitors and members through '*embodied feelings*' and '*affective events*'. Wildness in this sense is corporeally felt in a specific place and moment in time and is thus not limited to the SNP. This third type of wildness experience seems to evolve particularly through participants' embodied relationships with the non-human world. Whereas all three

understandings of wildness are shared by visitors and park members, ecosystem wildness is particularly present in park members' narratives. Although wildness in the SNP is mostly understood as secondary wildness, interviewees' general understanding of wild(er)ness still seems to be informed by *wilderness* imaginations rooted in patriarchal colonialism. This manifests itself in participants' conception of a 'real wilderness' (compared to wildness in the SNP) as completely untouched, uncivilized nature often associated with foreign lands and, in few exceptions, specifically with indigenous peoples. This result highlights the importance of decolonial approaches to nature and wildness in the case of Swiss nature conservation.

The second main objective of this thesis lies in the identification of EVs in interviewees' relationship with nature and wildness. For a more condensed presentation, findings related to the three research sub-questions are summarized together. Intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values did not fundamentally differ between visitors and park members, which seems to build common ground for future conservation management. Indeed, this study provides empirical support for relational values as a third category of EVs reflecting the 'manifold relationships' between participants and nature (Mattijssen et al., 2020: 402) in the context of PAs, as values emerging from interviewees' relationship with nature are brought forward by visitors and the park team. Thus, participants' argumentation goes beyond stereotypical dichotomies of intrinsic versus instrumental values frequently associated with PAs.

Whereas several intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values identified in this thesis are supported by existing studies on EVs, few values may be considered new or unexpected. As such, *embodied awareness* describes a relational value emanating from multidirectional and multilayered embodied relationships between participants and their environment, thus challenging clearly defined subject-object relations in the valuing process. Overall, relational values emerged not only from *direct* human-nature and people-people relationships but also from indirect and mediating relations. Indirect and mediating relational values have not exclusively but often emerged together with place attachments particularly expressed by park members. Embodied experiences, and specifically 'being in nature' are particularly considered by visitors as a decisive element in constructing and simultaneously acting out their relationship with nature. Further, this study found that emotions, memories, and shared experiences play an important role in approaching values derived from people-people-nature relations. *Knowledge* as a relational value entangled with *care* and *stewardship* presents a value brought forward by both visitors and park members, yet the articulation differs between the two sample groups. Whereas both refer to the individual value of acquiring knowledge about nature, the sharing of the latter with visitors constitutes part of park members' work and ideology and involves people-people-nature relations.

With reference to the research question '*How have Swiss National Park visitors' and park members' perceptions and values of nature and wild(er)ness been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic?*', the findings point to the role of transformed self-people-nature relationships in nature perception and experiences during the CP. Whereas most interviewees did not report a direct change in nature perception itself, they rather argued for the perception of shifted people-nature interactions due to social restrictions during the pandemic. 'Being in nature' has been considered to be especially important for individual and collective wellbeing during the CP, and the relational value of social relations and cohesion gained meaningfulness through increased socializing in natural, green spaces. Within the SNP but also in other alpine regions, the sudden interest in nature-based activities of newly outdoor-attracted people during the CP is associated by interviewees with an increased commercialization of nature, the challenge of superficial nature experiences, and the loss of written and unwritten laws. These transformations often negatively affected participants' personal nature experiences. Besides, the perceived commercialization of nature reveals the relevance of the instrumental value ascribed to nature in nature-based tourism by research participants in the context of the CP. The results support the opportunity of fostering pro-environmental awareness and behavior, as especially values of care about and for nature seemed to gain relevance for interviewees. However, the findings rather point to a short-term reaction, questioning the sustainability of the pandemic's influence on people's relationship with nature.

The last question of interest - *How may values be identified in embodied experiences in 'nature'?* - constitutes a conceptual-methodological question. The importance of 'embodiment' in experiencing and

perceiving nature and wildness in the SNP, and the construction of subjective relationships with nature presents a recurring theme in participants' argumentation. Inspired by phenomenological and more-than-representational theory, this study argues that a focus on embodied human-nature relationships enables a nuanced perspective on people's interaction with and valuation of nature. Results of this thesis illustrate that go-alongs as mobile, place-based interviews function particularly well in the investigation and identification of values emerging from people's embodied experiences in nature. As interview space and interview subject overlap with each other in the very case study, nature and wildness in the park become materially and symbolically present, and linkages between the actual embodied experience, perception, and subsequent articulation of value may be revealed in a contextualized manner. While this thesis does not intend to present go-alongs as an exclusive method to account for values in embodied experiences, research findings support the strength and potential of such an emplaced interview technique to better understand the diverse relationships people have in and with nature.

Moreover, the contribution of this thesis to existing research shall be outlined in the following. From a methodological point of view, this thesis provides information for future research projects about the implementation of go-alongs as mobile interview techniques in socio-environmental sciences. Particularly, the overall positive realization of the rather unique approach of accompanying park visitors 'spontaneously' during their hikes to gather in-depth knowledge about embodied experiences in nature and place-based perceptions and understandings of the environment may inspire other qualitative studies in striving for participatory, mobile research techniques in nature conservation and beyond. Finally, the qualitative approach strived for in the scope of this thesis also contributes to the rather small number of qualitative research projects implemented in and by the SNP with regard to socio-environmental topics. Findings especially enlarge knowledge about the nature perception of younger visitors as a specific, potentially growing visitor group in the SNP, adding to the study of older visitors' perceptions and needs in the SNP (Trachsel, 2011). Besides, results specifically related to deadwood contribute to existing data about changes in visitors' perceptions, attitudes towards, and acceptance of deadwood in the SNP over time (Backhaus et al., 2013; Backhaus & Rupf, 2014).

Thematically, this Master's thesis contributes to research around the topical issue of how Covid-19 restrictions influenced Swiss citizens' outdoor and nature experiences in the specific case of the SNP. The data collected during fieldwork may complement previous quantitative results of the pandemic's impact on visitor behavior in the park and serve as an indication towards the (qualitatively) perceived sustainability of these impacts. This study links embodied experiences in and perceptions of nature and wildness with associated intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values, thus specifically accounting for the discussion of EVs in the context of the pandemic. Besides, through the nature of this research's case study, namely presenting an IUCN strict nature reserve and wilderness area, the analysis of notions about 'nature' and 'wild(er)ness' held by interviewed visitors and members of the park contributes to empirical and conceptual debates on nature, wilderness, and wildness in the Swiss context.

Furthermore, this thesis's theoretical and empirical engagement with values going beyond traditional binary thinking (e.g., intrinsic vs. instrumental values exclusively) enlarges existing experiences with a relational values approach in nature conservation science. By focusing on values emerging from visitors' relationship with nature amongst those of park members, this study enriches the discussion of relational values emanating from people's relations with environmental entities that do not necessarily imply an interaction on a regular, daily basis (e.g., in contrast to people-nature relationship of farmers; cf. Chapman & Deplazes-Zemp, 2023). Additionally, to better understand the linkage between situated and lived experiences in nature and all-embracing, embodied relational values, perspectives from phenomenology and more-than-representational theory have been identified as useful to account for some of these underlying multilayered, meaningful human-nature relationships.

## Bibliography

---

- Adams, W. & Mulligan, M. (2003): *Decolonizing nature: Strategies for conservation in a post-colonial era*. London: Earthscan.
- Adams, W. (2020): Wilderness—England’s English. In: Hall, M. & Hardenberg, W. (eds.): “*New Wilderness Babel: What does Wilderness Mean in Your Language?*” Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions 2013(1) [updated 1 June 2020]. Version 2. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.
- Anderson, J. (2004): Talking whilst walking: a geographical archaeology of knowledge. *Area*, 36(3), pp. 254–261.
- Anderson, J. & Jones, K. (2009): The difference that place makes to methodology: uncovering the ‘lived space’ of young people’s spatial practices. *Children’s Geographies*, 7(3), pp. 291–303.
- Backhaus, N. (2010): Landschaften wahrnehmen und nachhaltig entwickeln: ein transdisziplinäres Modell für Forschung und Praxis. *Geographica Helvetica*, 65(1), pp. 48–58.
- Backhaus, N., Buser, C., Butticaz, M., Jorio, D. & Speich, M. (2013): Wirtschaftliche Auswirkungen des Sommertourismus im UNESCO Biosphärenreservat Val Müstair Parc Naziunal. *Schriftenreihe Humangeographie*, Bd. 27, Geographisches Institut der Universität Zürich.
- Backhaus, N., & Rupf, R. (2014): «...die Wege nicht verlassen ...» Ein Park für Menschen? In: Baur, B. & Scheurer, T. (eds.): *Wissen schaffen: 100 Jahre Forschung im Schweizerischen Nationalpark. Nationalpark-Forschung in der Schweiz* (Bd. 100, pp. 296–325). Bern: Haupt.
- Batavia, C. & Nelson, M. P. (2017): For goodness sake! What is intrinsic value and why should we care? *Biological Conservation*, 209, pp. 366–376.
- Bates, A. E., Primack, R. B., Biggar, B. S., Bird, T. J., Clinton, M. E., Command, R. J., Richards, C., Shellard, M., Geraldi, N., Vergara, V., Acevedo-Charry, O. et al. (2021): Global COVID-19 lockdown highlights humans as both threats and custodians of the environment. *Biological Conservation*, 263(2021), 109175 (pp. 1–18).
- Bauer, N. & Wallner, A. (2015): Wildnis in der Schweiz. Wilderness in Switzerland. *Natur und Landschaft*, 90(9-10), pp. 444–447.
- Bauer, N. (2016): Social values of wilderness in Europe. In: Bastmeijer, K. (ed.): *Wilderness Protection in Europe. The Role of International, European and National Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 94–113.
- Baur, B. & Scheurer, T. (2014): *Wissen Schaffen. 100 Jahre Forschung im Schweizerischen Nationalpark*. Haupt: Bern.
- Beery, T., Olsson, M. R. & Vitestam, M. (2021): Covid-19 and outdoor recreation management: Increased participation, connection to nature, and a look to climate adaptation. *Journal of Outdoor recreation and Tourism*, 36, 100457.
- Beery, T., Olafsson, A. S., Gentin, S., Maurer, M., Stalhammar, S., Albert, C., Bieling, C., Buijs, A., Fagerholm, N., Garcia-Martin, M., Plieninger, T., & Raymond, C. M. (2023): Disconnection from nature: Expanding our understanding of human–nature relations. *People and Nature*, 5(2), pp. 470–488.
- Bell, S. L., Phoenix, C., Lovell, R. & Wheeler, B. W. (2015): Using GPS and geo-narratives: a methodological approach for understanding and situating everyday green space encounters. *Area*, 47(1), pp. 88–96.
- Bergeron, J., Paquette, S., & Poullaouec-Gonidec, P. (2014): Uncovering landscape values and micro geographies of meanings with the go-along method. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 122, pp. 108–121.
- Bergson, H. (2004): *Matter and memory*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Blass, R. (2022): Besucherzählung 2022, Schweizerischer Nationalpark. Zerne, Parc Naziunal Svizzer.
- Booth, K. (2011): In Wilderness and Wildness: Recognizing and Responding within the Agency of Relational Memory. *Environmental Ethics*, 33(3), pp. 283–293.
- Brady, E. (2022): Aesthetic Value as a Relational Value. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XX(XX), pp. 1–2.
- Brehm, J. M., Eisenhauer, B. W. & Stedman, R. C. (2013): Environmental Concern: Examining the Role of Place Meaning and Place Attachment. *Society and Natural Resources*, 26, pp. 522–538.

- Britto dos Santos, N., & Gould, R. K. (2018): Can relational values be developed and changed? Investigating relational values in the environmental education literature. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, pp. 124–131.
- Brunner, N. (2020): Besucherzählung 2020. Schweizerischer Nationalpark. Zerne, November 2020.
- Bundesamt für Gesundheit (BAG) (2020): Lockerungen und Verschärfungen der nationalen Massnahmen. Stand 2. November 2020. Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern EDI. URL: <https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/de/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov/massnahmen-des-bundes.html#1310036670> (accessed: 02.03.2023).
- Burns, R., Gallant, K. A., Litwiller, F., White, C. & Hamilton-Hinch, B. (2020): The go-along interview: a valuable tool for leisure research. *Leisure Sciences*, 42(1), pp. 51–68.
- Burns, M., Bally, J., Burles, M., Holtslander, L. & Peacock, S. (2022): Constructivist Grounded Theory or Interpretive Phenomenology? Methodological Choices Within Specific Study Contexts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2, pp. 1–13.
- Büscher, B. & Fletcher, R. (2020): *The conservation revolution: radical ideas for saving nature beyond the Anthropocene*. London: Verso.
- Camenisch, R. (2008): Charakteristiken der Besucherinnen und Besucher der Region Unterengadin / Val Müstair mit Fokus auf die Bedeutung des Schweizerischen Nationalparks. Masterarbeit am Geographischen Institut der Universität Zürich, Zürich.
- Carpiano, R. M. (2009): Come take a walk with me: The “Go-Along” interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being. *Health & Place*, 15, pp. 263–272.
- Chan, K. M. A., Balvanera, P., Benessaiah, K., Chapman, M., Díaz, S., Gómez-Baggethun, E., et al. (2016): Opinion: why protect nature? Rethinking values and the environment. *PNAS*, 113(6), pp. 1462–1465.
- Chan, K. M., Gould, R. K. & Pascual, U. (2018): ‘Editorial overview: Relational values: what are they, and what’s the fuss about?’ *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, pp. A1–A7.
- Chapman, R. L. (2006): Ecological restoration restored. *Environmental Values*, 15(4), pp. 463–478.
- Chapman, M., Satterfield, T., & Chan, K. M. A. (2019): When value conflicts are barriers: Can relational values help explain farmer participation in conservation incentive programs? *Land Use Policy*, 82, pp. 464–475.
- Chapman, M. & Deplazes-Zemp, A. (2023): ‘I owe it to the animals’: The bidirectionality of Swiss alpine farmers’ relational values. *People and Nature*, 5(1), pp. 147–161.
- Charmaz, K. (2013): *Constructing grounded theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Chemero, A. (2009): *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chipeniuk, R. (2020): Wilderness—Early English. In: Hall, M. & Hardenberg, W. (eds.): “New Wilderness Babel: What does Wilderness Mean in Your Language?” Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions 2013(1) [updated 1 June 2020]. Version 2. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.
- Cohen, E. (1988): Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, pp. 371–386.
- Crang, M. & Cook, I. (2007): *Doing Ethnographies*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cronon, W. (1996): The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, getting Back to the Wrong Nature. *Environmental History*, 1(1), pp. 7–28.
- Da Schio, N., Phillips, A., Fransen, K., Wolff, M., Haase, D., Ostoić, S. K., Živojinović, I., Vuletić, D., Derks, J., Davies, C., Laforteza, R., Roitsch, D., Winkel, G., & De Vreese, R. (2021): The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the use of and attitudes towards urban forests and green spaces: Exploring the instigators of change in Belgium. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 65, pp. 127305–127305.
- De Vos, A., Bezerra, J. C. & Roux, D. (2018): Relational values about nature in protected area research. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, pp. 89–99.
- Dandy, N. (2020): Behaviour, Lockdown and the Natural World. *Environmental Values*, 29(3), pp. 253–259.
- Deplazes-Zemp, A. & Chapman, M. (2021): The ABCs of relational values: environmental values that include aspects of both intrinsic and instrumental valuing. *Environmental Values*, 30(6), pp. 669–693.
- Deplazes-Zemp, A. (2022): Are People Part of Nature? Yes and No: A Perspectival Account of the Concept of ‘Nature’. *Environmental Ethics*, 44(2), pp. 99–119.

- Deplazes-Zemp, A. (2023): Beyond Intrinsic and Instrumental: Third-Category Value in Environmental Ethics and Environmental Policy. *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, [Online], (pp. 1–23).
- Deppermann, A. (2013): Interview als Text vs. Interview als Interaktion. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 14(3), Art. 13. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1303131> (accessed: 10.08.2022).
- Devine-Wright, P. (2009): Rethinking NIMBYism: The role of place attachment and place identity in explaining place-protective action. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19, pp. 426–441.
- Derby, M., Piersol, L. & Blenkinsop, S. (2015): Refusing to settle for pigeons and parks: urban environmental education in the age of neoliberalism. *Environmental Education Research*, pp. 1-12.
- Diaz, S., Pascual, U., Stenseke, M., Martin-Lopez, B., Watson, R. T., Molnar, Z., Hill, R., Chan, K. M., Baste, I. A., Brauman, K. A. & Polasky, S. (2018): Assessing nature’s contributions to people. *Science*, 359(6373), pp. 270–272.
- Dick, J., Andrews, C., Orenstein, D. E., Teff-Seker, Y & Zulian, G. (2022): A mixed-methods approach to analyse recreational values and implications for management of protected areas: A case study of Cairngorms National Park, UK. *Ecosystem Services*, 56, pp. 101460 (1–13).
- Diekmann, A. (2017): *Empirische Sozialforschung. Grundlagen, Methoden, Anwendungen*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag GmbH.
- Dobson, J., Gore, T., Graham, K. & Swade, K. (2021): Paradise Regained? Localised and Limited Nature Connexions in the UK’s Covid-19 Lockdown. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 3(708209), pp. 1–13.
- Douglas, M. L., Borrie, W. T. & Bosak, K. (2023): The emotional presence of nature: Exploring affect in human-wilderness relations. *Leisure Studies*, [Online], pp. 1–16
- Dubois, A. & Gadde, L. E. (2002): Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*, 55, 2002, pp. 553–60.
- Duclos, J. S. (2020): Uncomplicating the Idea of Wilderness. *Environmental Values*, 29(1), pp. 89–107.
- Dudley, N. (Ed.) (2008): Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x + 86pp. WITH Stolton, S., P. Shadie and N. Dudley (2013). IUCN WCPA Best Practice Guidance on Recognising Protected Areas and Assigning Management Categories and Governance Types. *Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 21*, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xxpp.
- Duedahl, E. & Blichfeldt, B. (2020): To walk the talk of go-along methods: navigating the unknown terrains of being-along. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 20(5), pp. 438–458.
- Evans, J. C. (2005): *With respect for nature*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Evans, J. & Jones, P. (2011): The walking interview: Methodology, mobility and place. *Applied Geography*, 31, pp. 849–858.
- Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation [1980] (2007): *Ordinance on Parks of National Importance (Parks Ordinance, ParkO)*.
- Ferguson, M. D., McIntosh, K., English, D. B. K., Ferguson, L. A., Barcelona, R., Giles, G., Fraser, O. & Leberman, M. (2022): The Outdoor Renaissance: Assessing the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic upon Outdoor Recreation Visitation, Behaviors, and Decision-Making in New England’s National Forests. *Society & Natural Resources*, 35(10), pp. 1063–1082.
- Fernández-Llamazares, A., Terraube, J., Gavin, M. C., Pyhälä, A., Siani, S. M. O., Cabeza, M. & Brondizio, E. S. (2020): Reframing the Wilderness Concept can Bolster Collaborative Conservation. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 35(9), pp. 750–753.
- Fisher, M (2016): Ecological values of wilderness in Europe. In: Bastmeijer, K. (ed.): *Wilderness Protection in Europe. The Role of International, European and National Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 67–93.
- Fletcher, R. (2017): Connection with nature is an oxymoron: A political ecology of “nature-deficit disorder”. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 48(4), pp. 226–233.
- Flick, U. (2010): *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung*. Reinbek bei Hamburg, Germany: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Giampapa, F. & Lamoureux, S. (2011): Voices from the field: Identity, language, and power in multilingual research settings. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 10, pp. 127–131.
- Gilliand, C. (2021): Experiencing Values in the Flow of Events: A Phenomenological Approach to Relational Values. *Environmental Values*, 30 (6), pp. 715–736.

- Graneheim, U. H., Lidgren, B.-M. & Lundman, B. (2017): Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse Education Today*, 56, pp. 29–34.
- Ito, E., Walker, G. J., & Kono, S. (2019) 'A Comparison of Immediate and Retrospective Affective Reports in Leisure Contexts'. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 50, pp. 48–55.
- Hansen, H. (2008): 'Abduction'. In: Barry, D. & Hansen, H. (eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of New Approaches in management and Organization*. London: Sage.
- Hansen, A. S., Beery, T., Fredman, P. & Wolf-Watz, D. (2022): Outdoor recreation in Sweden during and after the Covid-19 pandemic – management and policy implications. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, pp. 1–22.
- Hein, J. R., Evans, J. & Jones, P. (2008): Mobile Methodologies: Theory, Technology and Practice. *Geography Compass* 2(5), pp. 1266–1285.
- Himes, A. & Muraca, B. (2018): Relational values: The key to pluralistic valuation of ecosystem services. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, pp. 1–7.
- Hoelle, J., Gould, R. K. & Tauro, A. (2022): Beyond 'desirable' values: Expanding relational values research to reflect the diversity of human–nature relationships. *People and Nature*, pp. 1–12.
- Humberstone, B. (2011): Embodiment and social and environmental action in nature-based sport: spiritual spaces. *Leisure Studies*, 30(4), pp. 495–512.
- Humberstone, B. (2015): Embodiment, nature and wellbeing. More than the senses? In: Robertson, M., Lawrence, R. & Heath, G. (eds.): *Experiencing the Outdoors. Enhancing Strategies for Wellbeing* (pp. 61–72). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Hunziker, M. (1997): Totholz in den Nationalparkwäldern: Attraktion oder Störfaktor? *Cratschla*, Heft 2, pp. 3–8.
- Ingold, T. (2000): *The perception of the environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London: Routledge.
- Jackson, S. B., Stevenson, K. T., Larson, L. R., Peterson, M. N. & Seekamp, E. (2021): Outdoor Activity Participation Improves Adolescents' Mental Health and Well-Being during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18 (5), pp. 2506–2518.
- Jacobs, L. A., Blacketer, M., Peterson, B. A., Levithan, E., Russell, Z. A. & Brunson, M. (2020): Responding to COVID-19 and future times of uncertainty: Challenges and opportunities associated with visitor use, management, and research in parks and protected areas. *Parks Stewardship Forum*, 36(3), pp. 483–488.
- Jauss, A. & Backhaus, N. (2013): Motorcycling over the Ofenpass: perception of the Swiss National Park and the Ofenpass from the perspective of motorcyclists. *Eco.mont*, 5(1), pp. 19–26.
- Jax, K., Calestani, M., Chan, K. M., Eser, U., Keune, H., Muraca, B., O'Brien, L., Potthast, T., Voget-Kleschin, L., & Wittmer, H. (2018): Caring for nature matters: a relational approach for understanding nature's contributions to human well-being. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, pp. 22–29.
- Johnson, M. (2015): Embodied understanding. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, article 875, pp. 1–8.
- Kangler, G. (2009): Von der schrecklichen Waldwildnis zum bedrohten Waldökosystem - Differenzierung von Wildnisbegriffen in der Geschichte des Bayerischen Waldes. In: Kirchhoff, T & Trepl, L. (eds.): *Vieldeutige Natur*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Kangler, G. (2021): Wildnisauffassungen in der aktuellen Politik und das unterschätzte Potenzial der Fließgewässer. In: Walsh, C., Kangler, G. & Schaffert, M. (eds.): *Landschaftsbilder und Landschaftsverständnisse in Politik und Praxis*. Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 141–157.
- Keune, H., Immovilli, M., Keller, R., Maynard, S., McElwee, P., Molnár, Z., Olsson, G. A., Payyappallimana, U., Schneiders, A., Schoolenberg, M., Subramanian, S. M. & Van Reeth, W. (2022): Defining nature. In: Visseren-Hamakers, I. J. & Kok, M. T. J. (eds.): *Transforming Biodiversity Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 25–42.
- Kinkaid, E. (2019): Embodied political ecology: Sensing agrarian change in north India. *Geoforum*, 107, pp. 45–53.
- Kirchhoff, T. & Trepl, L. (2009): *Vieldeutige Natur*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Kobayashi, A. (2009): Situated knowledge, reflexivity. In: Kitchin, R. & Thrift, N. (eds.): *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 138–143.
- Kruse, J. (2015) *Qualitative Interviewforschung: ein integrativer Ansatz*. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.

- Kuckartz, U. & Rädiker, S. (2019): Introduction: Analyzing Qualitative Data with Software. In: *Analyzing Qualitative Data with MAXQDA* (pp. 1–11). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Kühl, J. (2016): Walking Interviews als Methode zur Erhebung alltäglicher Raumproduktionen. *Europa Regional*, 23.2015(2), pp. 35–48.
- Kupper, P. (2012): *Wildnis schaffen. Eine transnationale Geschichte des Schweizerischen Nationalparks*. Bern: Haupt Verlag.
- Kupper, P. (2020): Wildnis-German. In: Hall, M. & Hardenberg, W. (eds.): “New Wilderness Babel: What does Wilderness Mean in Your Language?” Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions 2013(1) [updated 1 June 2020]. Version 2. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.
- Kusenbach, M. (2003): Street phenomenology: the go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography*, 4(3), pp. 455–485.
- Langmann, S. & Pick, D. (2018): *Photography as a Social Research Method*. Springer: Singapore.
- Lewicka, M. (2013): In Search of Roots. Memory as Enabler of Place Attachment. In: Manzo, L. & Devine-Wright, P. (eds.): *Place Attachment. Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*. London: Routledge.
- Lumber, R., Richardson, M., & Sheffield, D. (2017): Beyond knowing nature: Contact, emotion, compassion, meaning, and beauty are pathways to nature connection. *PLOS ONE*, 12(e0177186).
- Luque-Lora, R. (2022): The Trouble with Relational Values. *Environmental Values*, [Online], pp. 1–21.
- Lykke, M. & Jantzen, C. (2013): Walking around to grasp interaction. In: Bødker, M., Browning, D. & Meinhardt, N. D. (eds.): *Proceedings of the 14th INTERACT Designing for Diversity: Papers from Walking for Data Workshop* (pp. 1–5). Tumblr Papers. URL: <https://walkingfordata.tumblr.com/papers> (accessed: 02.03.2023).
- Macpherson, H., (2016): Walking methods in landscape research: moving bodies, spaces of disclosure and rapport. *Landscape Research*, 41(4), pp. 425–432.
- Margaryana, L. & Fredman, P. (2017): Bridging outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism in a commercial context: Insights from the Swedish service providers. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 17, pp. 84–92.
- Margaryan, L. & Wall-Reinius, S. (2017): Commercializing the Unpredictable: Perspectives From Wildlife Watching Tourism Entrepreneurs in Sweden. *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 22(5), pp. 406–421.
- Martini, N. (2020): Using GPS and GIS to Enrich the Walk-along Method. *Field Methods*, 32(2), pp. 180–192.
- Mattijssen, T. J. M., Ganzevoort, W., van den Born, R. J. G., Arts, B. J. M., Breman, B. C., Buijs, A. E., van Dam, R. I., Elands, B. H. M., de Groot, W. T. & Knippenberg, L. W. J. (2020): Relational values of nature: leverage points for nature policy in Europe. *Ecosystems and People*, 16(1), pp. 402–410.
- May, V. & Lewis, C. (2020): Researching embodied relationships with place: rehabilitating the sit-down interview. *Qualitative Research*, 20(2), pp. 127–142.
- McGinlay, J. et al. (2020): The Impact of COVID-19 on the Management of European Protected Areas and Policy Implications. *Forests*, 11(1214), pp. 1–15.
- Moles, K. (2008): A walk in thirdspace: Place, methods and walking. *Sociological Research Online*, 13(4), pp. 1–8.
- Moos, S., Bauer, N. Senn, J., Kienast, F., Kern, M., Conradin, K., Radford, S. & von Atzigen, A. (2019): *Das Potenzial von Wildnis in der Schweiz*. Bristol-Stiftung, Bern: Haupt Verlag.
- Morse, J. (2008): Confusing categories and themes. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18 (6), pp. 727–728.
- Morse, J. W., Gladkikh, T. M., Hackenburg, D. M. & Gould, R. K. (2020): COVID-19 and human-nature relationships: Vermonters’ activities in nature and associated nonmaterial values during the pandemic. *PLoS One*, 15(12), e0243697.
- Münderlein, D., Kühne, O. & Weber, F. (2019): Mobile Methoden und fotobasierte Forschung zur Rekonstruktion von Landschaft(sbiographien). In: Kühne, O., Weber, F., Berr, K. & Jenal, C. (eds.): *Handbuch Landschaft. RaumFragen: Stadt – Region – Landschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Muraca, B. (2016): Relational Values: A Whiteheadian Alternative for Environmental Philosophy and Global Environmental Justice. *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, 8(1), pp. 19–38.
- Neuteleers, S. (2020): A Fresh Look at ‘Relational’ Values in Nature: Distinctions Derived from the Debate on Meaningfulness in Life. *Environmental Values*, 29(4), pp. 461–479.
- Newing, H. (2011): *Conducting research in conservation. A social science perspective*. London: Routledge.

- O'Connor, S. & Kenter, J. O. (2019): Making intrinsic values work; integrating intrinsic values of the more-than-human world through the Life Framework. *Sustainability Science*, 14, pp. 1247–1265.
- Parc National Swizzer (2022): Besonderheiten. URL: <https://www.nationalpark.ch/de/about/ueberuns/naturoase/besonderheiten/> (accessed: 08.03.2022).
- Pascual, U., Balvanera, P., Díaz, S., Pataki, G. et al. (2017): Valuing nature's contributions to people: the IPBES approach. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 26, pp. 7–16.
- Patton, M. (1990): *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. (2002): *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Plumwood, V. (1998): Wilderness skepticism and wilderness dualism. In: Callicott, J. & Nelson, M. (eds.): *The Great New Wilderness Debate*. University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA.
- Poelsma, F. (2020): *Report Visitor Survey SNP 2020*. URL: [http://www.parc.ch/snp/pdf\\_public/2021/43464\\_20211208\\_141216\\_ReportVisitorSurveySNP2020.pdf](http://www.parc.ch/snp/pdf_public/2021/43464_20211208_141216_ReportVisitorSurveySNP2020.pdf) (accessed: 06.03.2022).
- Pouso, S., Borja, A., Fleming, E. L., Gómez-Baggethun, E., White, M. P., & Uyarra, M. C. (2021): Contact with Blue-Green Spaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown Beneficial for Mental Health. *The Science of the Total Environment*, 756, pp. 143984 (1–12).
- Prior, J. & Brady, E. (2017): Environmental aesthetics and rewilding. *Environmental Values*, 26(1), pp. 31–51.
- Raymond, C. M., Giusti, M. & Barthel, S. (2018): An embodied perspective on the co-production of cultural ecosystem services: toward embodied ecosystems. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 61(5-6), pp. 778–799.
- Reichertz, J. (2003): Abduktion. In: Bohnsack, R. & Winfried-Meuser, M. (eds.): *Hauptbegriffe Qualitativer Sozialforschung*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich (UTB).
- Reichertz, J. (2007): Abduktion, Deduktion und Induktion in der qualitativen Forschung. In: Flick, U., von Kardorff, E. & Steinke, I. (eds.): *Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch*. Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Riechers, M., Balazsi, A., Engler, J.-O., Shumi, G., & Fischer, J. (2021): Understanding relational values in cultural landscapes in Romania and Germany. *People and Nature*, 3(5), pp. 1036–1046.
- Röhring, A. (2021): Place-making in Handlungsräumen der Energiewende –Energiewendelandschaftsgestaltung und Entwicklung des Energielandschaftsverständnisses in Bioenergie-Regionen. In: Walsh, C., Kangler, G. & Schaffert, M. (eds.): *Landschaftsbilder und Landschaftsverständnisse in Politik und Praxis*. Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 77–95.
- Rose, G. (2002): *Visual methodologies. An introduction to researching with visual materials*. London: Sage.
- Rose, J. & Carr, A. (2018): Political ecologies of leisure: a critical approach to nature-society relations in leisure studies. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 21(3), pp. 265–283.
- Roulston, K. (2010): Considering quality in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, 10, pp. 199–228.
- Santo-Tomás Muro, R., Sáenz de Tejada Granados, C. & Rodríguez Romero, E. J. (2020): Green infrastructures in the peri-urban landscape: Exploring local perception of well-being through “go-alongs” and “semi-structured interviews.” *Sustainability*, 12(17), 6836 (pp. 1–26).
- Sattlegger, L., Brietzke, A. S., Stein, M. & Schneider, F. D. (2023): Go-Along- Interviews als Methode für eine sozial-ökologische Stadtnaturforschung [56 Absätze]. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 24(1), Art. 9.
- Scheurer, T., Jenny, H., Kupper, P., Parolini, J. D. & Schläpfer, D. (2014): Die Landschaft und ihre Nutzung von der letzten Eiszeit bis zur Parkgründung. In: Baur, B. & Scheurer, T. (eds.): *Wissen Schaffen. 100 Jahre Forschung im Schweizerischen Nationalpark*. Haupt: Bern.
- Schnabel-Jung, U. & Wipf, S. (2021): Extreme Besucherströme bringen neue Herausforderungen für Schutzgebiete. *Forum für Wissen (WSL Berichte)*, Heft 115, pp. 57–61.
- Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006): The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A*, 38, pp. 207–226.
- Skubel, P. A., Shriver-Rice, M. & Maranto, G. M. (2019): Introducing Relational Values as a Tool for Shark Conservation, Science, and Management. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 6(53), pp. 1–21.
- Stremlow, M. & Sidler, C. (2002): Schreibzüge durch die Wildnis. Wildnisvorstellungen in Literatur und Printmedien der Schweiz. Bristol-Stiftung, Bern: Haupt.
- Stålhammar, S. & Thorén, H. (2019): Three perspectives on relational values of nature. *Sustainability Science*, 14(5), pp. 1201–1212.

- Stanley P. (2020): Unlikely hikers? Activism, Instagram, and the queer mobilities of fat hikers, women hiking alone, and hikers of colour. *Mobilities*, 15(2), pp. 241–256.
- Suri, H. (2011): 'Purposeful Sampling in Qualitative Research Synthesis'. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 11(2), pp. 63–75.
- Tadaki, M., Sinner, J. & Chan, K. M. A. (2017): Making sense of environmental values: a typology of concepts. *Ecology and Society*, 22(1), pp. 1–12.
- Teff-Seker, Y., Rasilo, T., Dick, J., Goldsborough, D. & Orenstein, D. E. (2022): What does nature feel like? Using embodied walking interviews to discover cultural ecosystem services. *Ecosystem Services*, 55, pp. 101425 (1–10).
- Thompson, J. (2022): A Guide to Abductive Thematic Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(5), pp. 1410–1421.
- Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012): Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3), 167–186.
- Timmermans, S. & Tavory, I. (2022): *Data analysis in qualitative research. Theorizing with abductive analysis*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tin, T. (2022): Urban Proximity and Visitor Numbers of Four Wilderness Areas in 2020 during the COVID Pandemic. *International Journal of Wilderness*, 28(2), pp. 39–52.
- Trachsel, A. & Backhaus, N. (2011): Perception and needs of older visitors in the Swiss National Park: A qualitative study of hiking tourists over 55. *Eco.mont*, 3(1), pp. 47–50.
- Tresch, J. (2001): On Going Native. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 31(3), pp. 302–322.
- Vaismoradi, M. & Snelgrove, S. (2019): Theme in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis [25 paragraphs]. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 20(3), Art. 23. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-20.3.3376> (accessed: 01.03.2023).
- Vannini, P. & Vannini, A. (2020): Attuning to wild atmospheres: Reflections on wildness as feeling. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 36, 100711 (pp. 1–8).
- Varley, P., & Semple, T. (2015): Nordic slow adventure: Explorations in time and nature. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15(1-2), pp. 73–90.
- Venter, Z. S., Barton, D. N., Gundersen, V., Figari, H., & Nowell, M. (2020): Urban nature in a time of crisis: recreational use of green space increases during the COVID-19 outbreak in Oslo, Norway. *Environmental Research Letters*, 15(10), 104075.
- Venter, Z. S., Barton, D. N., Gundersen, V., Figari, H., & Nowell, M. S. (2021): Back to nature: Norwegians sustain increased recreational use of urban green space months after the COVID-19 outbreak. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 214(2021), 104175.
- Von Atzigen, A. & Bauer, N. (2019): Gesellschaftliche Sicht auf Wildnis. In: Moos, S., Bauer, N. Senn, J., Kienast, F., Kern, M., Conradin, K., Radford, S. & von Atzigen, A. (eds.): *Das Potenzial von Wildnis in der Schweiz*. Bristol-Stiftung, Bern: Haupt Verlag.
- Waithaka, J. et al., (2021): Impacts of covid-19 on protected and conserved areas: A global overview and regional perspective. *Parks*, 27(special issue), pp. 41–56.
- Ward, K. (2019). For Wilderness or Wildness? Decolonising Rewilding. In: Pettorelli, N., Durant, S. M. & du Toit, J. (eds.): *Rewilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pp. 34–54).
- Weber, S. & John, M. (2019): Beredte Spaziergänge durch den Wald – Methodische Herausforderungen und analytischer Erkenntnisgewinn von Go-Along-Interviews. In: Sattlegger, L. Deppisch, L. & Rudolfi, M. (eds.): *Methoden umweltsoziologischer Forschung*. Tagungsband der 15. Tagung der Nachwuchsgruppe Umweltsoziologie (S.131–147). Frankfurt am Main: ISOE – Institut für sozial-ökologische Forschung. URL: <http://isoe-publikationen.de/fileadmin/redaktion/ISOE-Reihen/msoe/msoe-56-isoe-2019.pdf> (accessed: 01.03.2023).
- West, S., Haider, L. J., Masterson, V., Enqvist, J. P., Svedin, U. & Tengö, M. (2018): Stewardship, care and relational values. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, pp. 30–38.
- Whatmore, S. (2002): *Hybrid Geographies: Natures, Cultures, Spaces*. London: SAGE Publications.
- White, M. P., Elliott, L. R., Grellier, J., Economou, T., Bell, S., Bratman, G. N., Cirach, M., Gascon, M., Lima, L. M., Löhmus, M., Nieuwenhuijsen, M., Ojala, A., Roiko, A., Schultz, P. W., van den Bosch, M. & Fleming, L. E. (2021): "Associations Between Green/blue Spaces and Mental Health Across 18 Countries." *Scientific reports*, 11(1), pp. 8903–8903.

- WHO (2021): Green and blue spaces and mental health: new evidence and perspectives for action. Copenhagen: World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe; 2021. URL: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/green-and-blue-spaces-and-mental-health-new-evidence-and-perspectives-for-action-2021> (accessed: 04.05.2022).
- Wilderness Act (1964): Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S. C. 1131-1136) 88th Congress, Second Session, 3 September 1964. URL: [https://winapps.umn.edu/winapps/media2/wilderness/NWPS/documents/publiclaws/16 USC 1131-1136.pdf](https://winapps.umn.edu/winapps/media2/wilderness/NWPS/documents/publiclaws/16%20USC%201131-1136.pdf) [accessed: 29.03.2022].
- Wilson, E. O. (1984): *Biophilia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, A. D., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Manning, L. P. (2016): Using Paired Depth Interviews to Collect Qualitative Data. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(9), pp. 1549-1573.
- Wipf, S. (2021): Eine von COVID-19 geprägte Saison im Schweizerischen Nationalpark. *Allegra*, Nr. 4, pp. 10-12. URL: [http://www.parc.ch/snp/pdf\\_public/2021/43465\\_20211208\\_141937\\_allegra\\_nr04-winter-20-21\\_covid19snp.pdf](http://www.parc.ch/snp/pdf_public/2021/43465_20211208_141937_allegra_nr04-winter-20-21_covid19snp.pdf) (accessed: 06.03.2022).
- Wipf, S., Michel, A. H., Walder, D., Poelsma, F., Anderwald, P., Cruickshank, S., Jaroszynska, F., Rossi, C. & Backhaus, N. (2023): Boost in visitor numbers post COVID-19 shutdown: consequences for an alpine wilderness area (Manuscript submitted for publication).
- Witzel, A. (1985): Das problemzentrierte Interview. In: Jüttemann, G. (ed.): *Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie*. Weinheim: Beltz, pp. 227-255.
- Witzel, A. (2000): The problem-centered interview [26 paragraphs]. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(1), Art. 22.
- Witzel, A. & Reiter, H. (2012): *The problem-centered interview. Principles and practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Wunderlich, A. C., Salak, B., Hegetschweiler, T., Bauer, N. & Hunziker, M. (2021): The woods are calling: Auswirkungen der Corona-Pandemie auf die Schweizer Waldbesuche. *WSL Berichte*, 115, pp. 49-52.
- Yin, R. K. (2018): *Case study research and applications: design and methods*. Sixth edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.

## A.1 Informational letter

---

### Masterarbeit zur veränderten Wahrnehmung von Natur und Wildnis im Schweizerischen Nationalpark während der Covid-19 Pandemie

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren

Im Rahmen meines Geographiestudiums an der Universität Zürich führe ich eine Masterarbeit zur veränderten Wahrnehmung von Natur und Wildnis im Schweizerischen Nationalpark während der Covid-19 Pandemie durch. Die Arbeit erfolgt in Zusammenarbeit mit der Forschungskommission des Nationalparks und wird durch Dr. Annina Michel und Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus betreut. Anhand dieses Merkblatts möchte ich Ihnen meine Arbeit kurz vorstellen und Sie über deren Ziele und Ablauf informieren.

#### Worum geht es in der Masterarbeit?

Reduzierte grenzüberschreitende Mobilität und soziale Einschränkungen als Folge der COVID-19-Pandemie haben die Einstellung der Menschen gegenüber Naturräumen beeinflusst. So erlebte der Schweizerische Nationalpark (SNP) während des Lockdowns im Jahr 2020 einen erheblichen Anstieg an Besuchendenzahlen, wovon viele Personen den SNP zum ersten Mal besuchten. Die veränderte Wahrnehmung von Natur und Wildnis durch Parkbesucherinnen und -besucher während der Pandemie stellt daher ein zentrales Interesse des Parks dar und wird in dieser Masterarbeit untersucht. Dabei werden unterschiedliche Vorstellungen von Parkbesuchenden und Rangerinnen und Rangern in Bezug auf Natur und Wildnis erfragt.

#### Wie läuft das Interview ab?

Das Interview findet direkt im SNP statt und soll Ihren Aufenthalt im Park möglichst nicht stören. Daher möchte ich Sie gerne auf einem Teil Ihrer Wanderung begleiten und dabei in einem Gespräch meine Fragen stellen. Wichtig ist, dass Sie zu jedem Zeitpunkt selbst über Ihre Wanderroute entscheiden oder wann und wo Sie beispielsweise eine Pause einlegen möchten. Dies soll Ihnen ermöglichen, Ihre Wanderung wie geplant durchzuführen. Während des Interviews gelten die Weg- und Verhaltensregeln der Schutzverordnung des Nationalparks.

#### Was geschieht mit Ihren Aussagen?

Für die anschliessende Auswertung wird das Gespräch nach Ihrer Zustimmung durch mich aufgezeichnet, in digitaler Form bis zum Ende meiner Masterarbeit lokal gespeichert und nur von mir persönlich verwendet. Für die Auswertung des Interviews werden alle Aussagen wortwörtlich transkribiert und vollständig anonymisiert, sodass Ihre Identität vertraulich bleibt. Auf Wunsch schicke ich Ihnen die Tonaufnahme und Sie dürfen das anonymisierte Interview-Transkript gerne gegenlesen. Sie haben jederzeit das Recht, Ihre Teilnahme an meiner Masterarbeit zurückzuziehen, das Löschen der Interviewaufnahme zu verlangen und Ihre Aussagen zu widerrufen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie werden in meiner Masterarbeit zusammengefasst, welche im Frühjahr 2023 eingereicht und über das Geographische Institut öffentlich einsehbar sein wird. Ich werde dabei lediglich einzelne, anonymisierte Zitate aus dem Interview in der Masterarbeit verwenden. Bei Interesse stelle ich Ihnen meine Masterarbeit oder eine Zusammenfassung meiner Forschungsergebnisse persönlich zu.

Ich bedanke mich für Ihr Interesse und Ihre Teilnahme an meiner Masterarbeit und stehe Ihnen gerne bei Fragen oder Wünschen zu Informationen über die Resultate zur Verfügung!

Freundliche Grüsse

Selina Gattiker

**Kontakt:** Selina Gattiker, Geographisches Institut, Universität Zürich  
selina.gattiker@uzh.ch, Telefon: 0774640957

---

## A.2 Problem centered interview guidelines

### A.2.1 Interview guideline park visitors

Parkbesuchende (park visitors)			
RQ	Fokus	Leitfragen	Vertiefungsfragen
RQ1	<b>Einstieg</b>	Erzählen Sie mir doch bitte, für welchen Ort/welche Wanderroute haben Sie sich entschieden?	Wo gehen wir hin? Haben Sie diese Wanderung schon einmal gemacht?
	<b>Ortsbezug</b>	Aus welchen Gründen haben Sie sich für diesen Ort entschieden? Was macht diesen Ort für Sie besonders?	Worauf freuen Sie sich, wenn Sie in den SNP kommen? Welche Erwartungen haben Sie an diese Wanderung?
RQ1	<b>Verständnis Natur</b>	Wie würden Sie die Natur in dieser Landschaft/ diesem Ort beschreiben?  Was ist hier Natur? Wo nehmen Sie die Natur an diesem Ort wahr?  Wie erleben Sie die Natur an diesem Ort? Was nehmen Sie an diesem Ort besonders wahr? (Geräusche, ...)  Was schätzen Sie besonders an der Natur oder dem 'in der Natur sein'?	Was gehört für Sie alles zur 'Natur'? Welche Elemente gehören für Sie hier nicht zur Natur?  Wie unterscheidet sich die Natur an diesem Ort von der Natur an anderen Orten, die Sie kennen?
	<b>Verständnis Wildnis</b>	Was heisst 'Wildnis für Sie?  Wie sieht es Ihrer Meinung nach mit der Wildnis an diesem Ort aus?  Was empfinden Sie an diesem Ort als 'wild' oder 'wilde' Landschaft?  Wann oder wo erleben Sie Wildnis sonst?	Was denken Sie spontan über den Begriff 'Wildnis'?  Passt der Begriff 'Wildnis' zu dieser Landschaft?  Welche Bedeutung hat Wildnis für Sie?
RQ1 & RQ3	<b>Gefühle/ Erinnerungen</b>	Welche Gefühle oder Emotionen erleben Sie, wenn Sie sich in der Natur an diesem Ort aufhalten?  Welche persönlichen Erinnerungen verbinden Sie mit diesem Ort?  Welche Bedeutung hat dieser Ort für andere Personen aus Ihrem Umfeld?	Wie fühlen Sie sich an diesem Ort? Welche Gefühle löst das 'in der Natur sein' an diesem Ort aus?  Möchten Sie mir von einem Erlebnis an diesem Ort erzählen?
RQ2	<b>Einfluss Covid</b>	Was glauben Sie, wie wurde Ihr Erleben von und in der Natur durch die CP beeinflusst?  Wie hat sich das 'in der Natur sein' für Sie durch die CP verändert?  Wie haben sich Ihre Tätigkeiten in der Natur durch die CP verändert?  Was denken Sie, welchen Einfluss könnte dies auf die Natur an diesem Ort haben?  Welchen Einfluss könnte dies auf den Umgang des Menschen mit der Natur (o. Wildnis) allgemein haben?	Wie äussert sich diese Veränderung?  Welche Aspekte der CP haben zu dieser Veränderung geführt?  Wir haben zuvor davon gesprochen, was Sie an der Natur schätzen. Wie hat sich dies durch die CP verändert? Was hat an Bedeutung gewonnen? Was ist für Sie weniger wichtig geworden?  Wie empfinden Sie diese Veränderung? Welche Gefühle verbinden Sie mit dieser Veränderung?

RQ1	<b>Natur/Wildnis - Mensch</b>	<p>Nun kommen wir zu einem Themenblock der Mensch-Naturbeziehung. Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zur / mit der Natur beschreiben? Beschreiben Sie mir bitte, in welcher/n Rolle/n sehen Sie sich als Mensch in der Natur? (z.B. Beschützer, Teilnehmerin, Herrscherin, Partner, Aussenstehende, Managerin...)</p> <p>In welchen Situationen nehmen Sie diese Rolle ein? Wann nehmen Sie vielleicht eine andere Rolle an?</p> <p>Inwiefern sehen Sie sich an diesem Ort als Teil der Natur oder nicht?</p> <p>In welcher Beziehung sehen Sie den Menschen zur Wildnis?</p>	<p>Was denken Sie, hat Ihre Beziehung mit/ zur Natur geprägt?</p> <p>Welche Aufgaben, Pflichten oder Verantwortung sind mit dieser Rolle verbunden? Hat sich dies durch die CP verändert?</p> <p>Wie unterscheidet sich dies von Wildnis?</p>
RQ1 & RQ2	<b>Veränderung und Zukunft (Post-Covid Zeit)</b>	<p>Falls Sie diesen Ort mehrfach besuchen, welche Veränderung des Orts nehmen Sie wahr?</p> <p>Wie stellen Sie sich eine 'ideale Entwicklung' dieses Ortes vor?</p> <p>Wie soll sich die Natur an diesem Ort zukünftig entwickeln?</p> <p>Was glauben Sie, wie wird sich der Umgang des Menschen mit der Natur entwickeln (positiv, negativ...)</p>	<p>Wie empfinden Sie diese Veränderung?</p> <p>Wie soll sich Ihrer Meinung nach Natur / Wildnis in der Schweiz zukünftig in einer Zeit nach Corona entwickeln?</p> <p>Welche Rolle sollen dabei Ihrer Meinung nach Schutzgebiete wie der SNP einnehmen?</p> <p>Wie sehen Sie Ihre Rolle dabei?</p>
	<i>Abschluss</i>	<i>Ich habe alle meine Fragen gestellt, möchten Sie noch etwas erzählen, was Ihnen wichtig ist und bisher im Interview nicht zur Sprache kam?</i>	
	Soziodemografische Fragen	Geschlecht	<input type="checkbox"/> weiblich <input type="checkbox"/> männlich <input type="checkbox"/> anderes
		Alter	
		Wohnort	<input type="checkbox"/> an den SNP angrenzende Gemeinde <input type="checkbox"/> ländlich <input type="checkbox"/> städtisch
		Beruf	
		Anzahl Besuche im SNP oder anderen Naturpärken	
	Kontaktangabe (falls erwünscht)		

## A.2.2 Interview guideline park members

Parkmitarbeitende (park members)			
RQ	Fokus	Leitfragen	Vertiefungsfragen
RQ1	<b>Einstieg</b>	Erzählen Sie mir, was haben Sie für einen Bezug zum Nationalpark?	Wo gehen wir hin? Beschreiben Sie mir doch kurz, was ist Ihre Arbeit im SNP? Welche Aufgaben erfüllen Sie im SNP?
	<b>Ortsbezug</b>	Was macht diesen Ort für Sie besonders?	Worauf freuen Sie sich, wenn Sie in den SNP kommen? Welche Erwartungen haben Sie an diesen Ort?
RQ1	<b>Verständnis Natur</b>	Wie würden Sie die Natur in dieser Landschaft/ diesem Ort beschreiben?  Was ist hier Natur? Wo nehmen Sie die Natur an diesem Ort wahr?  Wie erleben Sie die Natur an diesem Ort? Was nehmen Sie an diesem Ort besonders wahr? (Geräusche, ...)  Was schätzen Sie besonders an der Natur oder dem 'in der Natur sein'?	Was gehört für Sie alles zur 'Natur'? Welche Elemente gehören für Sie hier nicht zur Natur?  Wie unterscheidet sich die Natur an diesem Ort von der Natur an anderen Orten, die Sie kennen?
	<b>Verständnis Wildnis</b>	Was heisst 'Wildnis für Sie?  Wie sieht es Ihrer Meinung nach mit der Wildnis an diesem Ort aus?  Was empfinden Sie an diesem Ort als 'wild' oder 'wilde' Landschaft?  Wann oder wo erleben Sie Wildnis sonst?	Was denken Sie spontan über den Begriff 'Wildnis'?  Passt der Begriff 'Wildnis' zu dieser Landschaft?  Welche Bedeutung hat Wildnis für Sie?
RQ1 & RQ3	<b>Gefühle/ Erinnerungen</b>	Welche Gefühle oder Emotionen erleben Sie, wenn Sie sich in der Natur an diesem Ort aufhalten?  Welche persönlichen Erinnerungen verbinden Sie mit diesem Ort?  Welche Bedeutung hat dieser Ort für andere Personen aus Ihrem Umfeld?	Wie fühlen Sie sich an diesem Ort? Welche Gefühle löst das 'in der Natur sein' an diesem Ort aus?  Möchten Sie mir von einem Erlebnis an diesem Ort erzählen?
RQ2	<b>Einfluss Covid</b>	Was glauben Sie, wie wurde Ihr Erleben von und in der Natur durch die CP beeinflusst?  Wie hat sich das 'in der Natur sein' für Sie durch die CP verändert?  Wie haben sich Ihre Tätigkeiten in der Natur durch die CP verändert?  Wie hat sich die Interaktion zwischen Parkbesuchenden und Natur im SNP während oder durch die CP aus Ihrer Sicht verändert?  Was denken Sie, welchen Einfluss könnte dies auf die Natur an diesem Ort haben?  Welchen Einfluss könnte dies auf den Umgang des Menschen mit der Natur (o. Wildnis) allgemein haben?	Wie äussert sich diese Veränderung?  Welche Aspekte der CP haben zu dieser Veränderung geführt?  Wir haben zuvor davon gesprochen, was Sie an der Natur schätzen. Wie hat sich dies durch die CP verändert? Was hat an Bedeutung gewonnen? Was ist für Sie weniger wichtig geworden?  Wie empfinden Sie diese Veränderung?  Welche Gefühle verbinden Sie mit dieser Veränderung?

RQ1	<b>Natur/Wildnis - Mensch</b>	<p>Nun kommen wir zu einem Themenblock der Mensch-Naturbeziehung. Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zur / mit der Natur beschreiben? Beschreiben Sie mir bitte, in welcher/n Rolle/n sehen Sie sich als Mensch in der Natur? (z.B. Beschützer, Teilnehmerin, Herrscherin, Partner, Aussenstehende, Managerin...)</p> <p>In welchen Situationen nehmen Sie diese Rolle ein? Wann nehmen Sie vielleicht eine andere Rolle an?</p> <p>Inwiefern sehen Sie sich an diesem Ort als Teil der Natur oder nicht?</p> <p>In welcher Beziehung sehen Sie den Menschen zur Wildnis?</p>	<p>Was denken Sie, hat Ihre Beziehung mit/ zur Natur geprägt?</p> <p>Welche Aufgaben, Pflichten oder Verantwortung sind mit dieser Rolle verbunden? Hat sich dies durch die CP verändert?</p> <p>Wie unterscheidet sich dies von Wildnis?</p>
RQ1 & RQ2	<b>Veränderung und Zukunft (Post-Covid Zeit)</b>	<p>Welche Veränderung des Orts nehmen Sie wahr?</p> <p>Wie stellen Sie sich eine 'ideale Entwicklung' dieses Ortes vor?</p> <p>Wie soll sich die Natur an diesem Ort zukünftig entwickeln?</p> <p>Was glauben Sie, wie wird sich der Umgang des Menschen mit der Natur entwickeln (positiv, negativ...)</p>	<p>Wie empfinden Sie diese Veränderung?</p> <p>Wie soll sich Ihrer Meinung nach Natur / Wildnis in der Schweiz zukünftig in einer Zeit nach Corona entwickeln?</p> <p>Welche Rolle sollen dabei Ihrer Meinung nach Schutzgebiete wie der SNP einnehmen?</p> <p>Wie sehen Sie Ihre Rolle dabei?</p>
	<i>Abschluss</i>	<i>Ich habe alle meine Fragen gestellt, möchten Sie noch etwas erzählen, was Ihnen wichtig ist und bisher im Interview nicht zur Sprache kam?</i>	
	Soziodemografische Fragen	Geschlecht	<input type="checkbox"/> weiblich <input type="checkbox"/> männlich <input type="checkbox"/> anderes
		Alter	
		Wohnort	<input type="checkbox"/> an den SNP angrenzende Gemeinde <input type="checkbox"/> ländlich <input type="checkbox"/> städtisch
		Beruf	
		Anzahl Besuche im SNP oder anderen Naturpärken	
	Kontaktangabe (falls erwünscht)		

### A.3 Category System based on ACA


Main category	Subcategory	Sub-subcategory	Sub-sub-subcategory
<b>Place attachment</b>	Work (SNP) (Frequency of) visits of place (SNP) Belonging of SNP to the entire region of the lower Engadin Not SNP related place		
<b>Childhood</b>			
<b>(Shared) memories and experiences in the past</b>			
<b>Emotion / feeling</b>	Peace of mind (calmness) Joy / happiness 'Being yourself' / sense of individual freedom Respect towards nature Connectedness with nature Embodied awareness Gratitude Relaxation Sadness / frustration Fascination Excitement / sense of adventure		
<b>Human-nature relationship</b>	Notion of nature (conceptual) Environment Rights and needs of nature Human(culture)-nature dichotomy Role in nature Personal relation in / with / to nature Change in human-nature relation (independently of CP)	'Park idea' (PA) Critique of boundary (dichotomy) Human as part of nature Human not being part of nature Human as subordinate to nature Protector Guest Observer Consumer / user Designer / influencer Gatecrasher Friend Care for nature Stewardship Conscience Acquiring knowledge Sharing knowledge Spirituality Social environment Parenting Life stage (age) Social countermovement (youth)	
<b>Experiencing nature</b>	'Being-outdoors' / 'being in nature' Nature experience in SNP	Activities in nature Fauna Flora View Absence of people	Deadwood

<b>Nature perception in the SNP</b>	<p>Visual</p> <p>Auditory Olfactory Haptic Conceptually</p> <p>Elements 'not being part of nature'</p>	<p>Landscape Beauty of nature 'Green'</p> <p>Natural / 'nature is herself' 'Oasis' / bubble Diversified Intact (curative) Not commercialized 'Pure nature' / pristine Legacy effects</p> <p>Park infrastructure</p> <p>Dam of Livigno (visual) Traffic noise Ofenpassstrasse (visual) Waste</p>	<p>Information boards Hiking trail Hut</p>
<b>Understandings of wild(er)ness</b>	<p>Counter pole Absence of human influence / civilization 'Untouched nature' Force of nature 'A lost cause' Antagonist 'wild' Intact ecosystem (secondary wildness) Continuous scale Distance / abroad Spatial dimension Indigenous people Wild animals Experiencing 'Wildnis' 'Wildnis' as feeling</p>	<p>Situated feeling in the moment Be on one's own Unpredictability / loss of control Overburdening Place of longing</p>	
<b>NCP / values</b>	<p>Privacy Recreation Wellbeing</p> <p>Thoughts / reflection Social relations and cohesion Instrumental value of intact nature Usage of nature (resource) Nature as part of identity Value of natural processes Fascination for 'life' in nature Nature's own value</p>	<p>Balance daily life Mental health Corporeal-physical</p> <p>Habitat for all species</p>	
<b>Change through CP</b>	<p>Nature as hideaway Peril for nature Change in personal activities</p>	<p>'No change'</p>	

	<p>Change in own perception of nature</p> <p>Change in other people's behavior</p>	<p>Personal affliction / un-involvement</p> <p>Sharing nature</p> <p>Too many people in nature</p> <p>Commercialization of nature</p> <p>(Re)discovery of nature</p> <p>Superficial experience of nature</p> <p>Inexperienced (new) people in nature</p> <p>Loss of (un)written laws</p> <p>Change in lifestyle</p> <p>Travel behavior</p> <p>Environmental consciousness</p> <p>Pro-environmental behavior</p>	<p>Outdoor sports business</p> <p>'Bought nature experience'</p>
<b>Nature's future</b>	<p>Future of SNP</p> <p>Balance between needs</p> <p>Preserve biodiversity</p> <p>Global warming</p> <p>Importance of PA (also nature parks)</p> <p>Urbanization</p> <p>Future generations / altruism</p>	<p>Weather extremes</p> <p>Wolf</p> <p>Reduced human impact</p>	
<b>Expectations SNP</b>	<p>Positive basic idea</p> <p>wildlife</p>	<p>National Park label</p>	

## Personal Declaration

Personal declaration: I hereby declare that the submitted Thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the Thesis.



Zürich, April 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

Selina Gattiker