

# Predators in ‘Agri-environmental’ Sweden: Rural Heritage and Resistance Against Wolf Propagation

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**Abstract** The politics and the underlying reasons for the recuperation of a Scandinavian wolf population are increasingly contested. According to the official policy, wolves shall be guaranteed place in the Swedish fauna. The conflict regarding whether Sweden should host a wolf population polarises between on the one hand, views and understandings as regards biodiversity and sustainable development, and on the other hand, perspectives expressing that local traditions and livelihoods are at stake as a result of wolf occurrence in the landscape. The diverging environmental imaginaries at play in the debate can be seen as constitutive of spatial indifferences. States’ and nature conservation organisations’ desires to implement measures understood to provide conditions for the survival of the wolf are counter-balanced by local actions groups and community residents who struggle to maintain the conditions for the conservation of summer pasturing agriculture, continued and unchanged opportunities to perform hunting with sporting dogs and other recreational activities such as mushrooming and the picking of berries. Considered not only by themselves as of high natural and cultural value, the European Union like wisely appoint that small-scale ways of farming are important to maintain for the upkeep of the landscape and the promotion of conditions guarding the survival of the values associated with these ‘agri-environmental’ habitats.

**Keywords** Agricultural policy · Environmental policy · Wolf population

## 1 Introduction

No other predatory animal has attracted as much organized opposition as the wolf. The reaction is due in part to the greediness of the wolves, and also to the fact that nobody ever eats the meat of an animal that has been touched by a wolf [25].

The above quotation illustrates an opinion of wolves that was prevalent in Sweden until 1965 when the preservation act came into force, but this view is not uncommon

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even today. At that time, the wolf was seen as a threat to humans and their activities in forest and farm landscapes. While the numbers of the wolf population were considerably reduced to as low as 10–35 individuals, mainly as a result of hunting and organised battues, they amount today to some hundred individuals and are still considered to jeopardise the lives and values of people living in the vicinity of wolves. These views illustrate the controversies we find among people regarding nature and natural assets.

The above statement is not only a portrayal of views of and feelings about the wolf as a dangerous and uncertain creature, it also tells of struggles over the access to, use of, and ownership of environmental resources. Disputes over ‘Nature’ are politically charged—issues of power exercise and dominance range from the supranational level of negotiations over directives and agreements concerning sustainability and biodiversity, to the local level where global discourses are to be implemented. Politically decided regulations and practices may, however, from a local point of view be perceived as illegitimate, and hence neither receive support nor be complied with. The concerned public’s experience and perceptions of the implementation process as being fair and just has been found to influence acceptance by the public [10].

The politics and the underlying reasons for the recuperation of a Scandinavian wolf population have been, and continue to be, increasingly contested. According to the Swedish official nature conservation policy, wolves shall be guaranteed place in the Swedish fauna. The conflict regarding whether Sweden should host a wolf population polarises between on the one hand, views and understandings as regards biodiversity and sustainable development, and on the other hand, perspectives expressing that local traditions and livelihoods are at stake as a result of wolf occurrence in the landscape.

Wolf sceptics maintain that the occurrence of wolves in the surrounding local environment will lead to the demise of forests and farm communities. The effects of the presence of wolves—wolf attacks on livestock and hunting dogs, potential attacks on people when growing wolf populations no longer have enough game to prey on, declining game stocks—will, according to the informants, cause increased marginalization of rural people and the depopulation of margin areas (cf. [32]).

Although numbers steadily increasing, environmentalists and authorities still consider the Scandinavian wolf population<sup>1</sup> to be in jeopardy of extinction due to not only a poor pedigree. According to the biological predator research community, the unlawful killings of wolves are another threat of considerable weight [24]. The view that the Swedish Government should take actions to make it possible for the wolf population to survive is supported by nature conservation organizations,<sup>2</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup>The wolf population is generally referred to as ‘Scandinavian’ since some of the wolf territories is to be found to pass the national border between Sweden and Norway.

<sup>2</sup>Such as *Svenska Rovdjursföreningen* (the Swedish Carnivore Association), *Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen* (the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation), and WWF (the World Wide Foundation).

public at large [6, 7] and individuals.<sup>3</sup> The 'pro' wolves groups withholding that wolves have the 'right' to exist is an argument—grounded in the environmentalist discourse recommending actions to be taken to restore an ecosystem understood as being under threat—that others<sup>4</sup> confront by emphasizing that the landscape and the local traditions of the rural Sweden are jeopardized as a result of the occurrence of wolves in Swedish countryside, and due to the present wolf policy (cf. [32, 36]). Thus, while some argues for protective measures to halt high inbreeding<sup>5</sup> and illegal hunting,<sup>6</sup> yet others oppose the practices in question [30].

In this paper, focus will be drawn to how the adoption and the implementation of a coherent policy for large carnivores in Sweden—the *Coherent Predator Policy*—besides its aim to enhance measures for an environmentally friendly society, may result in a transformation of the Swedish rural landscape—spatially as well as symbolically. Squeezed between policies promoting the safe-guarding of the predatory populations of wolves, the preventing of cruelty to animals and demanded-for activities by the agricultural program of the European Union, farmers residing in areas with residential wolf populations have come to take part in processes that may bring about a reinforcing of rural identity. The presence of wolves in the countryside of the middle parts of Sweden—where the majority of the Swedish wolf population is to be found—has caused considerable disquiet among some of the concerned stakeholders. Farmers' and hunters worries that the survival of the rural landscape and rural heritage are at stake due to wolves residing in the local environment are encoded with symbolic meanings of the landscape and the local traditions carried out in farmed and forested areas. Disputes between different stakeholders regarding what should guide the achieving of biodiversity has besides a policy quandary given rise to discourses on morality and ethics what regards the keeping of livestock and domestic animals. A questioning is taking place pertaining to space and place—as reproducing dimensions of cultural identity.

## 1.1 Theoretical Departure

Veined by the assumption that conflicts between people regarding the biological environment involve different dimensions, such as the aspect of place attachment and the meanings of property, the article is inspired by a 'first world political

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<sup>3</sup>Including informants and people who have been expressing their opinions at debate meetings, in radio and TV programs.

<sup>4</sup>Groups and organizations such as the 'the Swedish Forum for Predatory Animal Issues' (authors translation for *Svenskt Samarbetsforum i Rovdjursfrågor*) and 'the Swedish Hunting & Outdoor Recreation Club' (authors translation for *Svenska Jakt & Fritidsgruppen*), as well as individuals.

<sup>5</sup>It has been found that the Scandinavian wolf population was founded by three individuals. By drawing up a pedigree for 24 breeding pairs it was found that the inbreeding coefficient *F* varied between 0.00 and 0.41 in the period between 1983 and 2002 [13].

<sup>6</sup>See for example the web page of the Swedish Carnivore Association ([www.rovdjursforeningen.se](http://www.rovdjursforeningen.se)).

ecology' [18, 19]. That people in industrialized countries have relations with 'nature' is the main outline of this approach; irrespective of taking place in the 'first' or in the 'developing' world, environmental conflicts are socio-culturally informed [18, 23]. The article thus employs a landscape and place oriented anthropological approach in the sense that perceptions of the environment might serve as a frame for the rise of local desires and struggles to maintain social and cultural values and practices which can turn out to be in conflict with other wishes and agreements taken at other societal levels (e.g. [11, 16, 17, 20, 29]). Informed by cultural value frames that have developed during times and years of 'dwelling', to apply the vocabulary of anthropologist Tim Ingold [12], local residents can be said to find themselves in a 'configurative complex of things' ([5], p. 25). Besides relating to the natural and social worlds in ways that reproduce collective memories [26] and the meanings the traditions of the rural landscape bring to its practitioners, people's understandings and experiences of the contemporary world is also informed by other actor's endeavours imposing other sets of values (cf. [15, 27, 28]).

## **2 Promoting Environmental Diversity—The Encapsulation of Different Values and View Points**

Understood as being under the threat of destruction, the ecological system has become an integral part of national policy. Politically motivated, regimes for the management of natural resources have been established. Policies for collective control and the public administration of, for example, the management of the Scandinavian wolf population, have developed during the latter decades. Measures for the conservation of natural resources follows internationally negotiated treaties that have been ratified by the Swedish Parliament (e.g. the Bern Convention). These treaties, aiming for a sustainable development and caretaking, have served to inspire and direct environmental protective measures in the promotion of a biologically diversified society.

In 2001, the Swedish Parliament laid down a 'Coherent Predator Policy', which stipulates that the Scandinavian wolf shall be ensured long-term survival through the implementation of protective measures. The recovery of the wolf have, however, been increasingly contested. Although the decision can be labelled as democratically agreed upon, the decision has turned out to be highly debated. While the view that Sweden should take actions to preserve and maintain a wolf population is widely supported by authorities, nature organizations and a large public, others disagree, emphasizing that local traditions, values and meanings are at stake as a result of recovery aims and wolf management. These disputes tell of struggles over the access to, and use of environmental resources. As an issue of power exercise, the controversy regarding whether measures should be taken or not and if the survival of the wolf is to be considered as a matter for Sweden to deal with, can be said to highlight dimensions of space and place.

The controversy is thus to be regarded as not only a matter of how to understand a biological habitat, commonly referred to as 'Nature'. Most importantly, the voices raised for or against activities taken to ensure a long-term survival of

the Scandinavian wolf, can as well be encapsulated as a reflection regarding which values that should guide rural reconstruction.

The implementation of policies for the protection of natural resources brings many interests into collision. The wolf issue is thus to be considered as a meeting-point between authorities, 'green' organizations such as the Swedish Carnivore Association ('Svenska Rovdjursföreningen'), interest organizations as for example the Swedish Association for Wildlife Hunting and Management ('Svenska Jägareförbundet'), and organizations assembling wolf sceptics—the 'Swedish Forum for Predatory Animal Issues' (author's translation for 'Svenskt Samarbetsforum i Rovdjursfrågor'), the 'Swedish Hunting & Outdoor Recreation Club' (author's translation for 'Svenska Jakt & Fritidsgruppen'). 'The Association for Safety in Rural Communities in Sweden' (author's translation for 'Sveriges Glesbygds Trygghet') is another local/regional association, generally referred to by the acronym SGT,<sup>7</sup> that similarly to the previous mentioned, demand that Swedish predator policy and management to a much greater extent must consider the living conditions of people residing in rural Sweden. Decision-making concerning wolf occurrence should be made locally instead of nationally and regionally, since, as they argue, such decisions must have their point of departure in local realities and knowledge.

The organization 'Peoples' Campaign for a New Predator Policy (author's translation for 'Folkaktionen Ny Rovdjurspolitik'), organizes today many wolf sceptics and some of the above mentioned wolf sceptic associations have become transformed into this national organization that was founded in 2005. At the core of their demands stands that dialogue between local stakeholders and authorities must be increased since, as they say, without dialogue and real participation in decision-making, predator policy can never become sustainable and reach acceptance.

Thus, network building and mobilization of opinion are taking place. While wolf sceptical organizations make complaints and protests concerning Swedish wolf politics and management, wolf protectionists join nature conservation organizations to support the protection of threatened species.

We thus see a division between protectionists and sceptics. From reasons of solidarity with other countries efforts to protect endangered species, Sweden should also take actions for the furthering of biological diversity. That Sweden is obliged to actions since they have signed international treaties is another reason mentioned by the protectionists. But above all, as they argue, the wolf has the right to reside in the countryside since it as all other creatures has the right to exist.

### 3 Wolves in Scandinavia

According to an integrated predator policy, laid down by the Parliament (the Swedish Riksdag) in 2001, the Scandinavian wolf (together with four other large carnivores—brown bear, lynx, wolverine and golden eagle) shall, through the

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<sup>7</sup>In popular parlance among certain groups referred to as 'Shoot, Dig and Shut Up'.

implementation of protective measures, be ensured long-term survival ([21], p. 57). The politics of and the underlying reasons for the recovery of the Scandinavian wolf population have, however, been increasingly contested. While the view that Sweden should take actions to preserve and maintain a wolf population is widely supported by authorities, nature organizations and a large public, others disagree, emphasizing that local traditions, values and meanings are jeopardized as a result of recovery aims and practices of wolf management. Thus, although the political community has decided democratically that Sweden shall strive to follow international decisions and legislation in species conservation, others argue otherwise, saying that wolves do not really belong in the Swedish landscape. Whether or not we should save the wolves from extermination, is thus a highly debated matter.

In order to secure the wolf population in Scandinavia, policies for collective control and public administration have been developed and adopted. The Swedish official nature conservation policy follows treaties that have been internationally negotiated and ratified by the Swedish Parliament. Serving as a background for the research carried out did the understanding that contestations over the biological environment have been an issue both in earlier times and today. While the Scandinavian wolf population of today amounts 35 territories with wolf packs,<sup>8</sup> scent-marking pairs<sup>9</sup> and single stationary individuals<sup>10</sup> [35] representing 109–117 individuals,<sup>11</sup> the population was estimated at 1,500 individuals some 180 years ago. Whereas we today see protective measures governing the wolf population, laws and opinions of the wolf as being detrimental to humans and human activities, led, in the past, to wolf persecution. Provincial laws from the 15th century, for example, stated parish members' obligation to take an active part in wolf battues. The women of the parish, its vicar and the clerk of the parish were the only ones exempted from this duty. The hunt for wolves was successful. Until the preservation act in 1965, the larger part of the wolf population was exterminated during the 19th and 20th centuries. Using a variety of methods—traps, nets, weapons, and battues—people throughout the country managed well in their wolf hunts. Additionally, bounties were imposed in 1647 to encourage the hunt for wolves, and these remained in force until the wolf preservation act came into force more than 200 years later. Some tens of years before the wolf protection act in 1965, the wolf population was estimated at less than 40 individuals. Approximately 20 years after the establishment of the protection act, traces and observations point to a growing wolf population in Scandinavia. In the 1980s, it was estimated that there were about ten individuals and during the following years, we see a growing increase in the number of wolves, packs, scent-marking pairs and other residential individuals.

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<sup>8</sup>Estimated amount: 76–79 individuals. A wolf pack consists of a breeding pair and their offspring.

<sup>9</sup>Estimated amount: 26–28 individuals.

<sup>10</sup>Estimated amount: 7–10.

<sup>11</sup>Besides wolf packs, scent-marking pairs and other residential individuals there are also migratory wolves.

## 4 Study Area and Methods

Ethnographic methods were chosen as the main strategy for empirical investigation. Data was collected primarily from the conducting of in-depth interviews. Informal observations have also been carried out at various meetings. Readings of newspaper and journal articles and the visiting of different web sites have given additional insight into the 'wolf issue'—its structures, actors and the mains of the debate. The informants were asked to discuss the situation surrounding having wolves in the forests. Through conversations, local residents expressed their opinions, values and collectively shared dimensions of everyday experiences of wolves and local practices in farming and forest communities, thus providing glimpses of the social worlds of the people interviewed. The investigation of the concerns of residents living in the wolf territories employed an ethnographic approach. Such methods have found to suit research situations when it is of crucial importance for the outcome of the research carried out to establish trustworthy relationships with the informants [3].

The interview results on which this paper rests were carried out in three separate areas; the county of *Dalarna* and the two wolf territories *Dals-Ed/Halden* and *Hasselfors*—although all to be found in the middle parts of Sweden neither study area are located next to one another.

The fifty-two interviews that were carried out the summer and autumn of 2005 consisted of people holding 'pro' as well as 'anti' wolf attitudes and through which opinions and values related to the presence of predators in the landscape were collected. Gathered by convenience sampling, particularly the groups of hunters and farmers were interviewed. Besides interviewing residents in wolf territories, members of the research team have been carrying out observations at meetings, generally announced as 'information meetings', and the annually held 'Wolf Symposium' where interested parties have the opportunity to take part of talks regarding different aspects of wildlife management nationally as well as internationally.

The interviews lasted from two to four hours and consisted of a set of general questions as well as follow-ups on issues raised by the respondent. A written list of questions and topics served as a guide throughout the conversation. Detailed notes were taken and later transcribed. A tape recorder was not used during the interview since the wolf is a rather controversial issue and in some cases the parties involved have been under threat of violence. It was therefore considered important to guarantee individual anonymity as far as possible.

## 5 National Environmental Conservation Policy

The status of the Scandinavian wolf is based upon the classification works of plants and animals carried out by the Swedish Species Information Centre (ArtDatabanken), a body shared by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the Swedish University of Agricultural Science (SLU). According to this classification, building on a system of six categories reflecting the risk of extinction



in the Swedish flora and fauna, the Scandinavian wolf is on the Red List and is classified as Critically Endangered [9]. As such, the wolf is understood to be exceptionally endangered, facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the very near future. This classification system, built on a global classification system that was outlined by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in 1994, is one of the measures taken to protect biodiversity.

In Sweden, policies for collective control and public administration have been developed to deal with the political goal of specie conservation and today's controversy regarding the wolf. Through the Coherent Predator Policy, laid down in 2001, the Parliament has agreed that measures to minimize conflicts regarding predatory animals must be taken to ensure their long-term survival ([21], p. 57; see also [24]).

A Council for Predator Issues was founded in 2002 to assist the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) in implementing the Coherent Predator Policy. As an advisory consultative body, the Council deals with issues concerning general and overall policy, surveys and developments of the populations of the five carnivores covered by the Predator Policy. Besides striving for the reaching of 20 reproductions of the Swedish wolf population, representing approximately 200 individuals, the Parliament decided in 2001 that regional predatory animal management, as other environment protection, must involve local participation and strong support by those affected by the conservation efforts ([21], p. 57; [33], p. 173).

The need to encourage local participation ([21], p. 57) resulted in the establishment of Regional Predator Groups (RPG) in all counties having residential large predators. Today, we find 17 of these groups across the country, comprising representatives from hunting organizations, voluntary nature conservation groups, farmers' associations, the police and prosecutors, municipalities and county administrative boards. Besides striving for local empowerment on issues of predator management, the RPGs are by the authorities understood to be a means for an increased information exchange between different regional and local groups, and as such, facilitating the dissemination of information to the large public. Cooperation between the central authorities and the concerned NGOs and groups is by the decision-makers considered vital for the accumulation of knowledge—by the authorities assumed necessary to enhance more 'nuanced' perspectives and opinions of what has turned out to be a rather controversial question for the Swedish countryside. The solution on the wolf controversy, the authorities (regional as well as national ones) say, is to raise the level of 'acceptance'. Their work focuses therefore on the process of attaining a local consensus regarding what they refer to as a politically based initiative. Local compliance with a highly debated political decision, regarding wolves' living conditions and their future in the Swedish fauna, is thus sought for at the same time as the regional authorities strive for the realization of a national goal through the implementation of intermediate aims, such as regional minimum levels for wolf recovery in each county [31]. By incorporating concerned stakeholders and interest organizations into the RPGs, the central authorities assume that consent on the predator policy might be achieved as a dissemination of information will take place when the information given to the group members is passed on to their mother organizations ([34], p. 146). Understood as nourished by debates



and inconsistent opinions on the causes and effects of wolves' occurrence in the countryside, the central authorities appraises an increase of a scientifically based knowledge as central for abating worries regarding the effects of large carnivore presence [31].

## 6 Rural Lives at Stake

According to the *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) of the European Union, the farming sector has a multiple role to play. By their use of rural land, the farmers produce a variety of products for consumption but they do also contribute to the diversity—and the survival—of the countryside. Through their work, the farmers have a role to play in the maintenance of rural area.

Wolf sceptic informants, however, maintain that the occurrence of wolves in the surrounding local environment will be detrimental to the survival of forest and farm communities. According to the informants, the wolf's presence has entailed changed routines and fear and anxiety about the future of traditional work and ways of life locally. Among local residents, the wolf is considered to be an animal with the potential of bringing harm to livestock and humans. The effects of the presence of wolves—wolf attacks on livestock and hunting dogs, potential attacks on people when growing wolf populations no longer have enough game to prey on, declining game stocks—will, according to the informants, cause increased marginalization of rural people and the depopulation of margin areas (cf. [32]). Among local residents, the wolf is considered to be an animal with the potential of bringing harm to livestock and humans. Therefore people feel that they, their families and ways of living are jeopardised as a result of wolves living in the area. Since the wolf is not in jeopardy of being exterminated internationally, informants feel further that there is no reason why the Swedish rural population should be exposed to the risks the presence of wolves brings to people living in the countryside.

Fear and anxiety is not only a matter restricted to the outdoors. Peoples' homes and households are by several of the informants experienced as threatened by wolves' occurrence in the environs. One of the female informants mentioned that she did not dare to go down to the basement since she was afraid that wolves might enter the house meanwhile. Social anthropological research has shown that members of households draw safety and comfort from these entities when they experience that the surrounding world is exposed to threat and change [2]. Local reports that the wolves passes close to dwelling-houses and that women and children cannot feel secure, even close to their homes, show that the meanings people attach to 'home' and 'property'—as fundamental social institutions—are disarranged. Implementation of goals of society may thus bring about that peoples' self-images and ideas about society and life are put under pressure. People may feel violated when 'agents of change'—represented here by the wolf—trespasses what people regards as basic principles upon which human activity is structured (cf. [8]).

Network building and mobilization of opinion have taken place, making complaints and protests concerning Swedish wolf politics and management. The ways

in which people sceptic to wolf presence in the Swedish landscape become involved varies. A most obvious action that has taken place to counteract the implementation of the predator policy is the 'Dala Revolt' (*Dalaupproret*). This rebellion by hunters in the county of Dalarna who during a period of approximately 1 year (2004–2005) refused to trace animals injured by traffic (otherwise a normal task for them) until their demands—unrestricted access to outdoor recreation for people living in the countryside, a continued preservation of the country's moose stock, and a predator policy that more explicitly takes into consideration local knowledge and rural living conditions—had been met. The boycott was, however, brought to an end in spring 2005 without the movement being able to achieve their demand of a changed legislation concerning the rights of livestock and dog owners to defend their animals against attacks from predatory animals and grant permits for the controlled culling of wolves.

Generally, the presence of wolves in the landscape is understood to affect not only rural livelihoods and people's customary ways of living—in terms of restricted opportunities for hunting, fishing, berry and fungus picking, horseback-riding and orienteering—but the biological diversity is also felt to be endangered. According to the wolf sceptic informants, wolf presence has led and will lead to a depopulation of the countryside since landowners, livestock breeders and mountain pasture farmers will give up their livelihoods when the threats posed by wolves appear to be too heavy a burden.

The moving of livestock to summer residences is a historically rooted tradition. Restricted possibilities to graze in the village have, since agricultural land in the county of Dalarna in the 19th century were not partitioned as in other parts of Sweden, made the way for the use of unfenced summer forest pastures. Farmers who employ agricultural seasonal foraging consider themselves as part of a local heritage. By taking their cattle to summer grazing pastures they carry on the traditions of a historical past. Besides the keeping of old customs, the informants are of the opinion that they continually contributes to the up keeping of an open landscape and that seasonal foraging have developed in correspondence with the ecological environment of the constraints and possibilities of the Swedish rural landscape. However, the presence of wolves in the landscape threatens summer pasturing agriculture since the farmers have very limited possibilities to defend their cattle from wolf attacks. They say that their way of living and the old customs of cattle grazing in summer pastures are at stake. Instead of continually contributing to the up keeping of an open landscape and a rich fauna through unfenced cattle grazing they must leave their cattle nearby the chalets on the summer pasture. Since the grazing-grounds next to the chalets are very limited they will be forced to bring fodder from the farm in the village to feed their cattle. If forced this way, the environmental benefits of summer pasturing agriculture will be lost—and the farmers will not be able to fulfil the conditions the European Union asks for when granting economic support.

Besides the environmental benefits such as a rich flora and fauna, the municipality and the region do also benefit from the maintaining of the cultural heritage of agricultural seasonal foraging since it attracts many tourists during the summer months (June–August).

Similarly to results from Norway [32], feelings of injustice prevail among farmers regarding their experiences that their activities are improperly acknowledged. As they say, their ways of small scale farming has contributed to an open landscape, a diversified flora and fauna and a cultural heritage, which they see as being under threat due to the wolf residing in the forest. The farmers believe that the traditional ways of sending livestock out to grass—fenced or unfenced—will decrease since they fear attacks by wolves. When no longer the possibility exists to deploy forest pastures, small scale farming and agricultural seasonal foraging will decline, adding to the dying out of rural Sweden. Similarly, it is argued, decreased possibilities to go hunting without exposing hunting dogs to wolves' search of prey will leave the Swedish forests empty of hunters.

Informants' feelings of uncertainty regarding continued farming and hunting reflect that the landscape is a lived reality, holding significant meanings to people locally. As suggested by Cantrill and Senecah [4], '... our conception of the natural environment is framed by our experiences bound to local settings' ([4], p. 186). The landscape, then, is experienced through activities. Through practices of performance, representation and action, people socialise the landscape [1], as for example through hunting—an activity that in Sweden assemble nearly 300,000 people—meanings are created and established. When hunters gather and hunt, they establish and uphold social relationships and networks since the hunt for elks, in particular, is carried out in hunting parties. The landscape and the locality as a dimension for social life [1] and where feelings of fellowship, solidarity, and relationship building are established, create a sense of belonging [1, 5, 14, 22].

## 7 Discussion

The presence of wolves in the countryside of the middle parts of Sweden—where the majority of the Swedish wolf population is to be found—has caused considerable disquiet among some of the concerned stakeholders. Due to wolves' residing in the local environments, farmers (including farmers who employ a transhumance system of agriculture) and hunters worries that the survival of the rural landscape and rural heritage are at stake. The presence of wolves in the landscape is understood to affect not only rural livelihoods and people's customary ways of living—in terms of restricted opportunities for hunting, fishing, berry and fungus picking, horseback-riding and orienteering—but the biological diversity is also felt to be endangered. According to the movement, wolf presence has led and will lead to a depopulation of the countryside since landowners, livestock breeders and summer pasture farmers will give up their livelihoods when the threats posed by wolves appear to be too heavy a burden.

According to the *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) of the European Union, the farming sector has a multiple role to play. By their use of rural land, the farmers produce a variety of products for consumption but they do also contribute to the diversity—and the survival—of the countryside. Through their work, the farmers and their farming activities are thus assigned as essential in the

maintenance of rural area. The implementation of policies for the safeguarding of the Scandinavian wolf is giving rise to a policy quandary when farmers are expected to use production methods which are addressed as compatible with environment protection. Dependency upon the European Union's economic grants (CAP Reform 1992)—received if environment protective production methods are employed—and authorities' expectancy that they must adjust to the risks carnivore presence bring to the rural communities have come to cause disquiet and frustration among the informants when they are not given the possibility to safeguard their livestock from wolf attacks. Disputes between different stakeholders regarding what should guide the achieving of biodiversity has besides a policy quandary given rise to discourses on morality and ethics what regards the keeping of livestock and domestic animals but we can also see that a questioning is taking place pertaining to space and place—as reproducing dimensions of cultural identity.

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