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An Exploration of Hunting in Modern Society

– Can Hunting Transcend Alienation?

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Abstract

This study explores whether hunting can transcend alienation between modern society and nature in Sweden. Modernity is discussed from a Marxist perspective as being the cause of people's alienation from nature and natural sources of production. Exploring hunting's potential to reconnect people with nature is done through studying empirical material and interviewing Swedish hunters. The research argues that hunting educates people about their natural surroundings and provides them with an active role in natural environments through managing and harvesting wildlife. Hunters can learn to appreciate wildlife and ecosystems, bridging the alienation gap by reconnecting people with natural sources of production and facilitating the perspective that people do not exist as separate from nature. The effects of modernity on hunting are also discussed to reflect the paradox of hunting as an ancient activity in modernized world.

Keywords: Hunting, Modernity, Alienation.

Table of contents

1 Introduction.....	5
2 Modernity and Alienation	8
2.1 Hunting in westernized society	10
2.2 From traditional to modern hunter.....	13
2.3 Modernity's influence on hunting culture.....	13
2.1.1 Figure 1: Total hunting permits issued to women	14
3 Method.....	18
3.1 Gathering empirical material.....	18
3.2 Data collection techniques	18
3.3 Data approach.....	20
3.1.1 Table 1: Respondent Background	20
3.4 Evaluation.....	21
4 Results.....	22
4.1 Why do people hunt.....	22
4.2 Hunting changing perceptions.....	23
4.3 The consequences of hunting.....	27
4.4 Hunter immersion.....	31
5 Analysis	37
5.1 Critique of modern influences on hunting	38
5.2 A hunter in modern Sweden.....	40
5.3 What is nature?.....	45
6 Hunting Transcending Alienation	49
References.....	51
Appendix 1: Summary of Field Diary	54
Appendix 2: Interview questions.....	55

1 Introduction:

Humanities successful development into modernity has itself become a problem (Beck, 2009). Processes inherent in capitalism have led to a system where people are no longer in touch with sources of production causing what is referred to as *alienation*. Alienation is the main issue that is being explored in this research. Alienation is a Marxist term and is understood as the separation and estrangement of people from themselves and the reality of the world they live in (Ollman, 1976). Modernity is the vehicle that facilitates alienation through its inherent processes such as capitalism and industrialization which for example monetize value and separate producers from consumers. In turn, modernity creates an understanding that nature and human culture are two separate systems that only interact with one another - which is an alienated understanding of the reality of the world (Harvey, 1993). As a result of alienation between human and natural systems, there is also a resulting anxiety in the individual consumer because they are separated from modes of production. The separation of producers and consumers means the consumer no longer has knowledge or control over the means of production and therefore cannot determine the source of what they consume or the clear effects of their consumption, which is argued in the theory of risk society by Ulrich Beck (1992). People are becoming more aware of the negative consequences of consumption and how it affects the future; closing the alienation gap between producer and consumer could lead to a remedying of such anxieties and create a more sustainable perspective of consumption and production. There is therefore an underlying lack of control over the individual's need to consume and the effects of such consumption in modern society. Movements have been formed to remedy the sense of guilt and impending doom over the causative effects of consumption such as ecological societies, deep ecology and eco- health trends. Such attempts have often been labelled as misguided or insufficient (Peterson et al., 2010; Harvey, 1993) but people still try to engage and establish a better connection with nature and sources of production, directly or indirectly, mentally or physically.

Hunting is an activity which not only places people in natural environments and in close contact with wildlife, it also is an ancient practice that has been continued until this day (Peterson *et al.*, 2010; Persson, 1981). Hunting could be considered an “archetype” for how people interact with nature (Serpell, 2015). The purpose of hunting has not changed much but its practice has evolved and changed along with society (Persson, 1981). Hunting is an activity that not only places people in natural environments and in close contact with wilderness, but is also an ancient practice since hunter gatherer societies with records from 2500 BC in Egypt showing hunting being used for wildlife management (Lepold, 1933 in Hansen *et al.*, 2012). It is an activity that has changed and evolved alongside society until this very day and has also become taboo for certain people in modern society. Nevertheless, despite ethical dilemmas that occur over the lethal outcome of hunting, there is also a recognition of how life perpetuates itself through death (Peterson et al. 2010), a valuable realisation in a time of modernity where the

consequences of production are curtailed and removed from places of consumption (Peterson et al. 2010). A modern society where the agricultural, industrial and technological revolution have rendered nature or the “natural ecosystem” - apart from the human created cultural ecosystem - less important and less meaningful; therefore, threatening its continued existence in a world where it is still needed (Serpell, 2015). One question one can ask is if hunting as a leisure activity in modern society holds the potential to reconnect people with nature thus facilitating an understanding of society’s dependency on natural sources of production (Peterson et al., 2010). Human wellbeing often benefits from being in nature (Peterson et al., 2010) and hunting takes a person out in nature and lets the hunter interact with natural sources of production such as ecosystems, wildlife and other resources. Hunting can also unite the producer and consumer as the hunter often embodies both or is in close contact with the source of production (i.e. nature) and could therefore avoid or counteract alienation from nature. Hunting might provide a potential opportunity to bridge the alienation gap between “culture” and “nature”. On the other hand, as hunting changes along with society, it is paradoxically affected by modernization as well and, as a result, juxtaposes both the ancient and the modern. Hence, there must be recognition of the various ways hunting can be practiced and the nuances of approaches to the activity. Articles have been written about the potential of hunting to reconnect humans with the “wilderness” and with themselves such as Serpell, 2015 “Hunting and our connection to the wild”. However, there are very few prominent studies on the subject, one of them is Peterson et al. journal article; “How hunting strengthens social awareness of coupled human-natural systems” (2010), where they, in short, look at food production and the strengthening of the symbolic meaning of food to remind societies of their dependence on natural systems.

This research aims to explore to what extent hunting is perceived as a practice which potentially can connect people back with nature, sources of production and the products of their own labour alleviating the alienating effects of living in a modern society in a western context. Empirical material is gathered using different methods, mainly; semi-structured interviews and other previous research. The semi-structured interviews are conducted with hunters in Sweden around the Stockholm and Uppsala region (parts of Mälaren Valley). The hunters are by definition people who have acquired both a Swedish hunting and weapons permit and with some hunting experience, even if the extent of their experience varies. An important component of the research, especially concerning gathering primary data through interviews, is that the hunter’s background or upbringing is a contributing factor to their perspective of hunting (Persson, 1981). Hence some account is taken of the respondents’ upbringing and relation to hunting, identifying whether they have a more traditional hunter upbringing or if it is more modern. This in turn is used to contrast narratives and answers in some cases and contribute to a more defined idea of the respondents’ perspectives. The aim is then to study collected empirical

material and answer the question of whether hunting can reconcile humans with nature and ‘transcend the alienation gap between culture and nature’.

The question of alienation from natural systems is important due to its causative effects such as; unsustainable attitudes about consumption, consumer anxiety, general ignorance about nature and environments, deteriorating mental health and so on. By studying the viewpoint of hunters in Sweden it could be possible to see if hunting has changed their perspectives of nature and if it has any effect on alienation? The idea is however, not to suggest that everyone in Sweden starts hunting! Rather, to research the viewpoints, of those who hunt, on nature and perhaps what is needed to transcend the gap between humans and nature. To do this three questions are asked as part of the research process:

- 1: How modernity is influencing hunting and if negative influences can obscure the opportunity for hunters to reconnect with nature?
- 2: What position do hunters hold in modern society?
- 3: How do hunters define what is “nature” and “natural”?

2 Modernity and Alienation

Modernity exists at the heart of most social theory as a critiqued phenomenon (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). In a western context, modernity is a catalyst for the alienation between human society and nature because it masks the connection between nature and people on various levels (Peterson et al., 2010). Capitalism is part of modernity as one of the primary systems of commodity production and it relies on alienating workers from the products of their own labour (Ollman 1976; Peterson et al., 2010). It is therefore clear that alienation is a severe side-effect of modern society and capitalism. The wellbeing of people is said to depend “on improving understanding of the connectedness between humans and natural systems and applying that understanding in the policy arena to meet social challenges.” (Peterson et al., 2010 p127). Yet it is evident that modernity, and the functions inherent in modernity such as capitalism and urbanization, work against such goals of understanding the relationship between humans and nature, viewing them as separate bounded systems rather than a functioning whole (Harvey, 1993). The distinction between society and nature means that environmental issues are defined as a problem with intricate relations between these interacting systems. This way of thought is the crux of many ecological issues and is the “product of alienated reason, having no historical or well-grounded scientific justification” (Harvey, 1993 p.33).

In a modern society the vaguely defined idea of “nature” is, as already established, only understood as something that is separate from “culture” (Peterson et al., 2010). This also means that nature becomes a separate object from the point of view of the subjective human and therefore something that humans perceive they can control. On the other hand, modernity has also led to great advances in technology through observing nature under a Cartesian type lens that has provided insight into various natural systems but, also led to a reductionist view of nature which can only be defined as “alienated” (Levins and Lewontin in Harvey, 1993). The reductionist view of nature is also enforced by the way we value nature (and everything else) through money. In a capitalist society money is how we (people) have been trained to place value; we do it on a daily basis through monetary and commodity transactions when we go to the shop or pay our bills in a process of production and consumption (Harvey, 1993). Environmental economics has proved to be useful when convincing those in power to take action towards conservation and sustainability. Still, we are caught up in putting monetary valuations on everything, yet we do not often engage in direct transactions when enjoying the nature that surrounds us, such as trees or clean air, that are essentially considered “free”. Money is, according to Marx, “a leveller and cynic, reducing a wondrous multidimensional ecosystemic world of use values, of human desires and needs, as well as of subjective meanings, to a common objective denominator which everyone can understand” (Harvey, 1993 p4). We value everything individually and, as mentioned earlier, assume they fit as replaceable parts of a Cartesian machine; like fish are valued independently of the water in which they swim (Harvey, 1993). The environment is perceived as an

‘externality’ that has a structure we can decipher and predict enough to impose some sort of price structure or regulatory regime so that it can be integrated/internalized by human society.

Seeing nature as separate from human beings has also led to a disturbing separation from personal self-realisation through labour and the appropriation of nature (Ollman, 1976). “Appropriation” is a general expression used by Marx to describe the process where *“man incorporates the nature he comes into contact with into himself”* (Ollman, 1976). Capitalism and industrialization, two founding processes of modernity, have created a society where people “are in fact alienated from their human nature, because that involves people working freely and creatively, for their own benefit, and for that of people in their community” (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012, p25). Labour in a modern capitalist society becomes a compulsion, a forced activity overlooked by a boss or “overlord” who determines the labour process rather than the labourer themselves (Ollman, 1976). The worker is not free to determine their own work process and neither are they able to interact freely with natural sources to realize their own potential through the use of resources for personal gain (Ollman, 1976). The consumers in a modern society are also alienated from original sources of production in nature which mostly exist as increasingly industrialized complexes separate from society (Harvey, 1993).

Due to the separation of consumer and producer by industrialized producers, in a capitalist system that benefits from such a divide, the consumer is rendered helpless as they no longer are in control of their own production but dependent on industrialized forms of production instead (Ollman, 1976). Ollman states that “man is alienated from his product because the activity which produced it was alienated” (1976) and it is probable that as people become dependent on external processes they also lose control over their own consumption, or more precisely, the effects of their consumption. The lack of control over production and consumption leads to inherent anxieties in society amongst consuming individuals who are, through mass media and connectivity due to globalization, aware that they are “short-changing” the future (Harvey, 1993). Consumers actions have global consequences that are often negative (Giddens, 1994). It leads to what has been labelled a “risk society” by Ulrich Beck where; “we live in a world that has to make decisions concerning its future under the conditions of manufactured, self-inflicted insecurity. Among other things, the world can no longer control the dangers produced by modernity...” (Beck, 2009 p.8). The causative effects of consumption are the underlying source of anxiety, Mythen illustrates by remarking that “we now know that floods are encouraged and aggravated by specific human practices” (2004, p43). Another example of the consequences of the production consumption dichotomy is that large amounts of antibiotics are being fed to livestock and causing antibiotic-resistant bacteria to multiply and threaten public health (NRDC, 2015). Hence, people end up obsessing over “risks” of their lifestyles and they end up living in a risk society riddled with anxieties (Beck, 1992).

Reconciling humanity with nature in a modernized society built from Cartesian-Newtonian visions of the world; where systems are separate is very difficult (Harvey, 1993). The causative and atomistic rationale that perpetuates subjects such as sociology and economics leads to a limited understanding of reality and nature (Harvey, 1993). People should start to pierce this veil and overcome alienation by finding the opportunity to interact directly with nature on their own terms and hunting could potentially provide such an opportunity.

2.1 Hunting in westernized society

In Sweden hunting has generally been practiced by rural populations as a supplement to the household since 1851 when it was gradually democratized as it was tied to landownership instead of membership of the royal court or aristocracy (Hansen et al., 2012). Hunting was and is to some extent still a cultural heritage traditionally passed down the family line (from father to son) in rural dwelling families and the rights were mostly used to hunt small game (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). Hunting is also strongly linked to wildlife management in Sweden (Ednarsson, 2010) to such an extent that hunters are used for both surveying and managing wildlife populations (Ericsson et al., 2008). Studies have shown that hunters are more likely to engage in outdoor activities such as camping, berry picking, hiking, and fishing than the rest of the population that does not hunt. Such outdoor activities, consumptive and non-consumptive alike, are supported by the legal framework in Sweden due to the Right of Public Access (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). However, the Right of Public Access does not give the right to hunt (with the exception of some limited rights to small game) as that right lies with the ownership of land which provides a barrier to those who would like to hunt but do not own land or have contacts that do (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). It is also common for hunting teams to lease hunting grounds yet there still exists the need to join such a hunting team which, as urbanization is increasing (Peterson et al., 2010), will probably be even harder for newer generations.

Social trends, such as increased urbanization, have multiple effects on hunting and how people perceive nature. Separation from the countryside and natural resource extractive work such as fishing, mining and farming leads to people basing their ideas of nature on emotions (Kellert in Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002) whilst hunters, who tend to spend more time outdoors and acquire knowledge and experience of natural environments, base their perceptions of nature more on their experiences (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). People's awareness of nature and wildlife depends on their experiences which fortify any attitudes they may have on the subject (Petty *et al.* in Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). Hence, hunters which are proven to be more active outdoors are more likely to form stronger opinions with regards to nature and wildlife management as well as a stronger sense of stewardship (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). After all, stewardship is often cited as the primary aim for many hunters and the

Svenska Jägarförbundet (the Swedish Hunters Organization) has listed their ethical guidelines on their website, stating that;

- We respect wildlife, nature and community
- We nurture and manage a natural resource sustainably
- We protect the name and reputation of hunting
- We seek and promote knowledge
- We are diligent with safety

(Svenska Jägarförbundet, 2015 - translated)

These ethical guidelines illustrate what Svenska Jägarförbundet expect from hunters in Sweden and what hunting should symbolize. On their website they offer advice on how to handle game, hunter responsibilities and so on. Hunting is generally considered a controversial subject (Peterson et al., 2010; Gunnarsdotter, 2005), there is a strong motivation for keeping to ethics and proper conduct because they believe the future of hunting depends on hunters using their good judgment and responsibility (Svenska Jägarförbundet, 2015).

A study by Peterson *et al.* (2010) focused on the symbolic meaning of food and the process of obtaining it because the increasing alienation between people and nature is probably the most underlying challenge to sustainability (Peterson et al. 2010). Hunting often places people right in the midst of the natural systems upon which humanity depends. Hunting establishes a connection, a realisation, by not only having the hunter face the reality of how life is perpetuated by death but also the efforts involved in hunting beyond the moment one pulls the trigger (Peterson et al., 2010). These efforts, such as training, waiting, stalking, killing, transporting and butchering, form the entire process of hunting beside the second one fires a shot to kill prey. Therefore, hunting in its entirety is often a long memorable experience in nature, an interaction that is considered by many hunters to be “a natural way of life” (Svenska Jägarförbundet, 2015). The experience does not only stay with the hunter either, food is versatile and one of the most effective ways to express culture (Blunt and Dowling, 2006) and hunting meat often disperses into the wider community as seven out of ten Swedes claim to have eaten game at home in the last year (Ericsson, 2008). The positive reputation according to studies is mostly due to the utilitarian component of hunting where the hunter hunts for meat, skin or fur (Ericsson, 2008; Gunnarsdotter, 2005; Ljung, 2014). Meat is gifted to grateful friends and acquaintances as wild game such as venison and grouse are considered delicacies (Peterson et al. 2010) thus contributing to social support of hunting (Ericsson, 2008). Wild game is appreciated to such an extent that game is sold in Swedish supermarkets but, the further away the consumer is from the original source they are also arguably more separated from the experience and reality of the meats’ production. The popularity of game meat is not only due to the flavour but also based in social trends such as eating local and organic foods

(Ljung, 2014). Rural communities tend to also be more supportive of hunting than urbanites because of their closer contact with and direct consumptive use of natural resources and wildlife (Mankin et al., 1999 in Ljung, 2014). Hunting is argued to be the most sustainable form of food production and even more cruelty free than industrial scale agriculture due to the vast amounts of animals killed in the crop fields by agricultural machinery (Peterson et al. 2010).

Social trends such as sustainable living could easily be interpreted as a response to the social anxieties brought about by alienation. The meat industry is a perfect example of alienation where the gruesome truth of industrial meat production is hidden from consumers and often with great effort; farms are far away, 'Ag Gag' campaigns in the US to ban hidden cameras in livestock farms and describing animal-rights activists as "terrorists" (McGrath, 2013). There is also advertising trying to promote a 'happy farmer and livestock' image in children's books and misleading consumer labels (Monbiot, 2015) to not only hide the reality but also misleadingly reassuring "customers in a vague and fuzzy way while holding producers to standards that scarcely rise above the legal minimum" (Monbiot, 2015). The gruesome knowledge that does sometimes seep through to the consumer is a reminder of how "in pursuit of material affluence, humanity is running up an environmental deficit, a situation in which our relationship to the environment, while yielding short term benefits, will have profound, negative long term consequences" (Macionis and Plummer, 1997 in Mythen, 2004 p46).

Nevertheless, people must eat and live so despite the amounting information, dispersed by media technologies, of humanities effect on the environment we must continue to consume. Paradoxically, we have replaced the insecurity of a successful hunt with the insecurity of where and how our food is produced, perhaps our oxfilet is dyed pork (Pehrson, 2012) or our beef lasagna is actually horse (Åkerlund, 2013)? We cannot always be sure in a supermarket, which leads us to understand "why individuals in the West live comparatively longer and healthier lives, whilst simultaneously feeling less safe and secure" (Pidgeon, 2000; Sparks, 2003 in Mythen, 2004). The underlying insecurity of an individual's impact having larger and graver implications somewhere else builds a basis of social anxiety which is, as mentioned, often addressed by sustainable social movements who claim to employ stronger ethical bases and try to link producers with consumers. However these movements are not entirely successful and modern systems of production continue to hide "awareness of profound relationships between humans and natural systems" (Peterson et al, 2010 p128). Hunting, on the other hand, has the potential to place a person in control of the production process, the hunter has been present and active throughout the process with the full knowledge of which animal is on the dinner table and how it got there, therefore relieving any sense of insecurity and, in turn, anxiety. The only insecurity is the chance of successfully killing prey (Peterson et al., 2010), however, the hunt itself is an experience and the presence of supermarkets (and a decent/leading social welfare system) in Sweden alleviates any chance of starvation.

2.2 From traditional to modern hunter:

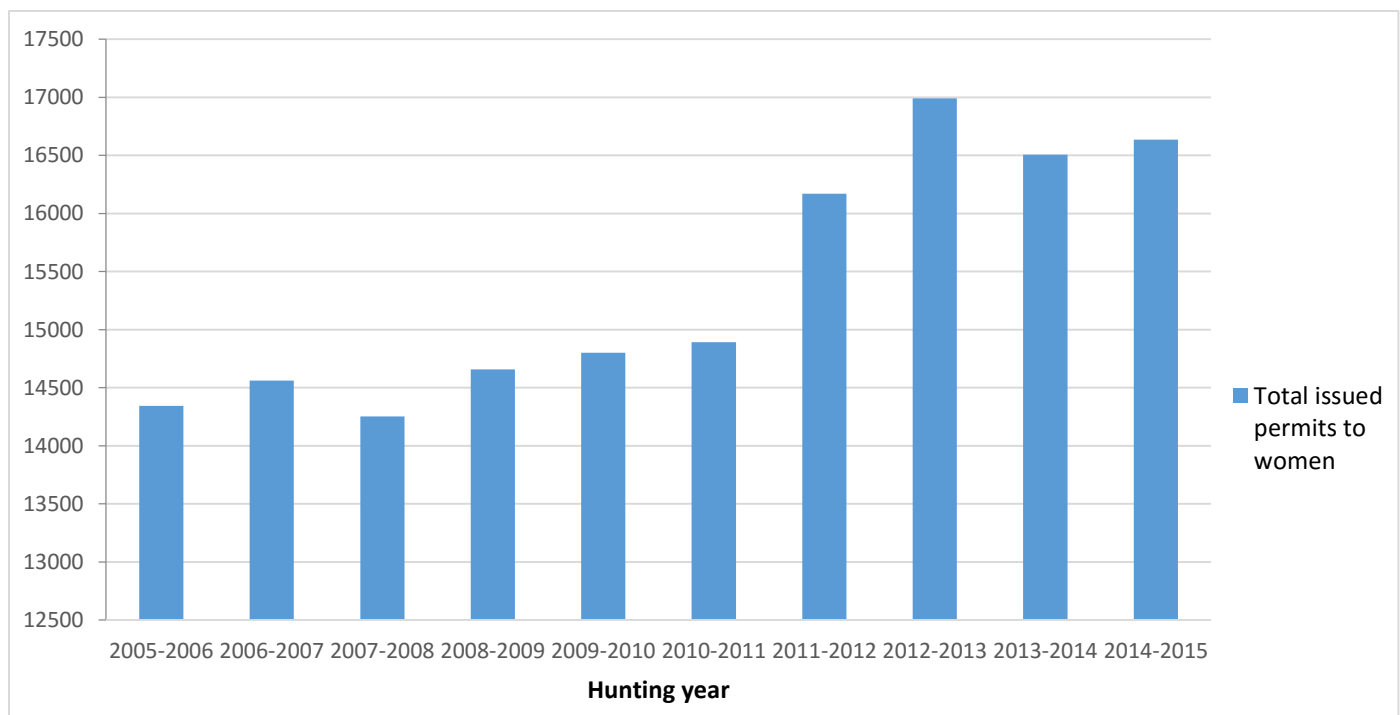
Hunting has had different functions and evolved along with society (Persson, 1981). The aspects of hunting that are more typical of a traditional hunter often follow that the son (and sometimes daughter) were introduced to hunting since childhood; often accompanying the hunt and later, sometimes around 12-13 years old, they would start hunting themselves (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). In Persson's 1981 study of hunters in Scania, Sweden, 73% of participants started hunting before the age of 20 and a high amount of them in their early teens, which means they would most likely still be influenced by their parent's attitude to hunting during that time (Persson, 1981). The majority of young hunters would learn hunting from their fathers; in Persson's study 76% of participants who hunted before the age of 17 learned it from their fathers (1981). Hence, traditional hunting is an inherited activity often linked to the countryside (Persson, 1981; Gunnarsdotter, 2005). Those who inherited hunting in a more traditional manner (under 17 from their father) have also been argued to often be more dedicated to hunting than those with an urban background who often start hunting later in life (Persson, 1981).

Persson's studies about hunting at the beginning of the 1980s were initiated at an interesting point in hunting history as it was on cusp of change where modern hunters started to break from the traditional (rural and inherited) hunting background (Hansen et al., 2012). The slow shift around the 1980s (Hansen et al., 2012) could have started due to an increase in wild game and hunting growing in popularity which simultaneously broke the link to the agrarian society and changing the perspective on game and hunting (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). These modern hunters, who started hunting later in life, had been introduced through friends or work colleagues and were more interested in big game and less dedicated to hunting in general (Persson, 1984 in Hansen et al. 2012). The hunter that emerged sometime in the 1980s was also likely to have no connection to farming and was used to subjective animal pets but not to the death and gore of slaughter (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). It was also more recently discovered during an extensive mail survey that even though there is a strong utilitarian component in hunting, Swedish hunters and the public both share a humanistic view of animals. A humanistic view of animals means that people view animals as individuals, which apparently had not been observed before (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). A humanistic view of valuing animals as individuals however contrast with a moralistic view which opposes harm and killing of wildlife. A distinction that fits with the break from agrarian society or perhaps in conjunction with other social trends.

2.3 Modernity's influence on hunting culture

It has been established that modernity is the cause of alienation in society, consequently it is important to examine how modernity in turn is affecting hunting culture and practice. Hunting culture has begun to frame itself as a significant contributor to sustainability by emphasizing its part in the production of local and free range food

(Peterson et al. 2010) and nature and wildlife conservation (Nordic Hunters' Alliance, 2014). Due to opposition against hunting, hunting associations in northern Europe, meaning; Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland have started to promote hunting's potential to link social and natural systems as well as develop "an awareness of the internal ambiguities existing within the hunting culture" (Peterson et al. 2010 p. 137). The ambiguous relationship between modernity and hunting has to do with certain paradoxes in what people want such as the popularity of free range and local food but the undesirable reality of death in its production (Peterson et al., 2010). The hunting associations communicate that hunting is an activity for everyone and focuses on "hunting's connection to food production and its contributions to sustainability, describing practices and experiences that allow hunters to share connections with nature with society" (Nordic Hunters' Alliance, 2009 in Peterson et al. 2010 p.137). The aim is to counteract modernistic influences that threaten the potential to reconnect people with natural systems through hunting (Peterson et al., 2010). Hence in this section the areas of interest that will be discussed, with regards to modernity's influence on hunting, are demographic, economic and technological. This is because issues with modernization such as commercialization, age and urbanization seem to already have caused a divide in hunting culture. If one were to look at the demographic changes happening in hunting there are three categories that are most prominent; an increase in female interest in hunting, an increase in age of entry (people start to hunt at an older age) and, the effects of urbanization. Data from The Hunting Registry at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (as shown in Figure 1 below) shows that there has been a marginal increase in female hunting participation since 2005.



2.1.1 Figure 1. Total hunting permits issued to women.

(The Hunting Registry, 2015)

Hunting is a masculine activity, but as more women are hunting it is starting to affect the masculine connotations to a certain extent (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). It is not as impressive to be a “weapons enthusiast” or “killer” as merely being interested in nature, camaraderie and animals, however, it is still important to be a “skilled shot” and have downed many animals according to an ethnographic study made in Locknevi Sweden (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). More women in municipalities with high levels of education are also applying for hunting permits (Ericsson, 2008). Interest in the environment and nature tends to increase with higher levels of education which perhaps can explain why women with higher education would want to start hunting (Ericsson, 2008). Nonetheless, hunting remains very masculine; when women join a hunting group it will likely consists mainly of men and she joins under “their conditions” and should be accepting of male banter (Gunnarsdotter, 2005).

The urbanization of hunters is being widely observed in several studies such as a doctoral thesis by Ljung in Sweden (2014) and a demographic study made in Denmark in 2000 (Hansen et al. 2012). It is expected that sentiments common to these demographic sectors are percolating into hunting culture, potentially shifting them from a more “utilitarian, functional focus of landscapes and wildlife towards a more recreational and protectionistic [sic] view among the public” (Ljung, 2014 p.11). However, urbanization creates physical separation of distance between society and the natural sources on which it depends (Peterson et al., 2010). Hence, there is a cut from agrarian communities that may have changed hunter’s attitudes about wildlife (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). Urbanization could also mean loss of knowledge about hunting traditions that exist in rural communities, as well as contacts to rural communities and hunting grounds paving the way for other means of hunting such as hunting tourism (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). Nevertheless, many who hunt and live in urban areas were raised in the countryside which is where they could also have started hunting, which means that not all urban dwelling hunters fall under an “urban hunter” category (Persson, 1981). This means that, according to Persson, a hunter’s upbringing is more important than their current place of residence when it comes to their perceptions of hunting (Persson, 1981).

In a study by Hansen et al. on the “demographic transition among hunters” in Denmark found that hunters recruited at an older age were more likely to have been introduced by a friend (rather than a family member), hunt fewer days, place less importance on hunting, be married, be female and be raised in more urban environments (Hansen et al., 2012). It was also mentioned earlier that access to hunting is becoming more difficult (Gunnarsdotter, 2005) and more affluent hunters will be favoured with hunting opportunities (Hansen et al., 2012). A similar conclusion was made by Gunnarsdotter who said that limited access to hunting would lead to more hunting tourism (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). The commercialization of hunting is a very relevant and current trend that could change hunting culture in Sweden. Urban raised hunters were shown to spent more money on

hunting and “income and education were positively related with annual expenditures and negatively related with the number of days spent hunting” (Hansen et al. 2012 p.448). Hence, it could be that hunters who have a higher income may have less time but more money to spend on hunting and urban hunters may just have to pay more in order to gain access to hunting. What is clear is that heightened expenditures on hunting and less time to dedicate to the activity could, without assuming too much, lead to increases in commercialization. In 2003 it was found that there was a high demand for hunting tourism opportunities in Sweden (Alatalo). Hunting tourism can be considered a primary example of commercialization and commoditization of the activity as the introduction of market forces into hunting often breaks apart the entirety that makes up hunting into separate price-valued pieces that dissolves the relations between hunter, forest, wildlife and place (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). The price tag creates instrumental values where there once were intrinsic ones which is done by cutting connections in order to create separate parts that are assigned a price (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). Hunters who have paid money will also expect more results and often a trophy which would lead to a more stressful hunt as the customer has paid for a “successful” outcome, meaning to shoot and kill game (Peterson et al., 2010, Gunnarsdotter, 2005 & Hansen et al., 2012).

Commercialized hunts are known to raise animals in captivity to then be released as “free” such as pheasants, ducks and quail in natural settings which obscures the relationship between society and nature because it presents a commercial operation as natural and wild (Peterson et al., 2010) which only works to increase alienation. The reality of death is often sanitized as employees working on commercial tourist hunts process the carcass for the customer who will only see the result as frozen packages of meat that are often sold separately (Peterson et al., 2010). This is where commodity fetishism is argued to take place as hunters chose to harvest trophies because commercial enterprises rely on delivering a product rather than the experience (Peterson et al., 2010). There is a shift in the aim of hunting from process to product “which allows attention to slip away from the relationship between human and natural systems” (Peterson et al., 2010 p.134). In Gunnarsdotter’s study, statements even went as far as to say that hunting tourism had an effect on the very ‘essence of hunting’ (2005). Even public support depends on hunting retaining a utilitarian component, such as game meat, because it has considerably higher support than hunting for recreational reasons, such as excitement or trophy hunting (Ljung, 2014; Ednarsson 2010). Hunting by indigenous populations is also supported by 93% of the Swedish population which is probably due to people viewing it as a more natural lifestyle or for its cultural significance (Ednarsson, 2010). It would appear that a less commercialized image of hunting is important not only to frame hunting more favourably in public opinion, but also because it runs a strong risk of obscuring the relationship between society and the natural systems on which society depends (Peterson et al., 2010). Hunting is a paradoxical anachronism in a modern world and therefore it is important to understand the balance between where modernity influences

(ancient) hunting culture, slowly changing it whilst perhaps retaining the potential to overcome alienation from nature by combining human and natural systems.

3 Method

3.1 Gathering empirical material

The main source of empirical material gathered for this study was through semi-structured interviews, a field day with a hunting team and previous empirical studies on the subject. I decided that due to the subjective nature of the research the most appropriate data collection methods would be qualitative as this research is based on a relatively small group of respondents and therefore attention can be paid to detailed variations in people's interactions and understandings (Silverman, 2005).

For the research topic the aim was to gather information about hunting culture and therefore the target sources of qualitative data were people who had firearm and hunting licenses and had hunted in Sweden. Having had no experience of hunting the first step in empirical data collection was a day-long observational study with a team of hunters conducted in Södertälje municipality (part of Stockholm County). The opportunity, to join as an observing participant in a hunting excursion arose during the hunting season through personal contacts in Uppsala. The experience was vital towards forming a better understanding of hunting in Sweden and insight into the lifeworld of the hunters. A summary of the diary can be found in *Appendix 1*. The hunting team from the excursion in Södertälje had a more rural and traditional perspective rather than modern. Contacts for interviews were gained through a snow-balling effect during the hunting excursion. At a later stage I got in touch with another hunting group in Uppsala and interviewed some of its members.

It was established in the literature review that background/upbringing and how people were initiated into hunting were highly relevant in shaping people's opinion of hunting through prior research by scholars such as Persson (1981) and Hansen et al., (2012). Consequently, there was a decided effort on my part to interview people from different hunting backgrounds and social groups to create a more accurate cross-section of responses. The data gathered for the project came from the Stockholm and Uppsala regions however the hunters themselves varied greatly in experience and could have hunted in many different places. However, there are some potential regional norms in hunting practice which is why opinions in the interviews may be more expressive of hunting culture in central Sweden, as opposed to the North or South of the country.

3.2 Data collection techniques

The interviews were all semi-structured (Flowerdew & Martin 2005) and lasted up to one hour but averaged on about 45 minutes. The questions that initiated the interviews can be found in *Appendix 2* along with the original transcripts (mostly in Swedish) in *Appendix 3*. The questions were aimed at answering how hunting shaped the

respondents perceptions of nature by exploring their “lifeworld”. A lifeworld is built from social interactions between individuals as they interact with each other in a shared everyday world which shapes their respective viewpoints (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012).

All interviews were with people who had a hunting weapon permit and had hunted in Sweden. One interview was not digitally recorded and instead logged using handwritten notes during the interview. Another interview with *vo11* was carried out by a fellow researcher and then transcribed by myself with the permission to use it in my own research. In total there are 11 semi-structured interviews used in this research; 9 audio recorded, 1 non-recorded and 1 interview conducted by another interviewer and is referred to as an “external source”. The decision to use semi-structured interviews instead of open-ended or closed interviews is because the structured questions allows for the researcher to keep the respondent on a relevant topics, answer desired questions and also allows for “respondents to raise issues that the interviewer may not have anticipated” (Silverman in Flowerdew & Martin 2005 p.111). Throughout the research knowledge has also been gained through informal conversation with hunters during unrecorded conversations on the day hunting trip, in-between interviews or when discussing new hunters that I could approach for my research. The informal conversation during the observational study led to the identification of subjects that contributed towards further insight into the perceptions and lifeworld of these hunters.

3.3 Data approach

Having already discussed the significant effects of hunting background and social group in the literature review it was apparent that these factors could shape the answers of the respondents and have an effect on their lifeworld perception of hunting. Consequently through quantitative means the respondents have been listed below in *Table 1* outlining some of the more prominent factors of their hunting background and social group.

Table 1: Respondent background											
Respondents	vo01	vo02	vo03	vo04	vo05	vo06	vo07	vo08	vo09	vo10 - Not recorded	vo11 - External source
Sex M/F	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
>30 years old	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	-
Started hunting <19 years	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Introduced by family member	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Rural or urban upbringing	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban (Uppsala but owns land)</i>

The information listed in the table is used in the results to contrast the individual respondent’s answers with some fundamental factors that contribute to their social and hunting background which places their qualitative narratives in a clearer context. The first two categories outline the sex of the participant and whether they are under the age of 30 years or not and pertain more to social grouping. The latter 3 categories have more to do with the respondents hunting background. The categories help to define, on a basic level, whether the hunter has a more traditional, modern or mixed hunting background which can aid in determine modern influences on hunting and changing ideals or norms. Traditional and modern influences were discussed in the Literature Review chapter but a traditional background template here is that the hunter is male, started hunting before the age of 19, was introduced to hunting and mentored by a family member and has a rural upbringing. The categories are mainly based on the studies by Persson from 1981 and Hansen et al. from 2012. An example of the categorization process used is that hunters may live in urban areas but have a background in rural areas and retain those preferences and values (of the countryside). As a result not all hunters can be grouped into an “urban hunter” category and it is therefore more accurate to categorise hunters according to their “upbringing” rather than their current place of residence (Persson, 1981).

The approach of this study has been centered on trying to create an accurate understanding of the lifeworld of hunters through typifications and habitualizations (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). Keeping in mind first order actors and second order analysts is also necessary in research (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). It is therefore important to acknowledge Merleau-Ponty's idea of the inherent unity of body and mind; the researcher is physically separate from the subject matter and perpetually influenced by their own bodily perspective and therefore can never be entirely objective (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). It has also been said that "Observation of the world is, Heisenberg argued, inevitable intervention in the world, in as much the same way that deconstructionists will argue that the reading of a text is a fundamental to its production." (Harvey, 1993 p.36). The added variable of the Marxist based theory of alienation stands to direct the subject matter and focus the aim of the research.

3.4 Evaluation

Whilst efforts were made to expand the pool of respondents to get an accurate cross-section of answers, the small study group cannot be fully representative of all perspectives - but there are some correlations and perspectives that may apply to wider groups. It is important to remark upon the demographic representation of the group of respondents as shown in the table above. The respondents that were interviewed are mostly under 30 years old whilst most people in Sweden get hunting licenses between the ages of 60-69 years old (Jägarregistret, 2015). Therefore it is likely that the group of respondents in this study are not fully representative of the general Swedish demographic. Nevertheless, the ratio of male to female is fairly representative of the norm where only a fraction of hunters are female and seeing as the topics of discussion are of a very much in-depth and of a subjective nature, the answers could be representative of a wider sentiment and not only restricted to that of the respondents own social group and background. Perhaps people they themselves have spoken to or the influence of their environment.

4 Results:

The hunters used narratives to describe their experiences and perceptions of hunting. Their backgrounds were often relevant in the building of their perceptions, referring to rural or urban opinions of hunting or the effect of their upbringing on their involvement in the activity. Rich descriptions of nature experiences and intense moments are common in the narratives as well as use of language and specialized terminology that permeates the hunting community.

4.1 Why do people hunt?

8 out of 11 respondents started hunting prior to 19 years of age but, according to statistics from Jägarregistret most hunting licenses are issued in the age brackets of 60-69 years of age. The respondents are predominantly male with 2 being female, namely *vo05* and *vo09*. Respondents *vo01* and *vo10* are the only ones who are over the age of 30 and *vo11* is an external source and there is no indication towards their age hence, the respondents are predominantly still in their 20s. These background factors and others are shown in *Table 1* in the results section.

When answering the question to why they started hunting 7 of the respondents attributed it to being introduced by a family member who was always male and another 2 respondents mentioned social contacts at work. The 2 latter respondents, that were introduced to hunting through work contacts, resided and worked in rural areas which can be a contributing factor to them engaging in hunting due to it being slightly more prevalent in the countryside. Another respondent attributed their interest in hunting to growing up in a rural area where many people in his community already hunted (even if none of them were close relations). Respondent *vo05* was brought up in an urban environment and said her interest in hunting was sparked by a hunting jacket on sale at an outlet:

Extract 1: "It started as a little trend, there was a sort of sale at Naturkompaniets' outlet and I found this jacket and just figured 'well, why not?' I think it was just something I discovered myself. I also thought it looks good on the CV, and then it wet my appetite" (vo05)

Extract 2: "Dad hunted, so I have grown up with it since childhood, it is just natural in the family" (vo01)

Those who start hunting at a younger age generally are introduced through family relations and sometimes contacts in their community. However, some people like *vo05* can start hunting solely on personal initiative especially when opportunities to join hunting courses are made available. Alternatively, when asked to compare hunting to other activities immediate answers mostly referred to hunting having "consequences", the danger and responsibility of carrying weapons, the killing of game as well as minding other people present in the area. These answers were especially common among the members of the Uppsala-based hunting club. Otherwise answers

revolved around hunting being much like other outdoor activities; a lifestyle, a way to be in nature, high levels of dedication especially during hunting season and so on. Nonetheless, as the narratives deepened a - not straight up and modest answers to a question - they described the vast amount of knowledge about nature and wildlife that one has to learn when becoming a hunter;

Extract 3: "Yes, it is very exciting, there are an awful lot of new impressions and in the beginning you were bloody knackered after having been outside and you learned such a terrible amount about animals.... You're still learning but in the beginning it was very explosive, you learned a hundred things every time you were out."(vo02)

4.2 Hunting changing perceptions:

The knowledge learned during hunting enlightened respondents to a greater understanding of their surroundings in the ecosystem. Instead of just seeing "a bunch of trees" (vo06) when in the forest their attention is drawn towards new signs of life such as wildlife tracks and specific sounds which are now identifiable. The heightened awareness of surroundings leads to more intense and intimate experiences of "nature";

Extract 4: "...so there is a lot that you suddenly notice that you otherwise did not, and then you learn to read and listen to nature in a completely different way" (vo4);

Extract 5: "You notice with many people that 'you look but you do not see'. You're in a forest, and they only see the forest, but they do not look for signs and things" (vo07)

The knowledge and awareness of surroundings are translated into skills when hunting, used to track down and predict the behaviour of wildlife. The hunter transcends the role of observer, given their experience and understanding of the environment they are now able to actively engage with their surroundings with distinct purpose by using the resources available for their own means of production. The skills to engage with natural surroundings are not only learned through reading books and studying but from experience; hunting is a skill that must be improved through practice and practical application. All respondents who discussed current hunting literature and online material agreed that it was very informative and according to vo10 it had improved over time. However, it is generally evident that hunting is practical; there was always an element of maintaining hunting skills in narratives, whether it was practicing at the shooting range, training your dog(s) or crop protection hunting, skills were being maintained. The degree of dedication varied in the responses, whilst several were involved in some hunting related activity on a weekly and almost daily basis such as vo1, vo2, vo4 and vo7, other respondents seemed to practice hunting more intermittently. However, hunting did not only heighten perceptions of surroundings, it also shaped and changed perspectives of wildlife. Newly certified respondents discussed how

views of wildlife had changed in certain ways, adding nuances to their understanding. Hunters use their knowledge of how wildlife behaves and therefore gain further insight into what an animal is to them. Romanticised views of wildlife from childhood stories are changed;

Extract 6: "Before it was somewhat doubtful 'I probably cannot pull the trigger' like, 'why should I kill Bambi?' But now it is just 'well, why not?'" (vo05)

All respondents voiced an interest in animals, an interest to learn about them and also how to care for wildlife. Vo01 specifically changed the name of his working position from "urban hunter" to "wildlife manager" because he considers his job to be more about managing wildlife populations to keep them healthy and this is something he feels he needs to communicate to the general public. There is a respect for wildlife in the sense that killing should be done quickly, professionally and without mistakes. Tracking down an animal is paramount if mistakes are made and you injured a creature by accident. Wildlife is considered fun and interesting and respondents often recount anecdotes of special encounters with animals, so called "nature experiences". However, in order to be a hunter there is also a pressure to shoot and actually "hunt" and kill wildlife, which according to respondents is not their only interest in hunting but is still the actual aim. Recently licensed respondents recount how they faced the idea of shooting game (wildlife); vo03, who grew up in an anthroposophical family (mostly vegetarian), recited his nervousity to shoot a wild boar and the doubts that flew through his mind but also the awareness that he had to shoot if he were to continue hunting. It was a decisive moment for vo03 and, even if there is remorse after killing, affirmations from the rest of the team confirm that his actions were actually good and within the ethical framework.

Extract 7: "I usually recommend to all my friends who are thinking about it that you do it [hunting], you get a completely new view of nature and how it works a bit. Like he said when I took my hunting exam, 'you will look differently at animals after this' and you might cut some feelings, with this that animals are not like people, to see the difference between them" (vo03)

Feelings for animals are described as being "cut" or reduced, they become desensitized to the killing. For example vo03 and vo05 describe how they themselves and other in their team became desensitized because they engage in hunting where you not only have to kill wildlife but also deal with the gore of digging out intestines from a warm carcass (vo06). Higher frequency of hunting is said to create a casual attitude among some hunters about shooting wildlife describing that, with time and experience, it becomes less of an issue. Along with the idea of being desensitized to killing and gore is also the perception that hunters are somehow more "raw" as mentioned by vo03. Some answers have described hunters as the people who can take otherwise considered difficult or irksome

tasks into their own hands; the idea of a capability to take difficult action to ease the suffering of animals or aid the progression of wildlife through what could be considered gruesome tactics. Narratives of aiding in the euthanasia of pets or the culling of diseased wildlife are responsibilities carried out by hunters not for sport or joy, but because it is within their capability, and therefore responsibility, to do so. Dealing with death is to some respondents a new situation they need to get used to and others something they consider a part of a natural cycle or a necessity for balance and production.

Extract 8: "I think this has absolutely affected my perspective, then, there are of course many elements of how nature works that you know more or less about, but precisely this that one cannot, as we talked about earlier, forget part of the circle, it must nevertheless be understood that the big animals eat the smaller animals or eat trees or similar and that there is neither food or place for all of them." (vo09)

The respondents highlight their own ethical standards, primarily the importance of a quick kill but also the need to process the carcass, turning it into a viable product which usually means meat. There is a utilitarian ideal behind several of the answers and mentions from every respondent about the positive effects of the meat. The meat has a symbolic status where it is acknowledged by the rest of Swedish society that does not hunt and is also something the respondents can gift to other people. Respondents such as vo04 attributed the popularity of game meat to the rising organic and health trend. According to respondent vo01 the demand has increased a lot over the years. Part of the rising popularity for game meat is not only considered part of a health trend but also a status activity such as golf or sailing. Respondents mention hunting being a lifestyle, there are different views over what type of lifestyle they mean but, the respondents who are from a more "modern" background of hunting link it to status; hunting is an activity where one can wear "lord like clothing" and eat good quality meat. Some respondents have however mentioned that the amount of meat they receive is not much compared to the amount of times they hunt, wishing that the meat were more obtainable. This is linked to landownership especially in the regional area (of Uppland and Stockholm), where those who do not own land tend to receive less and respondents with family owned land keep the meat "at home". The support of the general population for hunting, according to respondents, is very favourable due to the game meat. The ethical view on meat is that it is generally better to hunt wildlife for meat than to buy it in stores and supermarkets;

Extract 9: "And then I think it is very important, this entire process chain is food, the meat cannot be more ecological than an animal that has been going around and following its own natural instinct until it stopped. So I like that, that meat from the forest lies in the freezer, 'yes well I know how it died' it was I who made sure that it was done right" (vo05)

There is a sense of pride in answers about obtaining, processing and consuming/sharing the meat that comes from their own hunting efforts. Respondent's answers recount inviting friends for nice dinners prepared with the meat they hunted themselves and breaking the mundane by bringing a deer meat stew in your lunchbox. Most importantly is the ethical pride of hunting your own meat. To know that the animal lived well and was killed and taken care of in a way that respondents consider better and more humane than buying industrially farmed meat. Some respondents comment that they try to eat as much game meat as possible as opposed to "controversial" meat (vo07), meaning industrial livestock farming. Vo09 recounted how she would travel between her rural home and the city of Stockholm, and because people were more exposed to hunting back in her rural home than in Stockholm she would face less opposition when discussing the subject. The point being that as Stockholm is more "distanced" (from what one can assume is the countryside and hunting), there were people who had less knowledge about hunting and were also very opposed to the idea of shooting an animal even though they would still buy commercially produced meat;

Extract 10: "That logic does not really work in my world, but to buy meat at ICA [grocery store] means you have not thought of where your meat comes from, that was usually my argument against many who thought it was horrible or questioned what we were doing, that we are actually doing something much more natural than meat production today" (vo09)

Respondents highlight their negative opinions about commercial livestock farming when they contrast it with hunting. Even though some respondents mention how hunting changed their view of animals often towards becoming more utilitarian they also voice their interest in wildlife as well as the importance of keeping to ethical standards. They understand the consequences of their actions as hunters and also the process of how meat is produced as they are present throughout the process. They develop their own ethical standards based on the information they have of natural sources of production as well as their knowledge of commercial production.

Extract 11: "This with the meat is quite a lot of work, there is much to learn, understand how it works, that it not only transforms itself from an animal in the forest to a piece of meat on the plate." (vo08)

In the end respondents express a great interest in nature and animal welfare based on their own knowledge and experience as hunters and as people in society. There is a concern for the ethical implications of their actions. They understand that they may often have different views from parts of general society and are dealing with situations regarding life and death which shapes people's perceptions of them as well as their perceptions of themselves. Several respondents have pondered over how they value the life of animals after becoming licensed hunters; many developed an increasingly utilitarian view of animals than before based on the knowledge and

experience they had gained. Yet, despite views being or having become more utilitarian than perhaps the general public, respondents have voiced that their interest and care for wildlife have increased with hunting, describing wildlife experiences as fun, wondrous and emotionally intense. Consequently, there is a reshaping and adaptation of ethics about caring for wildlife where killing is part of managing as well as harvesting, and quality of life is more important.

4.3 The consequences of hunting:

Several respondents already having clarified that what sets hunting apart from other activities are mainly the “consequences”, the relevance of the term acquired a more significant meaning as respondents started to mention that there is strong pressure not to make mistakes. Hence, they mentioned how much time went into training and preparation before a hunt. It was especially clear in the answers from more recently examined hunters such as vo05 and vo06 (and also by respondents who made mistakes in the past) that there is a lot to consider when hunting and there exists a worry about slipping up;

Extract 12: "It may be more nervous, for example, you do not want to embarrass yourself, you certainly do not want to injure an animal, there is a lot of preparation that goes into hunting, at least for me, I feel I have to spend so much time at the shooting range, for example, so that you can confidently trigger a shot that will kill the animal you want to shoot, now I have never injured an animal, but it would feel really really bad if I did"(vo06)

There is a sense of responsibility and worry about making mistakes among the newer hunters, but there are also doubts among more experienced hunters about the training of new hunters. More experienced hunters like respondent vo01 and vo11 believe that some form of mentor programme should be introduced into the training;

Extract 13: "...maybe you should have some sort of mentor programme where you can be with someone, if you want to increase the quality, then if we say you are taking the hunting exam and you joined me for an autumn and get to hunt. Instead of joining a course and then all of a sudden you head out to hunt" (vo11)

Mentor programmes are suggested as a way to pass on knowledge that otherwise would have been given by a relative. Mentoring new hunters can increase their skills in the field but, more importantly, it teaches them proper hunting ethic according to more veteran respondents. Criticism of bad hunting practice was mainly centered on the ethics of hunting and especially the treatment of wildlife. Mentoring would teach new hunters ethics and responsibility. Worries about hunters with a bad hunting ethic concerns the lack of respect for wildlife as well as the unsustainable behaviour that it causes. Respect in the sense that animals should be killed quickly and skillfully without causing unnecessary suffering and proper treatment of the carcass;

Extract 14: "In some way it is about respect or wildlife. You do not want it to suffer, absolutely not, if you're going to shoot an animal then you shoot it so that it dies as painlessly as possible and as quickly as possible, and that is the whole basic idea. You do not shoot an animal because it is fun to torment animals or so, but it is 'yes, now we hunt' and that is the thought behind, and then you shoot the animal and then it should be killed as professionally and correctly as possible. I do not understand it when, people who just shoot for, well, shoot the sake of shooting animals, it does not feel fair." (Vo6)

As hunters are dealing directly with a resource they must also develop an understanding for how to manage it sustainably. Vo06 made an interesting comment where he mentions that due to not owning land he does not have any commitments to managing it but is only hunting as a "guest" which requires less energy and responsibility. Respondent vo01 is employed as a "wildlife manager" at the municipality, a job that involves hunting, he has a traditional hunting background having grown up with it in the family. His view on hunting is somewhat more rigid than other respondents. Hunting to him is not an activity or hobby but a public service, as much as a responsibility to manage wildlife sustainably. Wildlife management is the main purpose of hunting according to vo01 and even though he does have a hunting team and acknowledges that others may hunt for other reasons, he is critical of those hunters who lack an appropriate learning background to guide their ethical responsibility;

Extract 15: "It is probably the Stockholm hunters, they have not learned, it is so easy to get a hunting permit today, so they do not know what hunting really is, they get only a quick education, 'ah now you are a hunter' but they are not hunters at all really because they have no idea about what is ethical or how the forest works or why you do things the way you do." (vo01)

Hunters like Vo01 seem to be anxious about the standards of some people who are starting to hunt without, what vo01 considers, enough guidance. He mentions the "Stockholm hunters" meaning urban hunters who sat the exam, applied for a weapons permit and started hunting without any of the long term mentoring common in a traditional hunting background. Vo01 also links this trend to commercial hunting opportunities where the hunter does not even "see the animal they shot" as the meat is processed and sold by someone else. Other respondents have linked wealthy hunters with little time to the consumption of commercial hunting. Several respondents including vo11 and vo03 have been critical of commercial hunts;

Extract 16: "They are well, when they are hunting, they do not do as much, for example, when they go out and hunt, they will be served, they have "today's exercise" as they call it, instead of hunting, and so they are driven into forest and sit down and shoot a lot of animals and can be a bit rude sometimes." (vo03)

Extract 17: "Yes, that a canned hunt, for me, it feels, I do not know, I have a hard time understanding the attraction it has...I must say, or breeding ducks and pheasants, it feels really bloody strange, I think most people who buy these hunts are people with money but no time and they do not hunt for real." (vo11)

They are critical to the lack of effort that occurs when someone pays for a commercial hunting opportunity. The guest hunters often do not participate in the entire hunting process but only select parts. The guest hunter does not have to process the carcass or even learn how to track animals seeing as they are often chased out right in front of them according to vo03 who has occasionally worked at commercial hunts. It leads to a deficiency where the hunter does not learn to appreciate the consequences and responsibility of hunting. Other comments on commercial hunting are perhaps less harsh but also point out the weaknesses of such engagements. Vo04 has worked on commercial hunts for about 3 years and says that as an employee you are expected to deliver a special experience as well as a successful hunt with a kill, it becomes stressful for the workers and also the paying customer who expects to shoot something. There appears to be generally less patience in a commercial hunt because the client is more expectant. The stress can result in less care being taken when shooting because the customer wants to get their money's worth.

Extract 18: "...those who arrange a hunt, much is demanded from you, and as I said, again many forget it is a bit on the animals' terms and then, one can't do magic with animals, it is just so, they choose their own ways. So those times when things do not go well and so forth, it becomes a stress factor. You want to deliver so much and it is not working, you mess with nature and it goes its own way "(vo04)

Conversely, it is also argued by many of the same respondents (vo04 and vo08) that commercial hunts are beneficial for those who want to experience something new and that it is fully reasonable for landowners to want to earn money. Nevertheless, it appears that commercial hunting can be too reductive; it potentially obscures certain aspects of hunting that are considered important, even shrouding what it means to actually hunt. Hunting appears to become more of a commercialized activity in some other contexts as well where people spend more money on equipment but often spend less time hunting, vo07, who works at a hunting range, suggests that people who spend less time hunting will spend more money on equipment to satisfy a hunting desire that is not being met through actual hunting just to "keep it alive" (vo07). He claims that hunting has become more materialistic especially for hunters living in urban areas, stating that hunting equipment has become an industry. Modern influences on hunting are not necessarily all negative, many seem just new or different. People in the cities do not always have to travel very far to hunt, access to hunting and nature is still possible and appreciated.

Extract 19: "I think it is great with these contrasts, one day you might be sitting in the city and work or study, and another day you may sit out in the woods, that is what is great, I think." (vo08)

The juxtaposition of hunting and modern trends can lead to a satisfying balance where the rural activity of hunting and engaging with nature is integrated with the lucrative modern urban lifestyle. Vo07, who studies forest economics, assumed the high amounts of wildlife surrounding urban areas were caused by market forces because people are willing to pay for hunting experiences close to the cities. He figured this was a key effect of hunting in Sweden and how it is becoming more urbanized and materialistic. Vo07 mentioned further modern developments which were Youtube videos and spending more time at the shooting range. Youtube videos are being used to film and broadcast videos of hunting but also tutorials for hunters with both negative and positive consequences such as the sharing of information but also threatening the way hunting is trying to frame itself by filming less tasteful hunting events. Distrust or criticism of other hunters or groups is often noted in answers, whether it is foreign hunters or hunters in other regions of the country such as areas further north. Variations in hunting practice are common and it has even been stated that *"there are equally many theories of wildlife management as there are hunters"* (vo04). However, even if there is distrust of other hunters there exists an interest to introduce more people to hunting and especially young people. Several respondents are encouraged by what they view as a rising interest in hunting and actively engage in promoting it, such as holding classes, forming hunting groups and reaching out to urban dwellers to reconnect with the countryside through hunting;

Extract 20: "... that there are so many old people and they are something that is dying out more and more, so it is also fun when we get something new, and even makes people living in the city understand that "this is how you hunt". This is how you care for nature and they want to get back in touch with nature again because there are a lot nature experiences and so on. The shot itself is just one and a half seconds..." (vo03)

Communicating that hunting is more than just 'shooting animals for fun' is very important for all respondents, at the same time distancing themselves from the image of what they consider unethical hunting. What is evident in respondents' answers is the importance of learning the entirety of the hunting process and understanding that there is much more to hunting than just shooting. Knowledge and practical skills are used to perform a multitude of tasks such as identifying sights and sounds, tracking, understanding the behaviour of prey, safety, shooting and processing the carcass properly. Several respondents mention that they do favour different parts of hunting, what they consider most interesting such as processing meat or even the time spent preparing before the hunt. Neither does anyone deny that the aim is to kill animals. What respondents try to communicate is the experience that happens along the way when hunting that comes with engaging in the long hunting process and the intensity of

the situation. Killing also adds a somewhat morose or heavier meaning to the experience for some. There is a significance to the experience gained when engaging in a full hunting process, as illustrated by respondent vo06 when he was asked about the benefits of introducing more urban dwellers to hunting;

Extract 21: "And then to make people understand that it is not about slaying animals, but in the end it leads to it, but there is something else that happens along the way that is perhaps the most important, and that is, I think, an important thing to convey to people who are not as acquainted." (vo06)

4.4 Hunter immersion:

Immersion into hunting and thus one's surroundings during a hunt appears to be a much desired effect especially among younger respondents. There is a common enthusiasm for a more action packed experience than the standard 'beginner' position of lookout, where you sit in the same place waiting for wildlife to appear. Vo06 describes that the lookout position and not owning land leads him to feel more like a "guest" when hunting; someone who is not fully involved in the hunt but more on the periphery of what is happening. The desire for a stronger nature experience and immersion through personal struggle and solitude is expressed clearly in this quote;

Extract 22: "Then I would rather have a dog, for example, and maybe not focus so much on large hunts with plenty of people, I probably would rather hunt alone in the woods or with friend for small game; birds or hares for example. It becomes more of a nature experience if you get to walk by yourself in a large forest landscape and preferably that it should be difficult to hunt, not just shooting just because you want to, but that you should strive to achieve a result, I think that is important." (vo06)

However, the interesting thing is that even if other respondents have not expressed themselves in the same manner, they have in fact mentioned that they desire a similar effect. This could be discerned by the clear trend of respondents wanting to have their own hunting dogs. This was something that stood out among the majority of respondents who had more recently started hunting, probably because those who had hunted for a longer time already had their own hunting dogs. The clear popularity of hunting with your own dogs can be attributed to several reasons. Hunting with dogs appears to add to the significance and immersion of the hunting experience, as well as being a more vigorous role. The interaction between the hunter and a well-trained dog is described as being very satisfying and the result of much effort. One answer about hunting with dogs by vo07 links back to the same elements of immersion and even the solitude of vo06's previous quote;

Extract 23: "Once you have a dog and hunt alone it becomes more of a nature experience, you go into the woods and then you do not know what happens, it becomes more adventurous in there and no matter how many you are in the forest, when I walk into the woods with my dog, and so, unlike when sitting on lookout and I become dependent on others, but as soon as I enter the forest alone with the dog, everything becomes quite uninteresting, it is me and my dog who work." (vo07)

Both vo06 and vo07 speak of the solitary experience when hunting with a dog, whether in a team or alone in the North of Sweden. Vo07 highlights reasons why hunting with dogs is so desired among respondents such as stating how it adds to the adventure. There is a type of emancipation of the hunter's efforts along with it being a more active role in the hunting team. Hunting with dogs is therefore described as a more exciting and personal contribution to the hunt where the cooperation between the hunter and dog becomes a more immersive experience. Nature experience is in many ways the aim of immersion, to experience the natural environment in a personal and intimate manner as an observer or active participant in the natural environment.

Extract 24: "You get to see such an incredible amount of events and spectacles, I have seen deer give birth which is quite insane, it looks fantastic! Get to see lots of different animals in their environment, it is often that you do not shoot, you just sit and watch and just get to see how animals behave in their environments, it is very rewarding." (Vo04)

These are intense and very memorable experiences that often last a lifetime and also considered a main reason for hunting. Hunting is a reason for going outside and taking a break from the mundane, being outside in nature is considered comfortable, relaxing, exciting, triggering or scary and so on. Going out into the forest to hunt is mentioned by a vast majority to be nice and calming, where you can just sit and look around or get away from everything. Hunting appears to deliver a multitude of experiences that are all memorable and often considered enjoyable;

Extract 25: Partly because I think it is exciting, it is like a little bit of an adrenaline junkie warning, but then you drag yourself into the forest, you're forced to go out into forest and it is so incredibly nice, sitting in there, and if there are no animals you just sit there in peace and relax and feel good." (Vo05)

Respondents recount stories and refer to hunting as a great way to experience nature. However, they often argue that hunting is not the only way to experience nature although the knowledge and experience they have gained through hunting has also exposed them to a way of being in nature that is arguably unique. Respondents, including vo01, vo02, vo03, vo09 and vo10, have commented directly on the ignorance of the general population about both

rural areas and nature. There is consensus that general society has a low understanding of the animals that surround them, not being able to identify bird types or sounds.

Extract 26: "I received a call about a wildlife accident that involved an antelope, I was like 'ok?'." (Vo01)

The antelope in *vo01*'s quote was actually a deer, proving how oblivious some people are to the environment that surrounds them. There are mentions that there is generally a shallower understanding of the environment among the public compared to hunters, yet people who do not hunt are still fascinated by wildlife and especially children according to *vo01*. Seeing a wolverine, bear, elk or other wildlife is exciting and sometimes very rare however, when hunting the opportunities to experience wildlife in their natural habitat are greater. These experiences are memorable and also part of an immersion in nature through interaction and understanding. There is an idea that a hunter is part of the ecosystem, another actor within the natural process. Respondents describe their understanding of natural systems and systems of production in the countryside. Among several of the respondents is also the mention of hunters "maintaining a balance", this is often seen as a role they perform within wildlife management but also a role they play in the coexistence of rural productive services; especially forestry and crop farming. Hunters, unlike ornithologists according to *vo03*, have a more inclusive or holistic view of natural environments and wildlife. Some respondents attributing Sweden's increase in wildlife to hunting and *vo04* adding that not-hunted species thrive by living in areas conserved for game.

Several respondents speak of managing wildlife in order to keep "balance". The arguments follow that if hunters didn't manage wildlife then there would be large booms and busts in animal populations through famine or infectious disease which could affect both pets and people. Some respondents argue this point more than others who are neutral on whether nature should be allowed to "manage itself". Often those with slightly more traditional hunter upbringing would argue for hunting being necessary in management of the countryside and nature. However, management and balance does not only refer to wildlife populations but also to the interest of other people in rural areas. Farmers are mentioned as beneficiaries of hunting especially protective hunting on crop fields, one respondent stating that wildlife management would probably be much more important to him if he were a farmer. Especially respondents with rural connections speak of maintaining a balance of interests in the countryside; foresters and farmers do not want wildlife to ruin their crops and trees and hunters provide them with a service. Yet there are also groups who favour an abundance of wildlife such as tourists and nature enthusiasts. The role of hunters is therefore not only important for the welfare of wildlife, but also a vital part of the functioning of rural and natural environments. Nonetheless, this role only works if the hunter takes into account the interests of all other groups that utilize nature and the countryside, *vo09* illustrates it as a "circle" of balance;

Extract 27: "It is a fairly large circle really ... forest owners should be happy that their plants do not get eaten, hunters should be pleased that there are moose to shoot, and farmers should not be angry about their crops being destroyed, but there should still be animals for hunters, there is this balance that must be reached." (vo09)

The hunter's role as an active part in managing the countryside (and nature) is therefore conveyed in some of these narratives. Several respondents consider hunting as vital to the health of wildlife and the rural communities in Sweden, however respondent vo05 is doubtful over how much hunting is actually wildlife care or management, but still argues that hunting is a lifestyle that is very close to nature. Nevertheless, all respondents illustrate that they have a good overview of the interactions between humans and wildlife even if their opinions may vary. Hunting seems to be able to immerse a person into the surrounding environment as an active role in the ecosystem. Arguments against hunter involvement and the killing of wildlife are brought up and counteracted by respondents because there is an understanding of what is considered natural or beneficial, that perhaps varies from that of general society;

Extract 28: "... that nature is also very tough; if there is someone who is slightly worse or looks strange or so, nature will choose to remove those individuals; if a calf, for example, is born a bit weird or the like, then there is no chance that nature will choose to preserve it, it just requires too much energy." (vo09)

Extract 29: "This 'natural way' that everyone is talking about, that it will take care of itself, I do not really believe it, because, or I believe in it if it really is allowed to attend to itself, but now people affect everything else as well, so to suddenly let a small part attend to itself like hunting and wildlife it would be very problematic, so to not have any hunting in Sweden would be very difficult." (vo04)

Killing is viewed as a necessary part of nature, without hunting respondents predict not only the suffering of farmer's crops, but also the spread of disease and more animals moving into urban areas where the food they eat is not what they are adapted to. There is also the reasoning that humans already affect most of nature and wildlife and that hunters are often necessary for mediating the clash between the two. Vo01 works with leading wildlife out of urban areas and into more natural habitats and other hunters work with tracking down animals in car accidents and so on. The hunter is immersed into a necessary role of managing an ecosystem that consists of both humans and wildlife. The approach is not that wildlife and humans should be separated but that there is great value in keeping society in touch with nature and that people should know about the nature that surrounds them;

Extract 30: "Then they have no knowledge, you do not want to remove all wildlife, you have to learn from the little we have left, it is important for everyone to be educated about animals and nature as well, we're not creating a sterile city, that is not the aim." (vo01)

Human involvement in nature is unavoidable and the hunter is part of mediating and managing that involvement. A sense of stewardship for wildlife and habitats is what can be derived from many of the answers. Stewardship for nature is what many hunters consider themselves involved with. Stewardship and an active role in natural ecosystems is a type of immersion however, some respondents have also spoken about hunting as an instinctual and a natural part of themselves. Respondent *vo11* describes hunting as a “*primeval force*” that, if not satisfied, is expressed in other ways such as gambling or competitive activities;

Extract 31: "I definitely think it is genetic on my part, like I feel, it is some primeval force. There is no logical explanation for my will to hunt. It is there. Like eating, procreating and sleeping and all these needs, it is like hunting, it is primeval." (vo11)

Hunting is not only experiencing nature but also a way to get in touch with what some respondents consider natural in themselves, a natural behaviour. The role of the hunter is more likened to that of any other animal; hunting is instinctive in humans just as in other predators trying to survive. Hunting satisfies *vo11*'s needs so that they do not have to be met through other means; “*as long as I get to hunt then I do not need to do much more really.*” (*vo11*). This is similar to *vo07*'s previous comment about hunting being a *desire* that some people need to satisfy by spending money on equipment to keep the hunting “alive” as these people do not go out hunting enough.

Hunting is also a very masculine activity, two of the respondents are female in this study; *vo05* and *vo09*. Both of these respondents commented on what it means to hunt as a female in a very male dominated activity. *Vo11* voiced that the urge to hunt is probably stronger in men than in women. *Vo05* and *vo09* expressed their various reasons for wanting to hunt.

Extract 32: "That I started hunting is enough, I have always found it interesting with, without sounding crazy, weapons and military-like stuff, but still not become actual militant, and sneak around in the forest and stuff." (vo05)

Vo05 has an interest in some traditionally masculine activities like weapons and the military, hunting is a way to indulge that desire. For *vo09* hunting is a family tradition and her brother was taught at a younger age than herself whilst she and her sister were taught when their “*dad matured a little*”. Both of these women feel a lot of pressure to perform and fit into the male group dynamic. Even if there still exists a certain pressure to perform as a female

hunter there is no real difference in the expression of hunting morale and what pulls them to the activity compared to other male respondents. What determines their perspectives more seems to be their upbringing. Vo09 considers hunting to be a very natural activity and a good way to interact with nature. If respondents no longer could hunt they would find other ways to satisfy their needs by going on nature hikes or other activities. Many who started hunting later in their lives have tried other methods before they started hunting, which are sometimes considered equally good. These respondents do not consider hunting essential to their lives but they still value it highly and would want to continue hunting. For others it is harder to imagine their life without hunting. All respondents agree that hunting provides them with a very holistic and broad understanding of how nature and the countryside works. Vo06 argues that people engaged in hunting develop a deeper understanding of what nature is; that it is not just a bunch of trees and that it is very valuable to people and future generations. When asked to describe what that *value* is, he references his knowledge of economics and states that;

Extract 33: "It is highly subjective, that is the value of having it close, for example, there are ways to calculate it, but I do not think they are very good, property price method and the travel-time method, and so but, the main thing is, it is that people move in the forest. Look at the city forest in Uppsala, how would you evaluate the urban forest? How do people who cycle through the city forest in the morning and think 'ah, it is pretty quiet and peaceful here' and relax a little bit, how would they evaluate the urban forest in their daily lives? Would they be willing to pay 20 SEK for cycling through there? They would probably not, but the value is certainly quite high anyway, but they have like no way, they can't pay, because it is difficult to put money on it but it is easier to put an appreciation on it." (vo06)

He describes that people value their connection with nature but not through the medium of money. Nature has a very high value but setting a price to that value is not an effective means of expressing it. Through hunting respondents engage and immerse themselves in nature in such a way that they learn to value it on a different level than before or other people in society. They see the interactions of ecosystems through their own acting positions as hunters, learning that nature is an entirety which they are part of and also the rest of society.

5 Analysis

At the beginning of the results the importance of a hunter's background was revisited as well as some details of the group of respondents participating in the interviews, how they started hunting and why they continue to hunt. 9 out of the 11 respondents in the interview were younger than 30 years old and hence represent a fairly young demographic, especially compared to the average age of hunting permit takers whom are between 60-69 years old. This could mean that most of the answers are reflective of younger perhaps more modern attitudes to hunting. Some of the answers might be generalized as representative of wider hunting values, seeing as the respondents often agreed with one another despite age differences; their answers also often reflected what has been established in literature and prior studies. The sense of ethics also correlated well with the ethical guidelines on Jägarförbundet's website. Each respondents' upbringing was also fairly indicative of their individual perspective on hunting, especially when discussing the necessity for hunting in wildlife and rural management. A Table illustrating some basic hunting influences, outlining respondent upbringing, can be found in the Method section. These factors are all important and shape the opinions of the group of respondents (Hansen et al., 2012; Persson 1981).

In this section there are three headings, each leading up to whether hunting can reconcile people with nature and sources of production.

In the first section there is a critique of modern influences on hunting, how modernity is influencing hunting and how negative influences can obscure the opportunity for hunters to reconnect with nature. The threat of commercialization is the main issue that is discussed. These factors could push hunting away from its traditional roots, which in turn could mean that hunting no longer re-establishes people with nature, instead becoming a continuation of the artificial and alienating environments created by modernity.

The second section is about being a hunter in Sweden, referring to how hunters view general society and the relation between the hunter community and the rest of society and particularly through the trading and diffusion of wild-game meat. This section also ponders what it means to be a hunter in modern Sweden and its benefits and difficulties.

Finally this leads into a section titled "*What is nature*" in which the concepts "*natural*" and "*nature*" will be defined from a hunter's point of view. Whether hunting does provide respite from the negative aspects of a modern world through reconnecting hunters with these so called natural environments and sources of production will also be explained.

Throughout the three chapters the Marxist theory of alienation will be applied to the narratives in order to explore if and how hunting can provide a connection with nature. Through experiences and finding a role in natural environments hunters can discover that; “The advantage of seeing values in nature is that it provides an immediate sense of ontological security and permanence” (Harvey, 1993 p.10).

5.1 Critique of modern influences on hunting

Throughout the study influences of modernity have been discussed in both the empirical material and the narratives. This section discuss how hunting can both overcome the adverse effects of modernity on society as well as how it can succumb to them. Nonetheless not all modern influences are only negative.

As mentioned there are several modern influences and trends that are affecting and even changing hunting. Both technological advances such as Youtube and the increase in women who hunt are modern developments influencing hunting. Youtube can be both positive and negative development according to narratives by vo07 who commented that it can be used for online tutorials but also enforce a negative image of hunting through irresponsible and sensitive footage. Hunting is trying to frame itself positively as a sustainable activity that connects people with nature through the production of food (Peterson et al., 2010) and public support depends much on the established utilitarian component of hunting as opposed to only trophy or recreational hunting (Ljung, 2014; Ednarsson, 2010). Consequently, hunters who publish videos without an educational or utilitarian theme could diminish the reputation of hunting in general society. However, educational videos that can inform hunters could potentially help to diffuse hunting knowledge more widely and help hunters who may not have the traditional hunter upbringing with a mentor. The effects of an increase in female hunters is also difficult to determine because it is a fairly recent trend. Respondent vo05 and vo09 both hunted in groups with mostly male members and reckoned they were often treated in a “kinder” manner than their male colleagues which falls in line with Gunnarsdotter’s description of the situation in her study of Locknevi (2005). Vo05 expressed an interest in weapons and hunting equipment which is contradictory to some predictions in the literature about female influences on hunting. Nevertheless, these are very new developments and their influences over hunting and its reputation could grow to become more significant in time, which would make for interesting study.

Access to hunting is becoming harder as local community ties are being severed and the ownership of land is gaining more importance as illustrated by the main share of the meat being assigned to the landowner (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). As people become more urbanized connections to the countryside are severed potentially leading to an increase in hunting tourism (Gunnarsdotter, 2015) and that those with more money will be favored by the situation as they can pay for the opportunity to hunt. Vo06 expresses that because he does not own he does

not need to invest as much time and energy managing it which, is similar to those who pay for commercial hunts, they are “guests”. Commercial hunting is detrimental in several ways including that in order to market the hunting experience for commercial consumption, one must break it down into quantifiable parts that are assigned a monetary value that can be sold to customers (Gunnarsdotter, 2005). The hunting experience is broken down into objects which cuts the ties between components that make up the hunting process (Evernden, 1987 in Gunnarsdotter 2005). Commercial hunting is a popular topic of debate for both academics and hunters. Respondents such as *vo01* and *vo11*, (both traditional hunters) expressed dislike towards commercial hunting and the hunters who would buy commercially available hunts.

Most negative comments were centered on the hunting ethic and sometimes linked to modern influences such as commercialisation or urbanization by respondents. A skewed or underdeveloped sense of ethics was considered to be the failure to properly learn how to hunt and develop a responsible hunting perspective that is sustainable and considers the welfare of wildlife. If a hunter pays for a commercial hunting package; shooting animals that may have been raised as livestock/farmed (Peterson et al. 2010) and has employees handle most of the hunting process, then this hunter is engaging in an artificial process that enforces alienation from the realities of nature and personal achievement (Ollman, 1976; Peterson et al, 2010). This in turn could exasperates an alienated understanding of natural systems and hinder the development of a sustainable hunter ethic. The concern seems to be that if a hunter buys a hunt, he no longer fully participates or understands the process of hunting, hence, as argued earlier, the potential to overcome alienation is obscured on several levels, depending on the hunting method. The people who market the hunt feel a strong pressure to deliver an experience which falls in line with what *vo04* states in *extract 18*. The hunting experience becomes more stressful as the customer has paid a lot of money and wants a delivered product, *vo04* summarizes his point by saying that “*you mess with nature and it goes its own way*”. The experience delivered is no longer authentic because of all of the pressures that are added when selling a product and experience. *Vo03* pointed out that when he worked at a commercial hunt the experience was *delivered* meaning that the buyers only experienced parts of the hunting process and were aided in the activity, meaning that they were alienated from the significant parts of the work process and their own efforts (Ollman, 1976). Nevertheless, the commercialization of hunting is gradually becoming more popular in Sweden (Alatalo, 2003) and not all respondents were only negative about commercialization either, arguing that landowners should be able to profit from their land and that it provided hunters with new opportunities for different game and hunting techniques. *Vo07* attributed market forces, also from commercial hunting, to the increase in wildlife around urban areas as well as commenting on how hunting is becoming more materialistic.

Nevertheless, commercialization often risks increasing alienation between the hunter and nature because of the aforementioned problems of creating artificial environments, dividing up the hunting process, serving up “game”, favouring the wealthy and so on. Another alienating aspect that ties into the commercialization of hunting is the concept of exchange value symbolized by for example money (Harvey, 1993). This has presented a problem by respondent vo06 in *Extract 33*, who studied Forest Economics. Vo06 argue that we may appreciate nature significantly without placing a high monetary value on it, at least not a price that is adequately representative of nature’s worth because of the discussed issues with using monetary valuations. Money divides, replaces and standardizes worth and excludes the idea of an ecosystem functioning in its entirety as something significantly larger and more complex than the sum of its parts. Conversely, non-commercial hunting, according to a majority of the interviews, enlightened the respondents to the idea of whole functioning ecosystems and humans as part of that ecosystem.

5.2 A hunter in modern Sweden

Hunting wildlife is the aim of hunting, and meat production is the most tangible way hunting functions in society and can remind people of their dependency on natural systems. Hunting’s ability to change peoples’ relations to wildlife where they can become more utilitarian but also have a stronger sense of stewardship for nature, goes in opposition to some societal norms where animals are viewed more humanistically but buying meat at the supermarket is acceptable. Hunting can likewise be a self-realizing activity where the possibility exists to appropriate nature into oneself in contrast to modern capitalist labour and the separation of consumer and producer.

Respondent’s ideas about how hunting formed or changed their perspectives of nature and wildlife highlights how much more aware the respondents felt about their surroundings in nature as well as gaining a new understanding of ecosystems and the interaction of wildlife within them. They learn to experience nature differently because of the multiple functions that the hunting process contains. Regarding perceptions of nature, according to the study by Ericsson and Heberlein, hunters base their perceptions and attitudes on their experiences rather than a general emotional response that other individuals who spend less time in nature do (2002). The respondents highlighted how hunting heightened their understanding of natural systems of production; meaning wildlife and the ecosystem. They identified new sights and sounds that suddenly had a context within the environment hence overcoming a separation in knowledge and experience from sites of production and consumption (Peterson *et al.*, 2010).

In line with their experiences respondents also described their ideas of wildlife, how they view wildlife and how their perceptions of wildlife have changed depending on when they started hunting. All respondents expressed some sort of interests in wildlife, whether it was fascination and fun or welfare. Respondent *vo03* recommended hunting to anyone who is interested in wildlife, asserting that it would *change their view of nature and animals* from what some narratives indicate are emotionally based perceptions of animals to perceptions based in knowledge and experience (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). The changing from more emotionally based ideals of animals derived from having pets but also fairytales and the personification of animals is also clear in *Extract 6* by *vo05* - the respondent with probably the least traditional hunting background in this study. Nevertheless, even if hunters end up perceiving animals in a more utilitarian way, it does not change how much the respondents, or hunters in general, cared for the welfare of animals, even if they now understood and cared for wildlife in, perhaps, a different way. Killing animals for reasons such as maintaining healthy populations or food often falls within their ethical framework that is learned and developed over time.

Furthermore in Ericsson and Heberleins' study hunting can promote a stronger sense of stewardship for wildlife and nature because hunters are more likely to engage in outdoor activities and have more centralized and stronger attitudes about wildlife and nature management than the rest of society (2002). Even if education levels are increasing in Sweden promoting an interest in environmental causes, the lack of experience can often lead to unfocused and weaker engagement (Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002). Hunters and other groups with direct experience of natural systems such as wildlife and ecology stand to be stronger advocates for policy makers and also "comprehend and support goals designed to meet a balance of social values, recreational opportunities and a sustainable use of natural resources" (Holsman 2000, in Ericsson and Heberlein, 2002 p306). It correlates with answers from mainly the respondents with more traditional hunting backgrounds who believe that hunting maintains a balance not only with wildlife population but also the interests of various people who also live and work with natural resources in the countryside, specifically mentioning farmers and foresters. Ericsson and Heberlein conclude that an increase in hunters on a general policy level would promote healthy ecosystems and biodiversity and that promoting outdoor activity and hands-on experience in nature could help reduce negative impacts of human activity on the quality of the environment (2002). This correlates with respondents answers in arguments regarding the consequences and impact of hunting where it becomes vital to develop a sense of responsibility for one's actions in nature which leads to a strong ethical framework. When the respondents express worry over the killing of game and the time they spent training to avoid mistakes, they show that they understand the impact of their actions in nature, responsibility has transferred to their hands in contrast to people in the supermarket or other consumptive behaviour.

People who consume products produced by separate agents in a capitalist market often give up control over the production process and therefore the consequences that they may have, which follows with the risk society argument. People who lose control over the effects of their consumption can develop insecurities about what they are consuming and the effects of its production on the environment or otherwise (Mythen, 2004). Many respondents referred to meat production; *vo05* discussed her experience of visiting factory farms and the horrible conditions of the livestock, preferring how hunting allowed the animals she consumed to have a better quality of life and for the animal to food process to have been done *properly*. This opinion was voiced by all respondents who discussed the topic of meat production. Hunting allowed for the respondents to make connections for example between the materiality of food and “natural processes, such as life and death” (Peterson et al. 2010 p128). This is where the utilitarian component comes into place as respondents described their changed views on killing animals for food and as a part of the “natural circle” of wildlife management. Therefore, hunting as promoting an interest through engagement with natural systems also appears to provide an overview of human interactions in and dependency on natural systems.

However, there were mentions about having faced adversity with regards to hunting in interviews; *vo09* expressed that people in Stockholm would question why she hunted and viewed killing animals as something horrible, yet they would still buy meat at the supermarket. This logic did not make sense to her (see *Extract 10*) linking in with the distancing between consumers and producers and an alienated perspective where personally killing animals during a hunt is horrible and gruesome whilst buying industrially produced meat at the supermarket is acceptable. Why is this an alienated view? At first, it is possible to assume that there is a gap in knowledge and understanding over the production of meat and food, as already discussed; hunters are directly faced with the realities of killing to produce meat and understand the link between food and natural systems. A person who buys meat but criticizes hunters for killing and obtaining meat is probably not making the connection between natural processes, such as life and death, and the food on their plate (Peterson et al., 2010). Another example of the general obliviousness of natural surroundings and alienation from natural systems is mentioned by *vo01* who, as a professional hunter, was once called out to a traffic accident site involving what someone called an “*antelope*” when in reality the person had run their car into a deer. Antelopes do not exist in the wild in Sweden or even Europe, such a gap in basic knowledge about the environment was surprising to the respondent.

Hunters close the gap between producer and product by engaging in the production process themselves. For this reason they have been considered more “raw”, as stated by *vo03*, than the general population, as they are able to take matters into their own hands and deal with life and death. It is worth noting the degrees of “rawness” that varied between respondents where respondent *vo05* with an urban upbringing considered other hunters in her

team to be more desensitized to killing than herself because of their more extensive hunting backgrounds. The impression was that respondents with a rural background were more used to the blood and gore of slaughter than those with urbanized ones. This is also mentioned by Gunnarsdotter when she discussed the break from agrarian society by many modern hunters and how this could affect their perceptions of hunting and wildlife (2005). Hunters deal with the intensity of death which can sometimes be considered gruesome or even cruel, however, it can also be considered a reality and even mercy in some cases to kill animals in both hunting literature and the interviews. Death is part of a natural cycle and hunting is described as a part of that *circle* where humans can harvest game but also use their skills to guarantee survival by leaving out fodder during the winter and maintain healthy size populations. Nevertheless, the variations in perspective on hunting are numerous between people and hunters and also hunters and hunters.

Hunting is said to be a very comprehensive subject to study, to illustrate this it has been compared to ornithology during an interview and in literature. Ornithologists are described in the interview to have a more limited view of ecosystems where an abundance of birds is always an advantage, not considering balances in populations or natural cycles like hunters. In the Peterson et al. study, hunting is a much larger process that does not start and stop at the searching and cataloguing of species, but is a larger process where the animal is also killed and converted to food and, in order *“To succeed in this endeavour, hunters must intimately understand the natural life of game species in their habitat”* (2010, p131). Hence hunting can potentially provide people with a much broader understanding of natural systems. However intimate knowledge and understanding for species and ecosystems as seen in the results is gained from hunters engaging in the entire hunting process, learning it and being aware of the various important parts that together form the hunting activity. Respondents argued that limiting one's understanding and participation of hunting to just the shooting and killing of animals was a reductive approach to hunting that left out significant parts of the hunting experience, also relevant to the formation of a good hunter with a proper ethic. Engaging in the entire hunting process means the hunter learns much more, than, as previously argued, at some commercially bought hunts where most services are provided by various employees.

Non-commercial hunting allows for the respondents to control and oversee the labour process in the creation of the product. The labour involved in hunting according to the results is willingly performed by participants who even have a choice in how or to what degree they want to partake in hunting process. Some respondents favour the tracking of wildlife whilst others the processing of the meat, hence, they control their own labour process and participate in it willingly which is the opposite of alienated labour according to Ollman in his Marxists writings on alienation. In the responses we understand that the labour involved in hunting contrasts from the quote by

Ollman on alienated labour. The labour involved in hunting does not feel like a forced activity that “*mortifies man’s body and ruins his mind and in it he is uncomfortable and unhappy*” (Ollman, 1976) but instead the activity of hunting is witnessed to be quite the opposite. The hunters decide their hunting process and unlike alienated labour in a capitalist society, respondents also explain that they can feel relaxed and excited in nature. The narratives express feelings that are reflective of a pleasant environment during the hunt; it is awe-inspiring to be outside in nature and switches between exciting and calm through various moments. There can also be a sense of accomplishment when successfully shooting prey. Vo05 expressed particular pride over having meat in the freezer where she, due to her own efforts hunting, “*made sure that it was done right*” (Extract 9). Differing from alienated labour where the worker is alienated from the product in a sense that there is no self-realization from the efforts of their labour and no relation to the product they produce which is often owned by someone else (Ollman, 1976). The meat (or any other) product that the respondents may get is a result, a realization, of their efforts which they created and consume and enjoy. Their efforts in hunting do not relate to those of a person performing alienated labour who produces a product and has no right to it, but receives wages that can later on be spent on other products that have an anonymous background and are not related to the person's original working efforts (Ollman, 1976).

Another example of accomplishment is vo06 mentioning the need for struggle to enhance the nature experience. The respondent voices how the effort he puts into hunting are appropriately rewarded not only by material means, such as meat, but also by the experience itself which could mean a greater immersion into natural systems and/or stronger emotional reactions. Hunting allowed for the respondents to interact and use nature to their own advantage, again going against the norm of alienated labour where; “*While animals in the forest take whatever they need from their immediate surroundings, man is restricted in his use of objects to what their owners will allow, which is invariably less than his powers require*” (Ollman, 1976). This means that the hunters in this research are able to “appropriate” the objects of their natural surroundings during hunting as an act of self-realization by transforming objects in nature into something for their own personal purpose. Therefore, bridging alienation between themselves and the outer world (Ollman, 1976). However, the possibilities to overcome alienation from personal labour through hunting are dependent on the hunter’s engagement in the hunting process and how they chose to participate. If these aspects are eliminated through commercial hunting then the activity becomes just as alienated as any other form of capitalist labour (Ollman, 1976).

5.3 What is nature?

How do hunters define what is “nature” and “natural”. Hunting appears to have somehow affected the perspectives and opinions of respondents on a fundamental level. Here narratives about immersion, natural systems and balance are explored and whether hunting can alleviate alienation for individuals in a modern society.

The desire for what has been called “immersion” in this study came out of narratives explaining the desire for owning hunting dogs and hunting alone for small game. Increasing immersion is the name given to efforts taken to increase the ‘nature experience’ through intimate personal encounters with nature such as described in *Extract 24*, or other moments of solitude that are perhaps less spectacle but still very personal and engrossing. Hunting with dogs is something every respondent thought was interesting or desirable, several planning on obtaining their own in the future if they did not already have one. This was interesting because it was a very clear pattern among the respondents and also showed their enthusiasm for hunting as well as their desire to have a more active role in the hunting team and they depended more on their own efforts and cooperation with the dogs. When discussing labour in the last section, satisfaction is very much linked to personal effort and inclusion, *vo06* expressed that struggle is desired to enhance the experience and that cooperation with the dog allows the hunter to feel they are relying more on their own efforts compared to the lookout position during a hunt. Those who walk with the dogs do not often shoot which shows that the attraction is not really killing wildlife but creating an immersive experience and becoming a more active member of the hunt and in the team. Descriptions of the experience show that hunting with the dogs is often more intimate and the relationship to your dog is very important. The dog becomes useful, as much tool as pet, perhaps adding to the bond between person and dog. Together these factors, and especially hunting with dogs, shows that respondents probably enjoy the ideal of being more immersed in natural environments rather than approaching hunting as a group sport. The immersion experienced by the hunter is partly the hunter finding a desired role in the hunting team but also finding a place in nature and the ecosystem. In general the respondents displayed more of an interest in nature and wildlife than weapons and equipment.

Finding a role in the ecosystem is considered to be the hunter engaging directly with nature in a manner that some still consider very *natural*. *Vo09* consider hunting to be a good and natural way to be in and interact with nature according to many of her answers. She also describes nature as something that is efficient and unforgiving when necessary in *Extract 28* which is a very honest illustration of nature that appears to have come from her rural hunter background. Death is considered a natural process in general, killing wildlife is often the aim of hunting and it is also a vital part in population management. Respondent *vo01*, a fulltime professional hunter for the municipality, considers his job to be caring for wildlife not only through population management, but also winter

feeding and attracting wildlife to living in their natural habitat away from urban areas. *Vo04* considers hunting necessary for the management of wildlife especially as humans already have such a ubiquitous effect on the world, his argument in *Extract 29* follows that if one part of nature were to manage itself it would be very difficult. In several of the narratives there is agreement over hunters maintaining some kind of *balance*. That hunters have an active role in Sweden to manage wildlife populations and keep them healthy as well as managing the clash between society and nature. A clear illustration of this is when *vo09* uses the imagery of a “*circle*” to illustrate the functioning of nature and the interactions within it, not only between wildlife in an ecosystem but also between others who exploit rural areas such as farmers and foresters. She describes the hunter as part of a balance where managing wildlife and human interests is very difficult but also vital for the functioning of nature and rural areas. Balance in nature is seemingly a very human concept as nature itself is often very volatile especially considering the argued booms and busts in wildlife populations if unregulated. Hunters acknowledge this when they speak of booms and busts in population sizes and the negative effects of famine or disease among wildlife populations, which they can spread to pets and humans. As *vo01* puts it: he does not want to create a “*sterile city*” devoid of wildlife. Some respondents, especially those more committed to hunting, consider themselves an active part in maintaining balance, rather than outright separation of human and natural systems. Respondents consider exposure to nature and wildlife important for people in society, both children and adults. They acknowledge that nature is fascinating and it is somehow healthy to get out and interact with natural systems, whether through hunting or other outdoor activities. Being outside in natural environments is proven to be beneficial to human health (Peterson et al., 2010), whether this is linked to overcoming alienation in society is hard to determine but appears likely according to arguments concerning the respondents enjoying being out in nature in the previous section. Respondents are optimistic about people exploring natural environments and learning about their surroundings.

It is evident in the narratives that hunting effects one’s perspective of nature. The respondents do not seem to view themselves as separate entities from nature when hunting, many wanted to pursue hunting and become more immersed in the experience and natural environments. Other respondents discussed that they had an important role in managing wildlife and natural environments and keeping a balance. These arguments show that the hunters (respondents) find a role in natural environments and interact with the ecosystem on similar terms through for example tracking and killing. Mentions of being part of a “*circle*” also are indicative of hunters finding a role in natural systems. It would seem that the respondents have a similar idea of how one should view natural systems as academic literature describing how one overcomes alienation. The crux is that one should view nature as a complete ecosystem in which the humans are actors instead of viewing “‘society’ as a bounded system interacting with another bounded system called the ‘biosphere’” (Harvey, 1993 p33). The respondents when they immerse

themselves in natural systems seem to not distinguish between where society begins and nature ends. *VoII* considers hunting to be a “*primeval force*”, a “*need*” in *Extract 31* and therefore that is something natural for him to do, a natural way to interact with wildlife and nature. The main point is that hunters do not necessarily see themselves as people separate from nature unlike in modern society. Recent terms such as “ecosystem services” only enforce the idea of nature being a separate system that interacts and supplies society. The idea that society does not somehow exist in nature “looks precisely to be the product of alienated reason, having no historical or well-grounded scientific justification” (Harvey, 1993, p33). Respondents in general through their direct interaction and exposure to nature have, in line with Petersons study, come to realize human reliance on natural systems for both their own health and survival (2010). Understanding that people rely on nature and need it not only for its resources but also for other effects such as health and self-realization, through appropriation of natural sources, is a vital understanding. It can bridge alienation and anxiety caused by living in modern society as well as create a more sustainable perspective of natural systems. Fundamentally, it is our consciousness that separates us from nature and modernity probably just enhances this effect. Reconciling with nature is not about reverting to antiquated ideals of living as some schools of thought may suggest such as social ecology (Harvey, 1993).

Marxist often believe that there are new ideas and ways of thinking that can forward society into a more sustainable and less alienated existence (Harvey, 1993). Hunting can provide some respite and integrates the modern with the old and exposes the hunter to natural systems whilst simultaneously being a part of society. Modernity can obscure the possible connection that hunters form with nature through commercialisation and monetisation but, other changes are also happening that are not detrimental such as increase in women who hunt. Understanding how societal developments encroach upon hunting is therefore important in order to balance both the new and old and maintain what hunters consider to be proper standards of practice and ethics. Hunters are still a controversial group in Sweden which is why they often consider it important to communicate their perspectives of hunting and their own role as hunters. Hunters can provide a service in nature as well as practice an activity that lets them experience nature and wildlife intimately. By interviewing hunters in Sweden and puzzling together their perspectives of nature and wildlife it is clear that some hunters have come to understand humans a part of natural systems; humans are an actor in natural systems which they themselves are a part of, continuously affecting and adapting to their surroundings. They have a wider knowledge of the nature that surrounds us in different environments, from cities to forests, and are therefore more engaged in it as a result. Defining nature as a circle in which humans function is perhaps seeing a “whole system” rather than two separate ones. What matters is that some hunters appear to value the opportunity to come out and close the gap between the modern human and the environments that exist around us and sustain us. Further study could perhaps reveal more conclusive

evidence of hunters transcending the alienation gap, perhaps their perspective could then be communicated to general modern society and create a more sustainable understanding humans as part of nature.

Transcending Alienation

Hunting is perhaps not necessary in a modern society, we can buy meat and some even argue we do not need it in our diets. Perhaps other activities will replace hunting in the future? Nevertheless, hunting could provide us with a more realistic view of nature not grounded in emotionally based moralizing but instead experience and, desirably, responsibility or respect. Hunting created several immersive roles in natural systems, to sum them up:

- Part of a "circle"; food and the production chain
- Wildlife managers
- Utilitarian views of wildlife based in experience
- Hunting as a natural habit

Hunting enlightened respondents to being part of a natural "circle" whether it meant animals perpetuating themselves through the death of others or even extending towards the various human actors who exploit or appreciate natural resources and the balance between their various interests, such as; farmers, hunters, foresters and tourists. As "wildlife managers" hunters had a role buffering the interaction between humans and wildlife. Some hunters assigned themselves the role of acting as a buffer between humans and wildlife in several situations from dealing with wildlife in car accidents to managing populations in urban areas. Hunting having been discussed as a natural habit was also done directly and indirectly whether people saw it as an inherited instinct or as a desire that sometimes needs to be satisfied through buying gear, using shooting ranges or going out hunting. It also enabled respondents to appropriate natural resources through using knowledge, skills and sometimes struggle to achieve their goals in nature.

Through these immersive roles hunters understood themselves as engaging in nature and also becoming part of it, bridging the alienation gap as humans in nature. Nonetheless, hunters themselves were also affected by processes of modernization, and commercialization in particular. There was not only conflict between hunters and non-hunting society, but also hunters and hunters. So called "bad hunting practices" threaten the fragile image of hunting and how the activity tries to frame itself in general society. Some hunters expressed confusion or concern about commercial practices in hunting often portrayed in media, especially trophy hunting. There were indications of a divide between hunters, particularly the new generation of urban based hunters and more traditional rural hunters, nevertheless, these concerns were not really enforced by any of the respondents' answers. In general, everyone involved in the study displayed a sense of responsibility and ethic with regards to the treatment of wildlife. What these tensions raise though is the fragile status of hunting as a valid activity in a modern society

which, if done “properly” and within a well formed ethical framework, is valuable to how we percieve and value wildlife, nature and ourselves as part of nature.

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Appendix 1: Summary of Field Diary

That day started very early in the morning and the hunting team was allowed to shoot wildboar, deer, stag, fox and hare but the objective was wild boar. The hunting took place on private grounds but the landowner was too old to join but he is entitled to the largest share in the meat. The team itself was organized and consisting only of men/boys. I was invited along with a friend to accompany one of the more experienced hunters as he walked with the dogs. Hunting with dogs is a traditional rural custom in Sweden and watching the cooperation between the two dogs and their owner provided valuable insight into the way people and animals can work together efficiently utilizing their skills. Rules and ethics were strictly followed, from safety to the strict practice that an animal should not be chased until exhaustion; the dogs would flush out the prey and pull away after a short chase, returning and “reporting” back to her master. The dogs were also tracked using a GPS device to map their running pattern showing the dedication that goes in to their training. Walking through shrubbery in the snow was a challenge but the hunter accompanying me seemed used to it and was much more adept at navigating the environment. During the hunt I was shown and educated about signs and tracks left by the animals living in the area, from damage on trees to traces of resting places different wildlife had used. Through informal conversation with the hunter we discussed the separation of hunters/hunting and city dwellers who judge hunting negatively. The hunter also compared new young hunters with himself, explaining that when he was young he learned by hunting small game (foxes, hares and so on) using an air rifle before he started hunting with a rifle. He “inherited” hunting from his family and his wife, daughter and son hunt.

The hunter also mentioned that he does not like people coming straight out of taking the hunting exam and not knowing how to properly behave during a hunt.

Later we heard barking from one of the dogs because she had found and was chasing a wild boar – we saw her chasing its black silhouette against the snow, standing on the top of a hill. Later there were 3 shots, not sure if it was the same boar that we saw running. There are rules that the animal is not allowed to suffer, if someone has only injured an animal it must be tracked down and euthanized. This did not happen during the excursion.

In conversation with other hunters in the team there were stories where animals were personified, mainly when one hunter was describing a fox that “outsmarted” him that same day that he recognizes from other times. Smart foxes are a common stereotype (in stories and folklore) but the stories about smart and cunning animals are common in hunting stories (Gunnarsdotter, 2005).

During the hunt the man I followed was very knowledgeable and confident about our bearings, safety and which direction we were taking despite the fact that we were not following a road. There was also some enjoyable banter on the radio and teasing, sometimes about the presence of women. There was a fika/lunch break and around a fire and at the end of the day it was a successful hunt for the hunters who shot two wild boars and a stag.

Appendix 2: Interview questions

- 1: *Vad sammanfattar ordet jakt för dig?*
2. *Vad fick dig att börja jaga?*
- Vem introducerade dig?
3. *Berätta om när du fick din jaktlicens.*
- Hur gammal var du?
4. *Har du märkt några nya trender inom jaktsamhället?*
5. *Hur ofta jagar du?*
6. *Hur stor roll spelar jakten i ditt liv?*
7. *Hur jagar du/vilken jakt föredrar du?*
8. *Hur upfattar du din omgivning när du jagar?*
9. *Skulle du kalla dig själv jägare?*
10. *Ser du dig själv jaga in i framtiden? Hur länge?*