WP1 The cultural meaning of hunting Ketil Skogen

Hunt is an interdisciplinary international research project, financed by the EU’s 7th Framework program, looking into the wider meaning of hunting in the 21st century.

**Background**
Debates over hunting also revolve around the issue of hunters’ relationships with wildlife and the land where they hunt. Do hunters merely seek excitement and recreation, or are they in fact responsible conservationists? We studied how hunters in Norway, Scotland, Croatia and Spain understand their role in nature, and how they relate to conservation.

**Key findings**
For many hunters, the idea the idea of caring for the wildlife and the land is crucial to their understanding of what hunting is about. The basic premise is that due to long-term human interactions with nature, nature also needs to be managed – not only for people’s sake, but to maintain ecosystems. This engagement with wild animals is thought of as part of a deeper unity with nature, which means being part of nature in physical sense. Hunters claim that if humans are to be part of nature, we must also engage with it (e.g. as predators), but also as caretakers or stewards.

**Conclusions**
The idea of hunters as stewards contributes to the moral justification of hunting and, importantly, underpins a symbolic appropriation of the land where hunting takes place. Despite differences, hunters and conservationists share many thoughts and values. The idea of stewardship that many hunters nourish, points to potential grounds for increased cooperation between the two groups and could provide a starting point for building a consensus that might also prove valuable for reconciling apparently conflicting moralities from a management viewpoint.

Anke Fischer

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Further reading:


A summary of research findings from the Scottish case study, http://fp7hunt.net/Portals/HUNT/Reports/Scottish%20research%20briefings.pdf


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