

MEANINGS OF HUNTING IN GORSKI KOTAR,
CROATIA

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MEANINGS OF HUNTING IN GORSKI KOTAR, CROATIA

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the cultural and social aspects of hunting in the region of Gorski kotar, Croatia, by exploring meanings and perceptions of hunting to hunters and non-hunters. Specifically, it explored attitudes toward hunting, motivations to hunt, and the particular roles of hunting in the social and natural environment. Similar motivations for hunting were identified by both groups but their opinions regarding the relative importance of each motive varied greatly. Three levels of the function of hunting were recognized (i.e., personal benefits, services to local community and services to ecosystem). Hunting was perceived as an inseparable part of wildlife management and received a great level of support from all groups. This study helped to identify the challenges for hunting in Gorski kotar and indicated the potential strategies that can support the continuation of hunting in this region, and with it the benefits it provides the social and natural environment.

DEDICATION

To my loving parents, Katica and Marijan Kereži

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Symbols	xii
List of Abbreviations.....	xiii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Research problem	5
1.2. Research context.....	9
1.3. Purpose of the study	11
1.4. Thesis outline.....	14
2. Literature Review	16
2.1 An introduction: Changing nature of hunting	16
2.2 Definitions and types of hunting	20
2.3 Challenges of modern sport hunting: anti-hunting versus pro- hunting debate	23
2.4 Hunting and the Human dimensions of wildlife management	29

2.4.1	Understanding hunters from a human dimension perspective	30
2.4.2	The future of hunting: Understanding attitudes toward hunting	34
2.5	Widening the meanings of hunting: Cultural studies on hunting	40
2.5.1	Hunting for identity: masculinity, rurality and tradition in studies on hunting.....	41
3	Study area	52
4	Methods	62
4.1	Methods for collecting data	63
4.1.1.	Individual interviews	64
4.1.2.	Focus group	66
4.1.3.	Multi-method approach: using focus groups and individual interviews for gathering data	68
4.2	Data collection.....	71
4.3	Data analysis.....	77
4.3.1.	Familiarizing yourself with your data	79
4.3.2.	Generating initial codes	80
4.3.3.	Searching for themes	81
4.3.4.	Reviewing themes	82
4.3.5.	Defining and naming themes.....	83
4.3.6.	Producing the report	84
5	Results	85

5.1	Hunting community.....	89
5.1.1.	Sense of belonging (category)	89
5.1.2.	Sense of responsibility (category)	93
5.1.3.	The Proper hunter (category).....	95
5.2	Multiple dimensions of hunting.....	101
5.2.1.	Diversity of motivations (category).....	101
5.2.2.	Diversity of functions (category).....	109
5.3	Hunting for wildlife management	128
5.3.1.	Attitudes towards nature (category)	128
5.3.2.	Quest for balance (category)	132
5.3.3.	The notion of game management (category).....	134
5.4	Summary.....	139
6	Discussion and Conclusion.....	142
6.1	Hunting community.....	142
6.2	Multiple dimensions of hunting.....	150
6.3	Hunting for wildlife management	160
6.4	Conclusion.....	165
7	Bibliography	174
Appendix I: Interview schedule for semi structured interviews and focus groups with hunters		202

Appendix II: Interview schedule for semi structured interviews and focus groups with non-hunters	204
Appendix III: Example of line-by-line coding.....	206
Appendix IV: Example of categories with corresponding codes.....	207
Appendix V: Example of themes and their corresponding sub-themes (i.e., categories and sub-categories) and codes	210

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Information about focus group participants	72
Table 4.2 Information about interview participants	73
Table 4.3 Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis	79
Table 5.1 Themes and their corresponding categories and sub-categories	85
Table 5.2 Types of motivations	101
Table 5.3 Personal benefits to hunters (socio-cultural dimension)	110
Table 5.4 Benefits to local community (socio-cultural and socio-economic dimensions)	120
Table 5.5 Benefits to game populations/nature (ecological dimension)	126

List of Figures

Figure 3.1. Map of Croatia. Gorski kotar is highlighted in black	52
Figure 5.1. Definitions of hunting	135

List of Symbols

(Within participants' quotes)

(()) - word(s) inserted by the researcher for clearer understanding

() - word(s) estimated to be correct by the researcher due to recording anomalies or low sound quality

{ } - indicates section of transcript has been omitted either because it is unrelated to the topic or for clarity

List of Abbreviations

HD - human dimensions of wildlife management

LAG GK - Lokalna akcijska grupa Gorski kotar (Local action group of
Gorski kotar)

MPŠVG - Ministarstvo poljoprivrede, šumarstva i vodnog gospodarstva
(Ministry of agriculture, forestry and water management)

1. Introduction

The study of human-environment interactions has been of longstanding interest to geographers (Pattison, 1964; Fellmann et al., 2007). Specifically, within human geography, the term “animal geography” has often referred to research done on exploring human-animal interactions. Recent work in animal geography includes studies focused on the human-animal divide, links between animals and human identities, animals and places, environmental ethics, etc. (Emel, Wilber and Wolch, 2002). While such work has been mainly influenced by research done in cultural studies, natural sciences, and environmental ethics, other human-animal geographical research has been influenced by other schools of thought, such as social psychology. This type of geographical research (Bath, 1998; Majić, 2007; Bath, Olszanska and Okarma, 2009) has focused on studying animals (i.e., wildlife) and humans within the context of natural resource management. It originally developed as a response to the growing use and public interest in fish and wildlife and the need to produce sociological information for the policy makers responsible for the fish and wildlife management (Decker, Brown, and Siemer, 2001; Brown, 2009). Sociological information can be used in various stages of the decision-making process, and helps wildlife managers to explore and interpret public interest in wildlife, their opinions regarding specific human-wildlife conflicts, and possible management approaches (Blanchard, 2000). More specifically, this relatively new

discipline known as the human dimensions of wildlife management or simply, human dimensions (HD), is useful in “conflict resolution, social impact and trade-off analysis, stakeholder identification, participatory planning, values-clarification, design and implementation programs, regulations and enforcement, and evaluation” (Blanchard, 2000; pp. 55).

In many countries, including Croatia, hunting is the primary means of managing wildlife species thus serving as a mechanism for controlling population numbers of particular species (Huber et al., 2008; Obbard and Howe, 2008; Stedman et al., 2008). In addition, revenues generated through hunting (e.g., license fees) directly or indirectly fund wildlife agencies and their management activities, including conservations programs (Decker et al., 2001; Heberlein, Serup, and Ericsson, 2008; Brainerd and Kaltenborn, 2010). HD studies on hunting are undertaken with a premise that they can assure that the voices of those with a stake in the wildlife management decisions are being taken into account (Morzillo, Mertig, Garner and Liu, 2009). In addition, they are used to advise wildlife managers of public sentiment, warn them about the potential volatile issues, and help establish effective communication with the public (Decker et al., 2001; Campbell and Mackay, 2009). Finally, these findings are also used to gain support for the wildlife management activities that rely on hunting (Decker et al., 2001; Campbell and Mackay, 2009).

Success of a particular management program, in many cases, directly depends on hunters and their support (Morzillo et al., 2009). It is therefore not a

surprise that hunters are recognized as one of the most vocal and influential interests groups in public involvement processes regarding various wildlife management decisions (Decker et al., 2001; Lindsey and Adams, 2006; Morzillo et al., 2009). Actually, for a number of years, hunters, together with anglers and trappers, were perceived as *the most important* “consumers” of wildlife. These clients or beneficiaries of wildlife management, as they were often referred, were the focal point of modern wildlife management (Decker et al., 1996). This management was established in North America and Europe in the early-mid twentieth century, and was based on the agricultural approach of controlling and harvesting game (i.e., wildlife populations) (Leopold 1933; Gigliotti, Shroufe, and Gurtin, 2009; Nadasdy, 2011). This government-centered, scientific, expert driven wildlife management relied heavily on management techniques that included hunting, fishing and trapping (Heberlein, 1991; Messmer, 2000). The “client-manager” system of wildlife management was functional for a number of years due to the narrow and mutually shared set of values between the wildlife managers and their clients (Decker et al., 1996; pp. 73). However, by the late 1960s more and more people became interested in the environment, many of whom engaged in the non-consumptive wildlife activities (Brown, 2009). This was also the time when the public started requesting to be actively involved in governmental decisions, which resulted in a rise of citizen participation in decision making (Decker et al., 1996). Regarding the wildlife management, this meant a diversified array of stakeholders as well as an increase in stakeholders’ expectations to be involved in the wildlife

management processes (Riley et al., 2002). Some of these new stakeholders questioned the suitability of hunting, fishing and trapping as wildlife management strategies. They, as well as a large portion of the general public, started looking at hunting as a socially unacceptable activity (Heberlein, 1991; Brown et al., 2000).

Such anti-hunting sentiment can be explained by several factors. In the last 50 years, due to a rising concern about animal welfare, different types of hunting practices and hunting in general have been openly criticized and judged by animal rights activists and the general public (Marvin, 2000; Gunn, 2001; Peterson, 2004). More specifically, a lot of negative attention has been placed on sport or recreational hunting describing it as “anachronistic, unnecessary and morally unacceptable” (Marvin, 2006; pp. 11). Some of the common anti-hunting arguments state that hunting is part of non-civilized behavior, is not crucial for human survival, and is threat to biodiversity (Gunn, 2001). In addition, the philosophies of the animal rights movement and deep ecology are becoming accepted by the wider society as part of western liberalism and ecological philosophies (Heberlein, 1991).

The anti-hunting attitude is not the only challenge facing modern hunting. The second major challenge is a steady decline in hunting participation across the globe (Heberlein, Serup, and Ericsson, 2008). For example, the number of hunters in the USA has declined by half since the 1970s (Bergman, 2005), and similar trends can be seen in many parts of Europe as well (Heberlein et al., 2008). A lower number of hunters will inevitably result in less money being generated for wildlife management (Fix, Pierce, Manfredo, and Sikorowski, 1998). Fewer hunters also

mean that non-hunters will have less opportunity to associate with hunting and hunters, which might lead to a decrease in the support for hunting (Applegate, 1973). The hunting community has tried to deal with these challenges by implementing various recruitment initiatives, re-creating the image of hunters, or emphasizing the importance of hunting to achieve conservation goals (Dunk, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). In some cases, like in the US, the hunting community has been trying to promote hunting by emphasizing linkages between hunting, national values and national identities (Taylor, 1997).

1.1. Research problem

HD studies on hunting have explored topics such as attitudes toward hunting (Kellert, 1978; Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998; Campbell and Mackay, 2003), hunters' motivations (Decker and Connelly, 1989), satisfaction levels (Hendee, 1974; Manfredo et al., 2004), hunting experience quality (Tynon, 1997; Miller and Vaske, 2003), hunters' skills and behaviors (Nedham, Vaske, and Manfredo, 2004; Stedman et al., 2004), participation in hunting (Bissell et al., 1998; Heberlein and Ericsson, 2008), and hunting ethics (Peterson 2004; Knezevic 2009). While these studies focus largely on the attitudes and views of hunters, other HD studies on hunting tended to explore general public's support or lack of support for hunting (Kellert, 1978; Campbell and Mackay, 2003; Heberlein and Ericsson, 2005).

The majority of these HD studies on hunting share two distinct traits. Firstly, they explore hunting as an essential ecological and economic element of wildlife

management (Brown et al., 2000; Stedman et al., 2004; Campbell and Mackey, 2009; Morzillo et al., 2009). Thus, while the HD practitioners acknowledge that hunting has considerable management, recreational, and cultural benefits, they primarily focus on the management and recreational values of hunting. Secondly, HD studies, including those on hunting, use the theories from social psychology and sociology to understand, predict, and affect views and behaviors of people in order to reach conservation goals (Manfredo, 2008). In doing so, they predominantly rely on different quantitative methodologies and methods in data collection and analysis. The main reason why these are the standard practices is due mostly to the conflict-solving nature of the HD discipline. In other words, most HD studies produce results that can be generalized to populations and be further implemented into various wildlife management programs (Bath, 1998; Manfredo, Decker, and Duda, 1998; Campbell and MacKay, 2003; Boulanger, Hubbard, Jenks and Gigliotti, 2006; Mangun, Throgmorton, Carver, and Davenport, 2007).

Due to the conflict-solving nature of the HD discipline, HD studies are often too focused on exploring available options managers can use to resolve human-wildlife problems (McCleery, Ditton, Sell, and Lopez, 2006). As a result, some authors call for an improved understanding of “relevant social science literature” within HD discipline and for HD researchers to base their work on “established theoretical frameworks” (McCleery et al., 2006). Some HD researchers also cautioned about the danger of studying hunting through only measurements and variables as it may represent hunting as an activity consisting predominantly of

“license buying or going afield to shoot game” (Enck, Decker and Brown, 2000; pp. 823). More attention needs to be given to how hunters perceive themselves and what does being a hunter actually mean to them (Enck et al., 2000; pp. 823). Knowing what factors influence hunters’ self-perception as hunters might help wildlife agencies to act proactively instead of simply reacting, to current trends regarding hunting participation and retention. It can also provide a more insightful depiction of the cultural importance of hunting to society and enhance the wildlife agency’s interest in maintaining the cultural benefits associated with hunting (Enck et al., 2000).

Therefore, because of both *what* the HD discipline focuses on (i.e., management and recreational aspects of hunting) and *how* it explores these issues (i.e., through quantitative sets of data), HD studies often neglect cultural perspectives on hunting. In particular, HD studies usually do not explore hunting within the context of meanings, representations or identity. Little research exists on topics such as how people relate to hunting, what meanings they attach and deploy through hunting, whether there exists a particular social representation of hunting and if and how hunting impacts one’s identity (Bye, 2003; Bronner, 2008). At the same time, the various cultural perspectives of hunting are fairly visible and noteworthy. For instance, hunting is said to enable people to symbolically reconnect with some ancient existential needs and give them “a sense of productive freedom, personal satisfaction, and self-reliance” (Boglioli, 2009, pp. 56). It is an activity that unifies people who participate in it, and through which “social bonds are created

and strengthened across gender, generation and social status border” (Bye, 2003; pp.146). Hunting can also be an essential element for the identities of individuals, groups and communities (Chitwood, Peterson and Deperno, 2011). For a great number of people, hunting is a way to experience nature, and the satisfaction they get from simply being outdoors is one of the greatest benefits they get from being a hunter (Littlefield, 2006). Overall, hunting shapes and maintains economic, social, and cultural values in many parts of the world (Willebrand, 2009). Although the studies on cultural meanings of hunting have been done in other disciplines (e.g. anthropology, ethnology, sociology and geography) the lack of such studies in HD limits our understanding of hunting and its meaning for wildlife management and society at large.

There has been increased interest in the social and cultural aspects of hunting, which has its roots in qualitative social science (Bye, 2003). The problem, however, is that the findings from these socio-cultural studies have been largely overlooked by wildlife managers and policy makers. A likely rationale behind this neglect could be the fact that these findings are often in the form of qualitative data, which is sometimes labeled as “unscientific, difficult to replicate or as little more than anecdote, personal impression or conjecture” (Pope and Mays, 2006). Nevertheless, qualitative studies in HD possess the strength of regarding wildlife and wildlife related issues as culturally created “social representations” that are based on the perceptions and representations of participants themselves (Leong, 2010). Differing values and meanings ascribed to wildlife often result in “conflicts

over appropriate wildlife management goals, socially acceptable wildlife uses, and wildlife management practices” (Leong, 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, understanding how different meanings about wildlife, including hunting, are constructed, and how and if they are shared or contested by different participants can give both wildlife managers and policy makers a better perspective regarding the human-wildlife relationship and offer insights for future wildlife management.

1.2. Research context

In the Gorski kotar region of Croatia, organized hunting has been present for over a century, and the region is renowned for its quality of habitat, diversity of game species, and abundance of trophy animals (Malnar, 2005; Frković et al., 2010). Most of the hunting is organized through hunting clubs that provide recreational hunting opportunities for both the local residents who are members of the club and guests, who are usually not local but pay to participate in the activity. More than 1000 local hunters are members of one of the 11 local hunting clubs (Lovački savez Primorsko-goranske županije, n.d.). For a region with a population of just above 26 000, the size of its hunting community is considerably large. Money generated by the guests paying for the right to hunt, that is, through hunting tourism, has been shown to contribute significantly to the clubs’ overall budgets (Knott et al., 2012). In fact, several private and state-owned hunting companies operating in Gorski kotar rely solely on hunting tourism as their source of income. There is also a wild game meat market, and majority of local restaurants offer

“traditional” game dishes. Indeed, hunting has been oftentimes referred as one of region’s traditional, signature activities.

However, while it is evident that hunting has a prominent role in the region, it is hard to determine the actual extent and relevancy of hunting for the local residents. The literature on hunting in Gorski kotar is not only scarce, but it predominantly explores hunting within the context of its ecological and economic impacts and potentials. Questions like “Why do people hunt?”, “What impact does hunting have on people’s lives?”, “What is appropriate hunting and what not?” have not been of special interest to the scholars and have been only briefly touched upon in few existing books on hunting in Gorski kotar (Malnar, 2005; Frković, 2007). These books, although rich in historical context, focus predominantly on the development of organized hunting (i.e., local hunting clubs), the history of game management, and hunting legislation (Malnar, 2006; Frković, 2007). In addition, in none of the handful of HD studies that were done to date in Croatia and that included data from Gorski kotar (Majić 2003; 2008; Majić and Bath, 2010) was hunting the primary research focus. The small number of Croatian HD studies is not surprising, given that the HD discipline originates from North America where consequently the majority of HD studies have been conducted (Glikman and Frank, 2011). This lack of research outside of North America is recognized as a serious challenge that “limits our understanding of the role of social organization and social structure on hunting” (Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998).

Overall, the lack of HD research tailored specifically toward hunting in Gorski kotar limits our understanding of the roles of hunting in Gorski kotar and of its significance for the local community. Given that hunting is a recognized and well established practice with important cultural values, there is a need for a qualitative HD study on hunting that would address these cultural and social aspects of hunting. By exploring the social practices and cultural significance of hunting in GK, my research will provide an in-depth case study of the values of a traditional hunting community and how these values relate to individual identity, community life, and wildlife management.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the cultural and social context of hunting in the area of Gorski kotar, Croatia, by exploring meanings that local people attribute to hunting. The goal is to determine the scope of attitudes and values towards hunting, and to explore participants' views about the role of hunting for the Gorski kotar's social and natural environment. The study also aims to reveal the differences and similarities in attitudes toward hunting among hunters and non-hunters from Gorski kotar by exploring the belief systems and values on which hunters and non-hunters base their attitudes toward hunting, and legitimize hunting. By exploring people's views, perceptions and feelings toward hunting, it is possible to better understand not only people's relationship with the wildlife but toward nature and the environment in general.

In order to address the above mentioned issues, the following questions are of main interest to this study:

1. What does hunting mean to the people of Gorski kotar?
2. What do people think the role of hunting is in the natural environment?

One of the main premises of this study is that individuals and/or groups in society hold different and at times, opposing views on hunting. Meanings people attribute to hunting might vary based on the type of hunting, (perceived) motivations behind a particular type of hunting, different value orientations toward nature and other reasons (Bissell et al., 1998; Campbell, and Mackay, 2003; Manfredo, Teel, and Bright, 2003). Studies have shown that hunters indeed hunt for a variety of reasons, and that different hunters value different components of hunting (Bissell and Duda, 1993; Gigliotti, 2000; Radder and Bech-Larsen, 2008). Understanding reasons for hunting is also important because the general public's attitudes toward hunting greatly depend on them (Kellert 1978; Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998).

Hunting is often referred to as one of cultural traits of rural areas and as a "way of life" for rural communities (Stedman and Heberlein, 2001). Studies on hunting in rural areas have described the ways people associate with hunting and how being a hunter influences their perceptions of self and others (i.e., identity) (Bye, 2003; Littlefield, 2006; Manore, 2007; Skogen, 2007). Therefore, it might be expected that hunting plays a prominent role in the lives of people from Gorski

kotar, as this region has the typical characteristics of a rural area, and hunting has been practiced there for a relatively long time.

This study will be the first HD study in Croatia that specifically focuses on hunting, and one among the rare studies on hunting in Croatia that addresses hunting as a cultural practice. As such, this study will expand the existing HD knowledge on hunting by adding an additional geographical and cultural perspective to the existing HD literature. Moreover, the qualitative nature of this study means that a wide spectrum of nuanced meanings on hunting will be explored, giving a more detailed portrayal of hunting, as perceived and represented by the people directly affected by the topic (i.e., hunting). From a methodological point of view, my study will contribute to the existing qualitative HD research, which at the moment continues to be an underrepresented methodology within the natural resource discipline. Contrary to the majority of HD studies on hunting, this study is not an applied, quantitative or conflict solving study. Therefore, the emphasis is not put on finding the best approach to solve a particular issue but to explore the issue in length and provide an in-depth depiction of it. Findings from this study are used to expand our knowledge and understanding of hunting, especially about the role it plays in both the lives of people and its significance for the natural environment. These findings will furthermore reveal the current and context specific challenges facing hunting in Gorski kotar, and be helpful for policy makers, wildlife managers, and local communities in creating strategies for the future development of hunting in the region.

1.4. Thesis outline

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, I provide a description of the research problem and state the main purpose of the study. This chapter also sets the context of hunting within the HD discipline. In addition, insights regarding current challenges facing hunting in the Western World and more specifically in Gorski kotar, Croatia are introduced. In the second chapter I present a short historical overview of hunting, after which I provide a broad overview of the literature on hunting. The literature presented in this chapter explores hunting from several different perspectives and covers a spectrum of hunting related issues such as types of hunting, legitimacy of hunting, motivations and attitudes toward hunting, hunting as a tradition and identity. For this purpose, the literature cited in this chapter is taken from several disciplines, including HD, cultural geography, anthropology and environmental ethics. The third chapter provides a short description of the study area, and depicts the current status of hunting in Croatia and Gorski kotar. The fourth chapter outlines the methodological approach I used in this study and provides a detailed description of data collection and data analysis. Special attention is given to explaining the reasoning behind choosing the particular methods utilized in various phases of data collection and data analysis. In the fifth chapter I present the main findings of my research, which are organized under three main themes. Interpretation of the main themes and concepts identified in the results chapter is part of the discussion and conclusion. Here, I explore the key findings of my research within the context of similar studies on hunting done in

other countries, and discuss the similarities and differences between these studies.

In the second part of this chapter I provide direction for the development of hunting in the region of Gorski kotar and recommendations regarding future research on hunting.

2. Literature Review

2.1 An introduction: Changing nature of hunting

Hunting has been an important source of food throughout history. It has also held strong mythical and religious significance for pre-agrarian people (Wood, 1997). Animists, for instance, believed hunting to be part of a complex prey-predator relationship in which predator was given food and “secrets of reality” while prey received “cultural immortality” (Cahoone, 2009; pp. 83). In agricultural-based societies, hunting lost some of its original purpose, although it still remained an important part of many cultures around the world. With the emergence of social classes, hunting eventually became a privileged activity of social elites. This was especially true in Europe in the Middle Ages, when monarchs, as the main landowners of that time, had the exclusive rights to hunt and to give hunting permits. Peasants were mostly banned from hunting, and thus for them the activity became a symbol of “freedom, feasting, and rebellion against authorities” (Cartmill, 1993; pp.61). Similarly, to the settlers in North America, hunting became an expression of newly gained freedom and independence (Fitzgerald, 2005).

With the end of the feudal system, all those who owned larger land properties were given the right to hunt (Ka-Urbani, 2010). However, during the 19th century hunting in the Western World still continued to be associated with social class, and those who hunted were often members of the middle or upper

middle class (Hummel, 1994). The late 19th century was also marked by an increase in popularity of big-game hunting. Popular both in Europe and North America, it was practiced mainly by the upper middle class (i.e., bourgeois). Big-game hunting was part of the culture of colonialism and “came to symbolize Europe’s imperial power and racial superiority” (Loo, 2001a). At the same time, in places such as central Europe, hunting was less class-dependent and hunters were not considered sportsmen, but “woodsmen, pliers of the forest trades and conservators of its bounty” (Cahoone, 2009; pp.72).

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hunters had a major impact on the development of the conservation movement. For instance, in North America, the beginning of wildlife conservation can be directly linked to the efforts of affluent hunters of that time, such as Theodore Roosevelt (Reiger, 2001; Manore, 2007; Eliason, 2008). The numbers of sport hunters steadily increased or stayed at the same levels until the mid 1970s, which was followed by a worldwide decline in hunting participation (Enck et al., 2000; Bauer and Herr, 2004). In the Western World this decline became especially evident during the last few decades of the 20th century (Bergman, 2005; Heberlein et al., 2008). The decrease in hunting participation was mostly related to the changing demographics (e.g. urbanization, aging population), personal constraints (e.g. lack of time, health), situational constraints (e.g., bag limits, length of season), and the increased anti-hunting attitude generated by the environmental movement (Miller and Vaske, 2003;

Mangun et al., 2007; Heberlein et al., 2008; Stedman et al., 2008; Campbell and Mackay, 2009).

In general, meanings and representations of hunting changed simultaneously with societal changes. Modern hunting is enriched with meanings that “are socially and culturally constituted and have been in flux and continue to change” (Littlefield, 2006; pp. 11). In that sense, portrayal of modern hunting is complex, and its varying meanings depend on the differing perspectives of people who hunt or and/or affected by hunting. Moreover, while today there is certainly a considerable anti-hunting sentiment present in the world, especially in the Western World, not everyone has a negative opinion about hunting. For instance, there are many for whom hunting is an important strategy for wildlife management. Hunting is also valued for its economic significance, as it can generate revenue and play an important role in the economies of developing countries (Gunn, 2001; Loveridge, Reynolds, and Milner-Gulland, 2006). In addition, for many indigenous communities, hunting has an important cultural and material importance. For instance, it is an essential source of nutrients, and it is often associated with status and accomplishment for mating competition (Hill and Kintigh, 2009). At the same time, a quite different set of meanings of hunting stem from the various discussions on hunting that focus, for instance, on gender (i.e., masculinity) (Bye, 2003; Smalley, 2005; Littlefield, 2010) social class (Krane and Skogen, 2007; Loo, 2001a), rurality (Milbourne, 2003a; 2003b), or individual and group identities (Dunk, 2002; Boglioli, 2009; Chitwood et al., 2011).

In the sections that follow, I will present the review of literature on hunting pertinent to my study. I start this overview with describing how the current literature defines modern hunting, and how it distinguishes between the different types of hunting. I then present some of the dominant discourses on the legitimacy of hunting, in particular those related to sport hunting. The decision to include an extensive section on the legitimacy of hunting and the pro- versus anti-hunting debate was based on the notion that is necessary to explore the context and reasons behind this debate as it is so often a key element in the current discussions on hunting. Evidence of this debate can be easily traced in Croatian society as well and it is likely that a similar debate will occur among the participants of this study. Thus, it was thought to be beneficial to provide an overview of the literature on this matter. This will be followed by a section that describes the ways in which the HD discipline studies hunting. In particular, I pay special attention in exploring the ways in which the HD discipline has examined motivations behind hunting as well as attitudes toward hunting. I specifically investigate these two topics as part of my research purpose, which is to understand resident attitudes toward hunting and their views on the motivations behind it. As noted earlier in the introduction chapter, the HD discipline has not specifically dealt with the cultural aspects of hunting. As this is the main purpose of my study, I include in my review of literature studies done outside the HD discipline. Specifically, I look at cultural studies on hunting done in the field of anthropology, sociology, folklore, history, women's studies, and philosophy. Here I explore the connections between hunting, peoples' identities,

and rural places (i.e., rurality). I choose these issues as these are the core issues discussed across this diverse set of literature. Thus, it is quite likely that they will be relevant for my study and that the tradition, rurality, identity and other related topics will be discussed by the participants from Gorski kotar. In the final chapter of this thesis I explore the difference and similarities between the findings from my study and studies described in the literature review chapter, and discuss implications of these findings for future studies on hunting.

2.2 Definitions and types of hunting

Hunting, in its purest form, is an act in which one animal takes the life of another one. A general definition of hunting states that it is a search for, pursuit of, and the capture or kill of prey (Wood, 1997; Marvin, 2006). In a frequently quoted definition written by the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega Y Gasset (1972; pp. 57), hunting is defined as “what an animal does to take possession, dead or alive, of some other being that belongs to a species basically inferior to its own”. However, hunting performed by humans is much more than simply killing prey since it involves a detailed set of social customs and regulations that must be obeyed, in order to distinguish simple animal predation from hunting (Marvin, 2006). For a hunt to actually happen, four essential things need to exist: available animals, a place to hunt, a social and cultural system that supports hunting, and hunter training opportunities for the novice hunters (Heberlein et al., 2008). Cartmill (1993) wrote that successful hunting by humans means killing a specific sort of animal through a

specific mode that is guided by a specific reason. This means that the hunted animal has to be wild, free, and that the act of hunting must include the use of direct and deliberate violence (Cartmill, 1993). Nevertheless, "successful hunting" does not need to inevitably end with an animal being shot. Actually, a large portion of research on hunting has explored the characteristics of a successful hunt (Vaske, Fedler, and Graefe, 1986; Gigliotti, 2000; Heberlein and Kuentzel, 2002; Manfredo et al., 2004). According to the multiple satisfaction model, success in hunting i.e. bagging or killing an animal is only one component of satisfaction a hunter derives from hunting (Hendee, 1974). While seeing, shooting and bagging the game can all boost hunter satisfaction, the relative importance of the harvest success toward satisfaction can vary depending on the specific types of hunting, hunters, and locations (Gigliotti, 2000; Heberlein and Kuentzel, 2002). Ortega (1972; pp.58) said that it is exactly this "problematic" nature of the hunt that makes hunting so intriguing.

Researchers often explore hunting based on the main purposes and motivations of hunting, distinguishing three types of hunting: subsistence, commercial and sport hunting (i.e., recreational hunting or leisure hunting) (Chardonnet et al., 2002; Loveridge et al., 2006). In a strict sense, in subsistence hunting a person hunts for survival (Wood, 1997). In a broader sense, a subsistence hunter might hunt due to tradition, a need for self-reliance or as a way to get food of better quality (Vitali, 2010). Commercial hunting can be either in a form of taking surplus from the subsistence hunters or a well structured exploitation of species for their meat, horns,

furs, skin, pelts or live animals (Chardonnet et al., 2002). While commercial hunting can bring a significant income to those involved in (international) trade, it can also create instability to the local economies (Chardonnet et al., 2002). The third type of hunting, sport hunting, is a versatile activity, present in different ecological and socio-political landscapes (Loveridge et al., 2006). Defined as the pursuit of an animal in order to kill the animal for food and trophy (Wood, 1997), it is done primarily for the sake of recreation and pleasure (Leader-Williams, 2009). It creates numerous jobs and brings millions of dollars to economies on local and state levels (Gunn, 2001; Loveridge et al., 2006).

One of the key elements of sport hunting is a strict set of rules, imposed both from outside and inside the hunting community (Wood, 1997). These rules might differ greatly from one hunting tradition to another, so that what one community regards as standard practice, might be considered as an utterly inappropriate practice by the other. Many hunting traditions in the Western World, require that the killing in sport hunting must be done with a serious purpose, and the meat must be used by a hunter or someone to whom game meat has been given (Wood, 1997). These rules are willingly obeyed in order to create a contest between an animal and human (Marvin, 2006; pp. 19):

The primary interest of the sports hunter is not that of obtaining the meat not even that of merely killing. Rather, it is with an immersion into the very difficulty of bringing about the encounter with the animal and with the pleasure and satisfaction that comes from successfully overcoming these self-imposed restrictions and difficulties. There is certainly the hope and an intention to kill an animal, but how that animal is found and how it is killed is far more important than the mere fact it is killed.

Trophy hunting has been regarded as a particular type of sport hunting (Wood, 1997; Chardonnet et al., 2002), although it is sometimes marked as a standalone and unique type of hunting (Gunn, 2001). Motivations behind trophy hunting include hunting for the sake of experience, adventure, danger and possession of a trophy (Bauer and Herr, 2004). This most controversial type of hunting in modern society has received a lot of criticism from those who in general oppose hunting but also from some of the hunters (Causey, 1989; Vitali, 1990). Studies have shown that a lower percentage of the general public supports trophy hunting compared to other types of hunting (e.g. subsistence hunting) (Bissell et al., 1998; Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998). At the same time, other studies such as the one from Kalof and Fitzgerald (2003) have shown that more and more hunters are inclined to participate in trophy hunting.

2.3 Challenges of modern sport hunting: anti-hunting versus pro-hunting debate

As already noted, in the last few decades a lot of negative attention has been placed on sport and trophy hunting. Anti-hunting discussions are usually characterized by their focus on an individual animal while hunters justify hunting by focusing on the population level (Wood, 1997). Debates on whether hunting can be justified, mainly from the moral perspective, have been discussed within the field of environmental ethics by authors such as Curnutt (1996), Gunn (2001), and Van de Pitte (2003). Van de Pitte (2003) stated that, regardless of whether the

debate on hunting is about animal rights versus human rights, wildness versus “constructedness of nature” or something else, it is first and foremost, a debate on someone’s morality. Curnutt (1996) criticized sport hunting and its justification by analyzing the three most common themes in the hunting versus anti-hunting debate: whether animals have moral rights, whether utilitarianism is appropriate in modern society, and what are the exact impacts of hunting on the environment and ecosystem. Finding major flaws in arguments from both sides of the hunting debate, he remarked that the main argument to be used against hunting should be the fact that hunting causes harm to animals. Since causing harm cannot be morally justifiable, hunts that end in causing harm to an animal, are morally wrong (Curnutt, 1996).

Among those who advocate for hunting, morality of hunting is often discussed in regard to the principles of “fair-chase”. This is especially true among the hunting traditions of Great Britain, USA and Canada (Hanna, 2007). Fair-chase consists of a set of self-imposed regulations although its definition is somewhat vague and open to interpretation. The concept of fair-chase stands for the hunting practice in which “the animal participant in the game has a reasonable chance to escape” and/or a practice in which a “hunter does not have an improper advantage over the hunted” (Hanna, 2007; pp. 241). Vitali (2010) stressed two key elements that constitute moral hunting. The first one is a meticulous commitment toward the conservation ethics by which hunting should directly or indirectly contribute to the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. The second prerequisite is for each hunter to nurture in

oneself recognition, understanding and respect for being an active member of a prey-predator (i.e., life-death) continuum (Vitali, 2010). In his justification of hunting, Vitali (1990; pp. 49) also said that hunting is ethical since: it does not violate animal's moral rights, it exercises human skills which consequently compensates the "evil" done by hunting (i.e., death of an animal) and it contributes to the ecosystems by balancing the life-death process.

In addition, sport or recreational hunting is justified using the argument that hunting maintains population levels of species at the socially acceptable levels, manages species according to the notion of sustainability, and plays a crucial role in the conservation of some wildlife species (Decker et al., 2001; Gunn, 2001). Sport hunters consider hunting an integral management tool that can have a direct positive effect on the abundance, health and conservation of many game (and non-game) species (Wood, 1997). Boglioli (2009), however, questioned this notion by saying that the common mentioning of these arguments in recent times might actually be a strategic way by which hunters react and respond to today's anti-hunting criticism. Pro-hunting arguments also include perceptions of hunting as an essential part of one's individual identity, one's local identity and cultural heritage, hunting as a means toward a proper respect and understanding of wildlife and nature, and hunting as a way of becoming a more self-sufficient individual (Dunk, 2002; Van de Pitte, 2003; Boglioli, 2009; Cahoone, 2009).

In a paper on the legitimacy of hunting with a special emphasis on trophy hunting, Gunn (2001; pp. 69) defined justifiable hunting as the one performed with

the aim to “promote or protect some nontrivial human interests” in cases when no other alternative method is suitable. Nontrivial human interests stand, among others, for the protection of species and ecosystems, especially if the species is endangered and the ecosystem threatened. If the revenues generated through trophy hunting benefit the development of local communities, this can have a positive impact on the local support for a particular conservation program, which might increase its success rate (Gunn, 2001). Gunn (2001) also noted how his own support for the trophy hunting is conditional and open for criticism, but he pointed out that controlled trophy hunting might be, at the time, the most appropriate method for the conservation of some endangered species.

A long standing debate regarding the legitimacy of hunting concerns the origin of hunting; that is, whether hunting is natural or cultural. Hunting is at times portrayed as something intrinsic to humans, a common trait that, once obtained, enabled people to distinguish themselves from other members of the animal kingdom: a trait that made us humans. This idea is embodied in the “hunting hypothesis” that originated from the work done by anthropologist Raymond Dart in the first half of the 20th century (Cartmill, 1993). Dart’s research on the fossil remnants of early humanoids (i.e., *Australopithecus*) led him and other scientists to believe that *Australopithecus* diet consisted largely of meat which was obtained by hunting performed most likely in large groups (Bartholomew and Birdsell, 1953; Dart and Craig, 1959). These findings had a strong influence on the field of human evolution. Between the 1950s to the mid 1970s anthropologists have claimed not

only that *Australopithecus* was a hunter but also that “our ancestors become human largely as a result of taking up hunting” (Cartmill, 1993: pp. 6). Human characteristics, such as male socialization, extensive mothering, or bipedalism were all said to be instigated by the ability to hunt (Etkin, 1954). Proponents of the hunting hypothesis claimed hunting is exactly what separated humans from primates, and that humans get pleasure and satisfaction from hunting (Washburn and Lancaster, 1968). Moreover, more recent proponents of this hypothesis claimed that humans’ violent nature and lust for killing actually enabled humans to become hunters and that modern humans inherited those traits from their hunting ancestors (Wrangham and Peterson, 1996; Sussman, 1999).

As soon as it appeared, the hunting hypothesis had many opponents. For these scientists it was quite obvious that *Australopithecus* was not a hunter, but the one who was in fact a prey of other large animals. This view was shaped not only by a lack of evidence but also due to the advocates of feminism, pacifism, and left-wing politics during 1970s. Recent critics of the hunting hypothesis pointed out how the hypothesis was used as a failed attempt to provide explanations for human inclination toward aggression, such as the aggression witnessed during the World War II and the Cold War (Zeiss Stange 1997; Bergman, 2005). Zeiss Stange (1997) also noted that the hypothesis was (mis)used to strengthen the rigid divide of gender roles within which man was clearly portrayed as hunter and women as gatherer. Sussman (1999) regarded it as a completely false argument that he called “man-the-hunter/man-the-killer myth”.

While most anthropologists have now abandoned the hunting hypothesis, the hunting community still relies on it to socially legitimize hunting (Peterson, 2004). According to the hunting hypothesis, also known as the naturalness hypothesis, hunting is a practice deeply interwoven into human nature and humans are regarded as predators positioned at the top of the food chain that have the natural right to hunt their prey (i.e., food) (Peterson, 2004). The naturalness hypothesis therefore equates hunting performed by humans to animal hunting or predation (Marvin, 2006). The assertion that hunting is part of a natural prey-predator order or that it comes natural to people has been regularly used by those who hunt to explain why they hunt or to justify hunting (Ortega, 1972; Swan, 2000).

A completely different view is held by those who challenge the concept of hunting as a natural practice. Branner (2008) said that hunting is a behavior guided by rituals, a seasonal and ceremonial activity set apart from the "ordinary world". Philosophers Veatch Moriarty and Woods (1997) questioned the naturalness of hunting by demonstrating how sport hunting cannot be equal to animal predation. When discussing the deer hunt Veatch Moriarty and Woods (1997; pp. 400) wrote:

At every step of the deer hunting process, the person's actions are shaped by and within cultural context (when to hunt, what to hunt, how to hunt, what hunting instruments are appropriate, etc.). Even the decision that one should hunt cannot be separated from the hunter's cultural context: deer hunting is acceptable in some cultures and unacceptable in others.

In the end, some of the differences between anti-hunters and pro-hunters might actually be less than they appear at first. Knezevic (2009), for instance, listed three essential goals shared by both groups: wildlife and habitat protection, effective natural resource management, and the need for people to once again become closer to their natural environment. However, existing conflicts over the environment, noted Opatow and Brook (2003), will often lead to the establishment of very distinct “environmental identities” where each group perceives the other one as being in total opposition to their own goals and programs (as cited in Knezevic, 2009; pp. 16). In their study on black bear hunting in New Jersey, Harker and Bates (2007) have found that both anti-hunting and pro-hunting groups have constructed claims on the legitimacy of hunting that totally exclude one another. In other words, for one claim to be valid, the other one must inevitably be false. This consequently leaves limited space for mutual understanding and co-operation between the two groups.

2.4 Hunting and the Human dimensions of wildlife management

Wildlife management can be understood as “the application of ecological knowledge to balance wildlife populations with human needs” (Messmer, 2000; pp. 97). This includes maintaining or decreasing populations of wildlife species by either altering their habitat (i.e., indirect management) or the species population (i.e., direct management) (Messmer, 2000). As part of direct management and as one of the essential tools for controlling wildlife populations (i.e., game species),

hunting is an important ecological part of wildlife management (Brown et al., 2000). The impacts of hunting on animal populations can be direct and indirect, positive and negative (Loveridge et al., 2006). If managed appropriately, hunting can contribute towards successful wildlife conservation (Gunn, 2001; Bauer and Herr, 2004). Hunting (i.e., sport hunting) is used as part of conservation efforts in cases where natural predators have been eradicated, or when newly reintroduced species such as wolf (*Canis lupus*) or lynx (*Felis lynx*) require population management (Loveridge et al., 2006). Since hunting may contribute towards habitat preservation, it can be beneficial for target as well as non-target species (Loveridge et al., 2006). Regulated hunting can be the most effective and efficient way to manage economically important species (Decker et al., 2001). It is also a suitable approach for maintaining populations of many large carnivores at the socially acceptable level, and a controlled source of mortality for many game species (Decker et al., 2001). In addition, as an important economic component of wildlife management, hunting can generate funds that contribute towards game research, management of game and other wildlife species, general nature management and conservation programs (Enck et al. 2000; Heberlein et al., 2008; Mahoney, 2009).

2.4.1 Understanding hunters from a human dimension perspective

Human dimensions of wildlife management (HD) recognizes and emphasizes both human and biophysical components as part of the dual nature of resource management (Bath, 1998). HD “identifies what people think and do

regarding wildlife and its management, seeks to understand why, attempts to predict future human behavior, and incorporates that knowledge and insight into management decisions and program designs" (Loker, Decker, and Chase, 1998). Specifically, HD research on motivations is important in order to understand why people engage in specific activities and can help in recognizing the consequences of that activity (Manfredo and Driver, 1996). The knowledge gained through studies on motivations can be directly implemented to tailor management programs in a way that will minimize conflicts between users and maximize benefits for them (Manfredo and Driver, 1996).

In the 1970s, HD researchers came to realize that bagging an animal was not the top priority for all hunters and that different hunters engage in hunting for different reasons. One of the first researchers to clearly articulate the existence of multiple motivations in hunting was Hendee (1974) who said that a person might have one or several reasons to hunt, which might all differ from the reasons of some other hunter. Hendee was especially interested in the satisfaction a person derived from hunting, and he defined satisfaction as "specific, immediately gratifying pleasures from certain aspects of the recreation experience" (Hendee, 1974; pp. 107). These experiences are caused by motivations that initiate behaviors, and motivations can be regarded as "cognitive forces that drive people to achieve particular goal states" (Decker et al., 2001). The existence of multiple motivations and satisfactions in hunting is an important component of the multiple satisfactions approach to game management, which implies that the recreation resources offer a

spectrum of experiences that can satisfy different satisfactions for people (Hendee, 1974). Hendee's concept was subsequently incorporated in many HD studies on hunters' motivations (Decker, Brown, Driver, and Brown, 1987; Hammitt, McDonald, and Patterson; 1990; Gigliotti, 2000; Manfredo et al., 2004). One such study was a study on wildlife recreation done by Decker et al. (1987) in which they categorized different reasons for recreational activities, including hunting, into 3 broad motivational orientations: affiliative, achievement and appreciative (as cited in Decker and Connolly, 1989; pp. 456). This study suggested that people who are guided by affiliative orientation primarily seek companionship or a chance to build relationship through a shared experience, while the achievement oriented recreationists aim to reach a certain level of performance. Appreciative recreationists seek peace, belonging, and familiarity from their experiences (Decker et al., 1987 as cited in Decker and Connolly, 1989; pp. 456; Decker et al., 2001). Distinct differences between hunters with different motivational orientations were also found in the studies from Decker, Provencher, and Brown (1984), and Pinet (1995).

More recent studies on hunters' motivations include, among others, those by Good (1997), Gigliotti (2000), Boulanger et al., (2006), and Radder and Bech-Larsen (2008). In a study on muzzleloader hunters in South Dakota by Boulanger et al., (2006) hunters listed nature, excitement, opportunity, and challenge as some of the main motivations why they hunt. Results from this study were similar to the results from an overview of hunter's motivations based on the analysis of hunting

magazines by Good (1997). Good (1997) found that the most frequent reasons for someone to engage in hunting were experience, excitement, companionship of others, beauty of nature, opportunity to kill and others. A more specific study on hunters' motivations and satisfaction level was done by Gigliotti (2000). An important part of his study was differentiating hunters based on the main reason to hunt, and hunters were given a choice from a list of reasons already identified in the hunting literature. Based on their answers, Gigliotti (2000) found that the majority of hunters were *nature hunters*, followed by the *social hunters*, and *excitement hunters*. Meat hunters were ranked fourth, followed by *trophy hunters*, *solitude hunters* and *exercise hunters*. Gigliotti (2000) considered nature, social and excitement reasons as the fundamental reasons to hunt, because of their relative importance for all seven types of hunters in his study. That the hunters predominantly hunt in order to socialize and experience nature was also shown by Pinet (1995), and again in a more recent study by Radder and Bech-Larsen (2008). The other important reasons to hunt were, according to Radder and Bech-Larsen's study, the importance of hunting for male identity, and hunting in order to escape (Radder and Bech-Larsen, 2008).

Research on hunters' motivations is often coupled with research on hunters' level of satisfaction and/or the perceived quality of their hunting experiences (Decker and Connelly, 1989; Gigliotti, 2000; Heyslette, Armstrong, and Mirarchi, 2001; Manfredo et al., 2004; Boulanger et al., 2006). Hunting satisfaction and hunting quality should be seen as two distinct concepts where satisfaction

represents the “summary evaluation of experience outcomes”, while hunting quality stands for a complex concept made of “experiential moments that enhance or detract from the ongoing experience” (Heberlein and Kuentzel, 2002; pp. 235). A quality hunting experience is the one that results in achieving desired satisfactions, and based on that an experience can range from low to high quality experience (Manfredo et al., 2004). High quality does not necessarily mean achieving success in hunting (i.e., killing an animal), but consist of multiple factors that are specific for each individual hunter (Tynon, 1997; Manfredo et al., 2004).

Overall, the HD literature suggests that hunters should not be regarded as one coherent group, and providing a range of hunting opportunities can improve the benefits hunters derive from hunting experiences (Manfredo et al., 2004; Morzillo et al., 2009). A type of wildlife management that takes into account various motivations and satisfactions people get from their experiences is able to adapt in order to increase the chance of achieving those satisfactions, which will inevitably increase the success rate of a particular management program (Hendee, 1974).

2.4.2 The future of hunting: Understanding attitudes toward hunting

To be able to “understand, predict, or influence the public’s behavior in wildlife-related issues”, (Decker et al., 2001; pp. 39), HD researchers have to possess knowledge about motivations behind a particular activity, such as hunting. Besides insights on motivations, understanding people’s attitudes toward hunting is another important piece of information that can help researchers in predicting the

likely future of sport hunting, and to understand its current or future role within wildlife management (Campbell and Mackay, 2003). Attitudinal studies are part of a cognitive approach in HD that focuses on peoples' values, attitudes, norms and behaviors (Decker et al., 2001). Attitudes are either positive or negative evaluations of a specific person, object, concept or action that is used to predict and influence human behavior (Decker et al., 2001). Attitudes are regarded as an important constituent within the *cognitive hierarchy*, a conceptual model which implies that people's values determine their value orientations, which in turn determine attitudes and norms. Attitudes and norms consequently determine behavioral intentions, and these determine behaviors (Fulton, Manfredo, and Lipscomb, 1996).

HD attitudinal studies on hunting have been done since the early 1970s, but it was a series of studies by Kellert in the 1980s that were highly significant for understanding people's views on hunting (Kellert, 1976; 1978; 1980). Kellert's often cited results suggested that people's attitudes toward hunting greatly depended on the reasons behind a specific type of hunting (Kellert, 1980). He asked the public about their attitudes toward three different types of hunting (e.g. subsistence hunting, hunting for recreation and meat, and hunting for recreation and sport) and found that the subsistence hunting received the highest level of support, while less support was given to hunting for meat and recreation. Hunting for recreation and sport received the lowest level of support (Kellert, 1980). Interested to see whether the level of support for hunting in the USA had decreased in the past 20 years, Heberlein and Willebrand (1998) replicated a portion of Kellert's 1980

study. One of the main differences between their study and the study done by Kellert in 1980 was that in this study researchers included participants from Sweden. This was done in order to see whether people from two countries that have different approaches to wildlife management would have similar or dissimilar attitudes towards hunting (Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998). Their results showed the same pattern in attitudes toward hunting as in Kellert's 1980 study. In Sweden, a country with a long hunting tradition, traditional or subsistence hunting also received the highest level of support, followed by hunting for recreation and meat, while hunting for recreation and sport received the lowest level of support (Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998).

That the support for hunting directly depends on the reasons behind it was once again shown in the study done by Bissell et al., (1998). In addition, studies on hunting have shown that in general 10% of the public strongly supports hunting, 10% is strongly opposed to hunting, and 80% neither strongly supports nor opposes hunting (Fleishman-Hillard, 1994). Research has also shown that attitudes of those who strongly oppose hunting are quite unlikely to change, and that the opposition to hunting is actually opposition toward hunters and reasons to hunt rather than opposition toward the hunting as such (Campbell and Mackay, 2003). In general, a comparison of past and recent attitudinal studies on hunting contradicts the widespread belief of a decreased support for hunting, at least in North America. These studies suggested that during the 1970-1990 period general public attitudes toward hunting in the USA have not changed but that they depend on the real or

perceived motivations for hunting and the context in which hunting is performed (Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998; Decker et al., 2001). As a consequence, the public opinion on hunting is situational and can change based on the perceived motivations of hunters and uses of the game (Campbell and Mackay, 2003).

Research from Campbell and Mackay (2003) demonstrated that public support for hunting was the highest when hunting was regarded as a wildlife management strategy that could reduce wildlife diseases, maintain wildlife habitat or maintain wildlife populations at a manageable level. Support for such type of hunting was found not only within those who support hunting in general but also within those groups that generally do not support hunting and groups that neither support neither oppose hunting (Campbell and Mackay, 2003). Results like this are especially insightful in times when the general public questions the necessity of employing hunting in wildlife management, raising serious concerns for wildlife managers and hunters (Campbell and Mackay, 2009). This situation was generated by the loss of hunting tradition in rural areas due to urbanization, decline in hunting participation, idealization of nature, citizen initiated anti-hunting protests, and others (Campbell and Mackay, 2009). Moreover, nature is not anymore a place visited only by so called *traditional* users such as hunters, anglers, rural landowners but also by new, non-traditional users, like wildlife-watchers and outdoor recreationists (Lindsey and Adams, 2006). While the numbers of traditional users is on decline in many parts of the world, the number of wildlife viewers is increasing (Manfredo, 2008). *Non-traditional* users differ from *traditional* ones regarding their

attitudes toward wildlife, questioning the idea of hunting as an essential strategy for modern day wildlife management (Lindsey and Adams, 2006; Boglioli, 2009).

As already indicated, attitudes toward hunting might not have radically changed in the last 30 or 40 years but hunting and its utilitarian approach to wildlife is undeniably been questioned time and again (Decker et al., 2001). HD researchers have also noticed that since the 1970s the conflict over appropriate management of wildlife has increased (Muth and Jamison, 2000). Over the last decade, HD researchers have been trying to link anti-hunting attitudes and other conflicts over the use of wildlife to a global shift in basic human values (Heberlein, 1991; Manfredo et al., 2003; Manfredo, Teel, and Henry, 2009). A concept called wildlife value orientation (WVO) has been applied in order to interpret the variety of values that people hold toward wildlife and to investigate a possible shift in those values (Whittaker, Vaske and Manfredo, 2006; Teel, Manfredo, and Stinchfield, 2007). Value orientations express one's basic values and are "revealed through the pattern and direction of basic beliefs held by an individual" (Manfredo et al., 2003; pp. 289). Value orientations are less abstract than values, and are therefore more suitable to predict attitudes and behaviors related to wildlife (Whittaker et al., 2006). WVO research applies the social-psychological theories such as *cognitive hierarchy* using quantitative methods (Manfredo et al., 2003; Whittaker et al., 2006), although qualitative methods have also been used to study the concept (Champ, 2002; Deruiter, and Donnelly, 2002). What is apparent from these studies is a shift in values toward wildlife from a so called *utilitarian wildlife value*

orientation toward a *mutualism wildlife value orientation* (Teel et al., 2005). Utilitarian WVO promotes the notion of humans benefiting from the use and management of wildlife and pictures an ideal world in which “wildlife exists for human use and enjoyment” and “there is an abundance of wildlife for hunting and fishing” (Teel, Dayer, Manfredo and Bright, 2005; pp. 6). One of the basic belief dimensions is a so called hunting belief dimension which is basically a system of belief that considers hunting to be a “humane and positive activity” (Teel et al., 2005; pp. 6). On the opposite side is the mutualism wildlife value orientation that promotes the idea of humans harmoniously co-existing with wildlife (Manfredo et al., 2009). An ideal world according to this orientation is one in which humans and animals live with one another without any fear, and depend on each other; emotional bonding and companionship with animals is a crucial part of human lives, and no animal is suffering (Teel et al., 2005). Although not all recent studies on WVO found clear evidence of a shift toward mutualism, this value orientation was still found to be a very prominent orientation in a number of countries (Jacobs, 2007; Raadik and Cottrell, 2007; Manfredo et al., 2009).

The research on WVO is related to broad research that investigates the notion of Western society undergoing a major shift in basic values from materialist to post-materialist values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Inglehart, 2008). While safety, security, cultural norms, and economic stability are important for those with materialist orientation, belongingness, life quality and especially self-expression, self-esteem and self-fulfillment become important for those with post-materialist

orientation (Inglehart, 2008; Manfredo et al., 2009). According to Inglehart (2008; pp. 142), evidence of this shift in values can be recognized in changed electoral behavior, “the rise of environmental movements, women’s movements, gay liberation and other lifestyles movements.” These societal processes are believed to be caused and fueled by a changed system of economic production and demographic changes, resulting in a major value shift that changes not only broad societal values but also wildlife value orientations (Teel et al., 2005). The shifting of values, as indicated by Inglehart’s theory, is said to have an impact on how people view their environment and think about wildlife and directly influence their relationship with wildlife (Teel et al., 2007).

2.5 Widening the meanings of hunting: Cultural studies on hunting

Studies on hunting that explore the cultural meanings and values of hunting have been predominantly done by scholars from the field of anthropology (Marvin, 2006; Boglioli, 2009; Hill and Kintigh, 2009), sociology (Hell, 1996), folklore (Bronner, 2008), history (Smalley, 2005; Loo, 2001a; 2001b), women’s studies (Kheel, 1996; Fitzgerald, 2005), political ecology (Nadasdy, 2011) and philosophy (Curnutt, 1996; Van de Pitte, 2003). Some of the cultural studies, especially those done in the past, have been criticized for producing merely “statistical profiles and historical chronologies” of hunting (Bronner, 2008; pp. 14). Others have been criticized for focusing only on one type of hunting and for producing results that are hard to extrapolate to other situations (Pinet, 1995). Littlefield (2006) particularly

criticized those cultural studies, which rely on secondary data, saying that what they “lack in data, they make up for in narrative drama”. More recent studies, on the other hand, have been using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, participant-observation, lifestyle interviews, which has resulted in the increase of studies that focus on experiences of “real” hunters in their everyday settings (Bye, 2003; Bronner, 2008; Littlefield, 2006; Krange and Skogen, 2007; Bye, 2009). In any case, cultural studies on hunting, regardless of the disciplines’ differences in epistemological approaches, use hunting as a framework to explore similar issues such as identity, masculinity, rurality, human-animal and human-nature relationships (Marvin, 2000a; Bye, 2003; Milbourne 2003a; 2003b; Smalley, 2005; Littlefield, 2006; Marvin 2006; Krange and Skogen, 2007; Bye, 2009; Littlefield, 2010).

2.5.1 Hunting for identity: masculinity, rurality and tradition in studies on hunting

Identity can be observed through two dimensions: identification with a cultural or social collective and the feeling of “self, and a sense of continuity within that self” (Krange and Skogen, 2007; pp. 28). A person is not “born into” an identity but can, according to the current theories in sociology, choose from a variety of identities, lifestyles and social connections, or even create new identity (Krange and Skogen, 2007; Bye, 2009). It is a “relational and reflexive project” structured by the ongoing processes of inclusion, exclusion, self-recognition,

belonging, and identification (Bye, 2009). Identity is understood not as final entity but more as a process in which a person actively makes choices from a spectrum of possible strategies and options (Giddens, 1997). Identity is a subjective construction that originates from a person's social reality so that a person is at all times a part of his or hers social and historical context (Zeman, 2007). Castells (1996) argued that constructing one's identity became especially important in the current era of globalization (as cited in Zeman, 2007; pp. 1022). According to Castells, (1997) identity serves as a defense system against the globalization and its destabilizing effects on societal structures, institutions, and organizations (as cited in Zeman, 2007; pp. 1022).

A good example of how hunters construct their identities when challenged by the outside pressures can be found in the work of Krangle and Skogen (2007). These researchers studied the way young rural males, the majority of which were hunters, reacted to a re-occurrence of wolves in their community. Most of these hunters became hunters through their families' influence, and hunting represented a tradition passed on them by earlier generations. The presence of wolves was perceived as a threat to hunting but also as an invasion of urban values as they believed it is the urban people who constitute the "pro-carnivore alliance" (Krangle and Skogen, 2007; pp. 228). Wolves were, therefore, seen as an urban concept of nature that posed a threat to their identities, and so the importance of their identities, especially their collective identification as the male rural hunters, became even more relevant and pronounced (Krangle and Skogen, 2007).

These findings showed that hunting constituted an immense part of hunters' lifestyles, and that through hunting they could identify themselves on both a personal (i.e., "sense of self") and collective level (Krange and Skogen, 2007;.pp. 231).

In an extensive study about hunting in the rural south of USA, Littlefield (2006) explored the process of socialization through which hunters not only learned how to hunt, but also had an opportunity to prove themselves as men in their hunting communities. Littlefield (2006) observed that for those who became hunters through the influence of their family (i.e., primary socialization), hunting had a stronger impact on their identities than for those who became hunters later in their life through the secondary socialization. In the case of primary socialization, the process of becoming a hunter overlapped with the process of becoming a young man, resulting in childhood memories that often included recollections of hunting activities. This consequently made hunting important for the hunter's personal and family history (Littlefield, 2006). Moreover, Littlefield (2006) identified several clusters of hunters, all with varying approaches to hunting, values, social relationships with other hunters, relationships toward equipment etc. He referred to these five clusters as *traditionalist*, *pragmatist*, *gearheads*, *experiential*, and *transcendentalist* hunters. Littlefield also explored masculinity among these men and found that they expressed a spectrum of masculinities. These masculinities consisted of aspects of family-based values, mastery of equipment, connection and deep immersion in nature, care for the environment, social relations as well as

connection with the hunted animals (Littlefield, 2006; 2010). Littlefield's study showed not only that there are multiple masculinities in the hunting community but that these masculinities do not necessarily correspond to the prototype masculinity based on dominance of nature and women (Littlefield, 2010).

Rituals have been said to have a large influence on hunters' identities (Bronner, 2008). Since rituals are performed through generations they serve as a link between the past, present, and the future, "providing identity and visibility to hunting culture" (Bronner, 2008; pp. 61). As a result, Bronner (2008) added, hunting stops being merely an activity and becomes a tradition, a lifestyle, and a unique perspective of the world. Dunk (2002) was also interested in the concept of "hunting as tradition" and presented his ideas in his compelling study on the identity of white, male hunters in the Canadian province of Ontario. Revolted by a ban on a bear spring hunt, these hunters protested against the ban claiming that for them hunting represents a "profound statement of expression, a way of life, how they identify themselves in the world with their family, with their friends, with their community" (*OFAH v. the Queen*, 1999, as cited in Dunk, 2002; pp. 43). They depicted hunting as a tradition and a relevant cultural practice of white men in Canada, demanding from the government to acknowledge this fact and implement it into Canadian legislation (Dunk, 2002). This particular political discourse on legitimacy of hunting is part of the larger discourse that draws on issues of culture, heritage, right and need for tolerance to justify modern hunting (Dunk, 2002). What is so novel about this discourse is that the claims of identity and the rights

associated with it borrow largely from the discourses of rights and claims of subaltern, colonized indigenous groups of people. However, even though such discourse portrays hunting done by white male hunters in Ontario as a traditional practice, Dunk (2002) argues this is a case of “invention of tradition”. The term “invention of traditions” stands for an activity lacking in real historical authenticity that, within a relatively short period of time, becomes an alleged tradition or cultural heritage (Hobsbawm, 1983). While Dunk stressed the need to use extreme caution when distinguishing between “real” versus “invented” traditions, he pointed out that this new distinct discourse of hunting is an unmistakable product of our modern times. As such, he continues, hunting represented through such discourse cannot be regarded as tradition. Besides achieving a clear political goal, Dunk (2002) believed that claims of hunting as a tradition might also have something to do with the hunters’ nostalgic view of past times and their aims to redefine their identities and their images, not only for their own sake, but for the general public as well.

As seen from the foregoing, scholars have put a substantial effort into investigating if and how exactly hunting relates to identity and its formation. The vast majority of these studies have one important thing in common: they revolve around identity of male hunters. Gender issues, particularly masculinity, are commonly discussed in the research on hunting. The reasoning behind this is quite simple: there are and has been, by far, more male hunters than female ones. While the female hunting participation has been steadily increasing from the 1990s,

female hunters are still a minority in this male dominated activity (Enck et al., 2000; Bergman, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2005). In the USA for example, male hunters make up for more than 90% of the whole hunting population, and in Europe that percentage is even higher in favor of male hunters (Heberlein et al., 2008). In the past, women were discouraged from participating in hunting, while hunting became linked to, among others, manhood, masculinity, and male bravery (Fitzgerald, 2005; Smalley, 2005). An increase in female hunting participation in recent years has been linked to the intensification of recruitment programs aimed toward women, and women's "rebellion" against hunting as a male sport (Fitzgerald, 2005). The portrayal of modern hunting as one of the key elements in wildlife conservation and the appeal of such portrayal to some females might also be causing today's increase in female hunting participation (Fitzgerald, 2005).

It could be said that, to some degree, hunting acts as an incubator of masculinity. Loo's (2001a) study on big game hunting in British Columbia during the period of late 19th and early 20th century centered on the development of "bourgeois masculinity". The author argued that white middle class men became big game hunters in order to be seen as masculine and bourgeois, but also to establish their own "racial and sexual identity" (Loo, 2001a; pp. 298). Smalley's (2005) historical review of gender in sport hunting in the USA, revealed major differences in portrayal of hunting before and after World War II. The post-war masculinity was very intense, picturing "an image of hunting that was exclusively male and decisively masculine" in comparison to a pre-war period that was much

more open to women in hunting (Smalley's, 2005; pp.190). Smalley also (2005) noted that in the past gender served as a mean for different constructions of hunting, oftentimes hiding the true reasons behind the process (i.e., economic, environmental, and political reasons). In general, the female position and role in hunting is of special interest to feminist researchers who use perspectives from feminist political ecology and ecofeminism (Fitzgerald, 2005).

Bye (2003) studied construction of male hunters' identities in the circumstances when hunters are challenged by the modern hunting culture, i.e. urban hunters who hunt in the same areas as the rural hunters. The researcher paid special attention to the construction of masculinity and rurality using hunting stories told by the rural men to gain insights into hunters' gendered practices and values. The elk hunt had a pivotal role in shaping masculine identities of rural men, and the first successful elk hunt was a rite of passage for young hunters, marking their social status both within and outside the hunting community. Bye (2003) found that in order for a rural man to be considered a true man, he had to be a hunter or at least show some interest in hunting activities. Those men that failed to do so were to some extent excluded from the local community. Hunting was about friendship and excitement but also about the "masculine pride" gained through the hunting experience (Bye, 2003; pp. 149). Local hunters prided themselves for being well experienced, balanced and patient hunters in comparison to urban hunters who were "vain and incompetent" and clearly preoccupied with material values (Bye, 2003; pp. 149). The rural hunter was consequently seen as a true hunter and true steward

of nature and as such a better hunter than the macho urban hunter for whom hunting is only a hobby, and not a way of life. Rural men from this study established a well defined boundary between “us” (i.e., local hunters) and “them” (i.e., urban hunters) and constructed two distinct types of masculinity where one was proper, and the other wrong.

In his comprehensive study on meanings of hunting in the region of Vermont, USA, Boglioli (2009) explored a spectrum of hunting issues, part of which was the significance of hunting for the local hunters and their identities. For these men and women, who predominantly hunted in and around the same rural area where they grew up, hunting was a linkage to past generations of local people, to their landscape and natural environment. Hunting was perceived as a rural tradition and a “critical element in the creation of local community” (Boglioli, 2009; pp. 51). An important part of hunters’ identities was their self-sufficiency and feeling of connectedness to other hunters, especially during the annual meetings in deer camps. As for masculinity, Boglioli (2009) did not find any evidence of extreme masculinity (i.e., hypermasculinity), but he stressed the importance of hunting for the construction of masculine identity. The relationship between men and hunting was so intuitive for these hunters, that it was actually rarely discussed. Nevertheless, hunting in Vermont was unmistakably marked by the “typical” traits of American masculinity: self reliance, bravery, and a tendency for outdoor activities (Boglioli, 2009).

Besides being focused on identities, especially masculine identity, the majority of above mentioned studies (Bye, 2003; Milbourne 2003a; Milbourne 2003b; Krange and Skogen, 2007; Boglioli, 2009, and Littlefield, 2006) have one more important thing in common. They explore rural hunters, which is not a result of some odd coincidence. Rural residents, regardless of sex, are more likely to become hunters than urban residents (Stedman and Heberlein, 2001). Heberlein, Ericsson, and Wollscheid (2002) furthermore showed that those areas with the greatest percentage of rural population had also the highest hunting participation. Their study also showed that whether someone lives in the rural area was a much better predictor of his or her hunting participation than their age, gender or unemployment (Heberlein et al., 2002). Of course, not every rural man becomes a hunter, and whether a person has a father who hunts or not, is more important for hunting participation than the rural upbringing and rural socialization (Stedman and Heberlein, 2001).

Hunting has a special meaning for rural areas, serving as a social domain and unifying local hunters (Bye, 2003). Rural places have a strong influence on identities of rural people and their sense of community (Skogen and Krange, 2003). However, Stedman and Heberlein (2001) cautioned against taking rural spaces for granted and assigning them some "typical" rural characteristics. These authors stressed the significance of understanding that rural places are diverse places made not of one, but multiple perspectives and varying values, attitudes or behaviors. Some of the recent studies on rural places used the approach of social

constructionism claiming that rural places are social constructions defined not by some socioeconomic characteristics but by meanings people assigned to them (Lukić, 2010). As a result, defining rural places becomes an open, multidimensional and ever-changing process receptive for various interpretations (Lukić, 2010).

An interesting study on the role of hunting for the social construction of rural places was done by Milbourne (2003a; 2003b). He focused on several different study areas in rural England and Wales that differ, among others, in types of hunting practices, history of hunting, and level of in-movement of ex-urban groups (i.e., urban newcomers). One of the assumptions in his studies was that there are different constructions of nature and rurality between the “new and established rural residents” (Milbourne, 2003a; pp. 159). As a result, conflicts regarding nature, farming and hunting are likely to occur (Milbourne, 2003b). Milbourne found that the majority of rural residents are well aware of hunting, that they support it, and believe it can have a number of positive community functions. For some residents hunting represented a tradition with an extreme importance for the livelihood of rural people, that is as the essence of the rural life. This sentiment was predominantly held by those directly involved in hunting. While others also perceived hunting as a traditional practice, it usually did not play a major role in their lives and they did not consider themselves living in a “hunting community” (Milbourne 2003b; pp. 303). Some of these residents actually disliked hunting, although they did not openly display this attitude. Overall, Milbourne’s findings depicted hunting as a socially embedded practice. However, while his studies

showed that the in-moving groups have not confronted dominant discourses on hunting, they also showed that the socio-cultural functions of hunting were not perceived nor felt the same among all residents. In places with a larger population of hunters and longer tradition of hunting, hunting was valued more and there were more benefits associated with it. Thus, Milbourne's findings stress the complex perceptivities on hunting and clearly show there can be significant spatial and social differentiation in attitudes toward hunting within rural places (Milbourne 2003a; 2003b).

Conclusion

The literature presented in this chapter depicted the complexity of meanings on hunting. The main purpose was to examine the existing cultural studies on hunting. I also wanted to illustrate how relevant it is to expand our outlook on hunting, and include the cultural and social dimension of hunting in studies on hunting; in particular HD studies on hunting. The cultural and social dimension, just as the ecological dimension of hunting, undoubtedly influences peoples' views and attitudes toward hunting. At the moment, the vast majority of cultural studies on hunting are done outside the HD discipline. As a result, my research design was influenced by both HD studies on hunting as well as those studies on hunting done in other disciplines. Together, they provided me with a broad perspective and a number of concepts to guide the gathering, analysis and interpretation of my data.

3 Study area

The purpose of this chapter is to provide more detailed information about the study area. In particular, this chapter describes the geography of Gorski kotar, and showcases the most prominent socioeconomic characteristics in the region. I also describe the hunting systems in Croatia and Gorski kotar, and emphasize the current trends in both systems. This information is intended to give a better understanding of the region and hunting, especially in regard to the existing challenges, many of which will be mentioned in the results chapter and discussed in the final chapter.

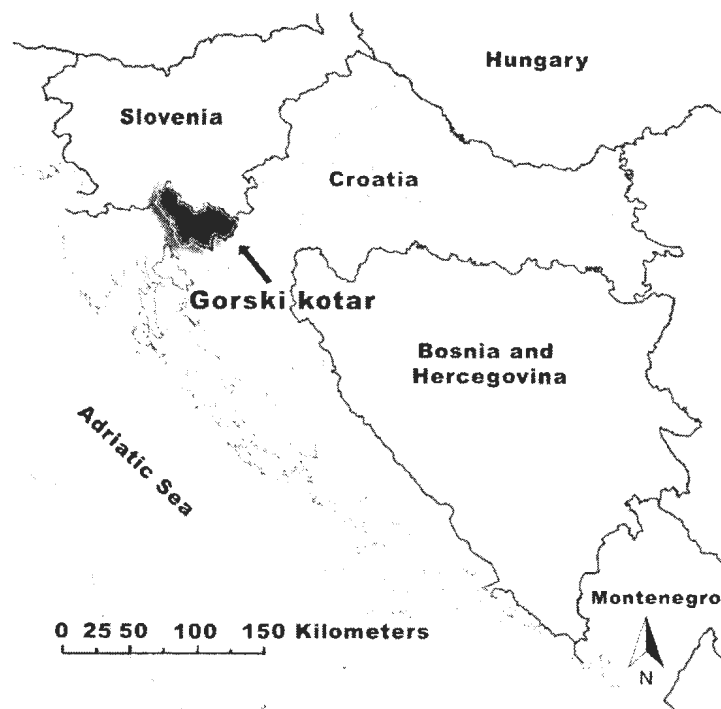


Figure 3.1. Map of Croatia. Gorski kotar is highlighted in black.

Gorski kotar

Gorski kotar is situated in the west of Croatia, and is part of Primorsko-goranska county. The region is located between continental Croatia on one side and the Adriatic Sea on the other. Gorski kotar is an important transit space connecting the east and west of Croatia as well as Central Europe with the Mediterranean (Lukić, Opačić, and Zupanc, 2009). The region extends northwest to southeast and has an area of 1273 km² (Banovac, Blažević, and Boneta, 2004).

The relief consists of typical karst typography with water sink holes, steep canyons, caves and shallow soils (Batina, 2004/2005; Kaczensky et al., 2006). Other typical landscape features are periodical lakes and rivers that submerge after short distances (Kaczensky et al. 2006). Gorski kotar is a mountainous region characterized by mountains reaching between 700 and 900m high; the highest mountain is 1500m high. More than two-thirds of Gorski kotar's terrain is covered by forests, which are a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees (Lukić et al., 2009). As a result, the region is often referred to as the "green heart" of Croatia (Batina, 2004/2005). The main characteristics of the climate are short and cool summers, cold winters with abundant snow, strong winds and plenty of precipitation during the year.

Gorski kotar is considered as a peripheral and less developed region of Croatia (Banovac, et al., 2004; Sveučilište u Rijeci, 2005). The region is marked by dispersed and isolated settlements with a rather small number of residents (Banovac, et al., 2004). Based on the 2001 census there were 26120 residents living

in 231 settlements; an average of 113 inhabitants per settlement (Lukić et al., 2009). Its population density of 21 inhabitants per km² is lower than the Croatian average (Lukić et al., 2009). The economy is based on forestry and hydropower. Forestry employs more than 50% of the entire population (Lukić et al., 2009). Agriculture is not a significant part of the economy as the small and fragmented land allotments limit agricultural development (Lukić et al., 2009). Tourism is slowly growing, but it is still an undeveloped industry. Current strategies on the development of Gorski kotar's tourism stress the positive characteristics of the region such as the rich cultural and historical heritage, healthy ecosystems, geographical and cultural diversity, and excellent geo-transit position (Sveučilište u Rijeci, 2005).

On the other hand, this rural region is marked by a lasting depopulation (Banovac, et al., 2004). Emigration and depopulation started in the second half of the 19th century, and so far there have been several high intensity waves of emigration (Lajić and Klempić-Bogadi, 2010). Unfavorable physical-geographical characteristics, shortage of cultivated land, small and dispersed settlements, and the lack of a central urban center are the main forces behind the emigration process and principal factors limiting the socio-economic development of the region (Lajić and Bogadi, 2010). Lajić and Klempić-Bogadi (2010) also noted that, during the last two decades, privatization of properties and centralization of natural resource management have impeded the local economy. Economic decisions often disregarded local interests, further marginalizing local communities. The future will

most likely bring a continued population decline and disruption of the demographic and economic structure (Lajić and Klempić-Bogadi, 2010).

Hunting in Croatia

During the feudal period in Croatia, as in many other parts of Europe, hunting was a privileged activity granted only to the aristocrats (Ka-Urbani, 2010). Hunting was seen as a source of entertainment and a convenient way to practice handling of weapons. Hunting, that is, was a symbol of class and power (Kolar-Dimitrijević and Wagner, 2009). At the same time, peasants were forbidden to hunt and were only allowed to participate in peripheral hunting activities in the role of abettors and gatherers (Kolar-Dimitrijević and Wagner, 2009). The situation changed once serfdom was abolished in the 19th century. In the second half of the 19th century there was an increased interest in hunting among the middle class (Ka-Urbani, 2010) that eventually resulted in the establishment of a "Society for advocacy of hunting in the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia" in 1881. This is considered the official date of organized hunting in Croatia (Florijančić et al., 2010). Aristocrats were still involved in hunting but their role gradually decreased and by the 1930s, hunting was completely separated from aristocracy. Nevertheless, the perception of hunting as a symbol of power was not completely lost as many politicians, both those of lower and higher ranks, participated in hunting throughout the early and mid 20th century (Kolar-Dimitrijević and Wagner, 2009). Perhaps the best example of this relationship between politics and hunting is personified in

Joseph Broz Tito, the leader of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the Second World War. Hunting had a central place in Tito's life and was more than just a hobby (Todorović, 2012). Quite often serious political decisions were made during Tito's hunting trips.

After the First World War the number of hunters steadily increased as well as the number of hunting clubs. In 1925 the association of hunting clubs was established (Ka-Urbani, 2010). During, and immediately, after the Second World War there were considerable problems in Croatian hunting as game populations were decimated, mostly due to intense illegal killing (Malnar, 2006). The Hunting Act of 1945 aimed to improve hunting conditions by placing stricter regulations regarding establishment and management of hunting clubs and hunting grounds. In addition, the Act established the regal hunting right, thus separating the hunting rights from the landownership. This hunting system was in place until 1991. The new Hunting Act from 1991 changed the hunting system by re-linking the hunting rights with the landownership. The aim of the new act was also to make the hunting system more similar to hunting systems existing in those European countries whose hunting tradition influenced Croatian hunting in the past (e.g., Austria, Germany, Czech Republic) (Ministarstvo poljoprivrede, šumarstva i vodnog gospodarstva (MPŠVG), 2004). Moreover, the 1991 Hunting Act, as well as the later 2005 Hunting Act, aligned Croatian hunting legislation with a number of international regulations and directives on conservation and habitat protection (MPŠVG, 2004).

Today, hunting in Croatia is defined as the management of the hunting ground and game. It incorporates breeding, protection, hunting and utilization of game and parts of game (Zakon o lovstvu, 2005). Croatian legislation describes hunting as an industry that has "economic, touristic, and recreational functions as well as a function of nature protection and conservation of biological and ecological balance of natural habitats, game and wild fauna and flora" (Zakon o lovstvu, 2005). The two highest authorities on hunting are the Ministry of Agriculture and the Croatian Hunting Association. The Croatian hunting association functions as the assembly of regional hunting associations and local hunting clubs and has more than 55 000 members (Hrvatski lovački savez, n.d.).

As noted earlier, the hunting right is linked to landownership but the right is not given automatically. A hunting right belongs to a landowner whose land allotment is bigger than 1000 hectares in which case the landowner can establish an individual hunting ground. Individual hunting grounds can also be established by the state on state-owned land. The other way to gain a hunting right is through a lease or concession of the state or commune hunting grounds. State hunting grounds are those that the state offers for a lease or concession in duration of 10 to 30 years. Communal hunting grounds are all those where the land allotments are too small to establish individual hunting grounds.

A state-owned company named Hrvatske Šume d.o.o. (i.e., Croatian Forests) manages the majority of Croatian hunting grounds (Hrvatske Šume, n.d.). The rest are managed either by local hunting clubs or private hunting companies. Croatian

Forests and private hunting companies regard hunting as an industry (i.e., hunting tourism) and largely focus on economic benefits of hunting. That being said, due to more than a century long tradition of both forest and game population management, Croatian Forests has played, and continue to play, a substantial role in Croatian game management. Specifically, Croatian Forests define their game and forest management as one that maintains balance, naturalness and biodiversity of both flora and fauna (Hrvatske Šume, n.d.).

Local hunting clubs are involved in hunting tourism too, but they primarily focus on providing opportunities for recreational hunting for their club members. Non-members, including foreign hunters, may hunt on a hunting ground managed by a particular hunting club but must pay a certain fee in order to gain the right to hunt. Since the easiest way to gain the right to hunt is through a hunting club membership, the majority of Croatian hunters are members of a local hunting club (Šegrt, n.d.). As club members, hunters are required to pay annual fees and spend a certain amount of time working within the hunting ground. Their work is directed towards managing population numbers of game, its sex and age ratio, and its trophy quality (Pejnović, Krapinec and Slamar, 2010).

The number of hunters in Croatia has been slowly but steadily increasing over the last decade: from 37 931 in 2001 to 57 766 in 2010 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2011: pp. 270; Pejnović et al., 2010). The precise reasons behind this increase are unfortunately not well explored and there is a lack of literature that specifically deals with this topic. What one of the rare socio-demographic studies

on Croatian hunters did find is that the spatial distribution of Croatian hunters is fairly uneven. Namely, more than one-fourth of Croatian hunters reside in three out of twenty-one Croatian counties in total; Primorsko-goranska county is one of these three counties (Pejnović et al., 2010). The same study found that the percentage of hunters in the population significantly decreases with the increase of population density. The study also found that the majority of Croatian hunters are older males (i.e., between the ages of 44 to 65) who started hunting in their twenties, have a high school diploma, are employed and live in rural areas (Pejnović et al., 2010). The same study also explored the reasons behind hunting. The main drivers for becoming a hunter were inclination toward recreation in nature and the existence of hunting tradition in a hunter's family. The latter factor was especially prominent if there was a male family member who hunted. Most family members of hunters supported hunting; the majority of those who opposed hunting were females. Work, time constraints, and the costs of hunting were listed as factors hindering hunters from a more active engagement in hunting (Pejnović et al., 2010).

Hunting in Gorski kotar

Gorski kotar is a region with a long practice of managing natural resources, forests in particular. Hunting in Gorski kotar is understood as an essential component of forestry and the tight association of forestry and hunting dates back for over a century. Throughout the years many foresters were also avid hunters and have played a central role in establishing and directing local hunting clubs and

game management (Malnar, 2005; Frković, 2007). Today, forestry, as well as hunting are considered as the region's traditional activities (Malnar, 2005; Pucić, 2010). Today, while hunting is less dependent on forestry, the link between the two fields remains strong (Mrkobrad, 2002).

Hunting in Gorski kotar is valued for its various appealing characteristics. For example, hunting magazines, as well as books and booklets on hunting like to point out the high biodiversity of game, in particular big game such as Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*), Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*), Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), European Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), and European mouflon (*Ovis aries musimon*) (Hrvatska turistička zajednica, 2010). Other attributes of this hunting, such as the existence of a well organized association of hunting clubs, good hunting infrastructure, specific hunting rituals and, high ethical standards are also frequently mentioned (Lovački savez PGŽ, 2012). The aim of these accounts is to showcase not only the recreational merits of hunting but also to depict touristic potentials of hunting. In the last decade there has been a push toward commercialization of hunting and all three types of hunting right owners (i.e., local hunting clubs, private hunting companies and Croatian Forests) are actively involved in hunting tourism. Moreover, the general public also has expressed an interest in seeing more economic benefits from hunting, especially within the context of revitalization of rural areas (LAG GK; 2009). However, complicated legislation, lack of supplementary non-hunting activities, lack of purposeful marketing, and a shortage of tourist accommodations

are some of the main challenges that prevent hunting from turning into a more significant industry (Kovačević and Kovačević, 2007; LAG GK; 2009; Florijančić et al., 2010). All of this being said, hunting as we will see, remains an integral part of rural communities in Gorski kotar.

4 Methods

The purpose of the following sections is to present the research design and analytical process employed in this study. Firstly, I present the epistemological tradition that framed the methodology and knowledge production for the study. Secondly, I describe the actual methods of gathering and analyzing the data.

The goal of this study is to determine the scope of attitudes and values towards hunting, and to explore participants' views about the role of hunting for the Gorski kotar's social and natural environment. In other words, I investigate the phenomena (i.e., hunting) by exploring an extensive spectrum of meanings assigned to hunting by people who are directly or indirectly affected by it. For this purpose, I use qualitative methodology as it allows understanding of "how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives" (Valentine 2005, pp. 111). I rely on the exploratory nature of qualitative methodology and its open ended questions to produce narratives as its data (Grbich, 2007). My goal is neither to test a particular hypothesis nor to validate a specific theory, but to explore and interpret multiple meanings within the data (Winchester, 2005), with the purpose of creating a contextual and rich map of individual's subjective meanings on hunting.

My research is framed by the interpretative paradigm as I investigate subjective meanings and their patterns (Gephart, 1999). The reason for choosing the interpretive paradigm was that it, among others, allows me to document "the subjective nature of the real world phenomena" (Davenport and Anderson, 2005:

pp. 630) in the natural setting where it occurs (Van Velsor and Nilon, 2006). Therefore, it produces a complex and contextually situated picture of the world that interprets the elaborated views of participants (Creswell, 1994). As a researcher using interpretative paradigm I assume that there is no such thing as objective knowledge independent of human thoughts (Grbich, 2007). Rather, knowledge is subjective and mutually constructed through interactions between the researcher and the researched (Grbich, 2007). Our understanding of reality, in other words, is socially constructed. People, according to interpretivism, “impose meaning on the natural and social world by the way they organize and categorize their sensory experiences, and their actions are simultaneously defined and confined by these meanings” (Yuen, 2005, pp.116). Meanings are not fixed but rather created, transformed, and negotiated through human interaction (Yuen, 2005). Overall, the interpretative paradigm supposes multiple realities, and argues that different people have a different interpretation and understanding of these realities (Grbich, 2007).

4.1 Methods for collecting data

Qualitative data for this study was obtained through the process of interviewing. Qualitative interviewing enables open-ended, in-depth investigation of a particular aspect of a participants’ life regarding which they have extensive experience and insight (Charmaz, 2003). The specific methods for gathering qualitative data in this study include in-depth interviews and focus group

discussions. In the following section I will outline the main characteristics of each method and explain the reasoning for using both methods.

4.1.1. Individual interviews

An interview is a “face to face interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information of expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons” (Maccoby and Maccoby, 1954, as cited in Dunn, 2005, pp. 79). Eyles (1988) regarded the interview as “a conversation with a purpose” (as cited in Valentine, 2005, pp. 111). Interviews are used to provide additional insights, explore complex behaviors and motivations, and gather a rich set of meanings, opinions, and experiences (Dunn, 2005). In addition, they are a great method for studying events, opinions, and experiences and they help researchers to better understand diversification of people’s meanings (Dunn, 2005). Their flexible nature allows for the interviewer not only to elicit ideas and topics from the interviewee, but to instantaneously follow up on these leads (Charmaz, 2003). They represent a dynamic form of conversation, and will vary due to particular differences in interviewees such as their interests, experiences and views (Valentine, 2005). The interview can never be reproduced but only reaffirmed by similar studies and methods (Valentine, 2005).

When choosing individual interviews as one of the methods for this study I was guided by the notion that they are sensitive and directly focused on people; they permit interviewees to describe their experiences in their own words; and the

range of discussion is much wider than, for example, in a questionnaire (Valentine, 2005). By using in-depth interviews researchers can find out what is of real importance for the interviewee, and during the interview a researcher's assumptions and opinions can be immediately confirmed or rejected (Dunn, 2005). During the actual interview, I am able to go back to previous parts of the discussion, and by asking the same questions in different ways I am able to explore the same issues in a different manner (Valentine, 2005). The additional strength of an interview is that it provides interviewees with the freedom to discuss the topics that were not originally foreseen (Silverman, 1993). Material produced by interviews is "rich, detailed, and multi layered" (Burgess, 1984, as cited in Valentine, 2005, pp. 111). The fact that interviews can easily be used in multi-method studies with other qualitative methods (e.g. focus groups in this case) to ensure triangulation for a deeper understanding of the studied topic (Valentine, 2005) was seen as another useful trait of this method.

I decided to use a semi-structured interview technique, which means I used open ended questions that were set in advance (Fox, 2009). Questions were listed in the interview schedule so that they covered the topics that the researcher sees as relevant for the study (Dunn, 2005). Questions were ordered but flexible, and, compared to unstructured interviews, the researcher's role is more prominent as he or she guides the conversation (Dunn, 2005). At the same time, the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to ask follow up questions and investigate topics that were not initially anticipated (Mabry, 2008).

4.1.2. Focus group

The focus group is a form of qualitative method for data gathering and is in a sense a group interview (Fontana and Frey, 2005). More specifically, a focus group is a “group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of research” (Powell, Single, and Lloyd, 1996, as cited in Conradson, 2005; pp. 129). This method can be a useful tool for exploring people’s views about a particular issue and the nature of their interactions and dialogues over that same issue (Conradson, 2005). Cameron (2005) pointed out that they can be used to explore the diversity of processes and practices that construct the social world, and that they are especially suitable to explore the rich relationship between people and places. Their trademark is their reliance on group interaction to produce a rich amount of data and insights, which might be impossible to obtain using some other qualitative methods that leave out group interaction (Morgan, 1997). Group interaction is also able to pinpoint similarities and differences regarding participants’ perspectives and experiences (Lambert and Loiselle, 2008). Another characteristic of focus groups is the significant role of the researcher playing the role of a moderator or facilitator, who encourages the group interaction and focuses discussion (Cameron, 2005). Still, compared to the researcher’s role in an individual interview, his or her role in a focus group is decentralized (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005; p. 904).

I decided to use focus groups as a data collection method in this study knowing that focus groups can produce rich data on precisely the topic of interest

from a relatively large number of people in a short period of time (Morgan, 1997; Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005). In comparison to individual interviews, focus groups allow creation of synergy among participants that might unveil particular information that is otherwise hard to elicit from an individual memory. This particular synergy and dynamic of focus groups can also reveal “unarticulated norms and normative assumptions” (Kamberelis, and Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 903). A negative side of focus group dynamic is that, occasionally, dominant member(s) might create a false consensus (Smithson, 2008). Moderators should not automatically assume that just because no one openly disagreed everyone has the same opinion. A good moderator will pay special attention to moments of silence and non-verbal signs as these might reveal discomfort and differences in opinion (Smithson, 2008). Focus groups require careful facilitation that will, among other, encourage discussion of different topics, explore disagreements, and clarify misunderstandings (Cameron, 2005). Through the joint investigation of collective memory and shared knowledge, focus groups can bring out the type of information that might seem trivial to an individual but instead might be crucial for the research (Kamberelis, and Dimitriadis, 2005). Maybe less important, but still worth mentioning is the fact that focus group participants usually enjoy the group interaction, while researchers often find the research process refreshing (Cameron, 2005).

4.1.3. Multi-method approach: using focus groups and individual interviews for gathering data

There are several motives why I considered a multi-method approach appropriate for this study. Firstly, I combined the two methods for pragmatic reasons. By using both individual interviews and focus group discussions for data gathering the goal was to maximize the input (i.e., sources) of data during the limited timeframe available for fieldwork. This meant reaching a wide range of people that were likely to participate in the study and interviewing them using the most appropriate method. More specifically, I conducted individual interviews with participants who held prominent positions within the Croatian hunting community and were thus perceived as having extended knowledge regarding the study topic. I also conducted individual interviews also in cases when it was impossible to organize a focus group due to either a small number of participants or when participants professed holding diametrically opposite attitudes regarding hunting. In the latter situation the aim was to avoid animosity or conflicts between focus group participants and assure an intra-group homogeneity (Conradson, 2005).

The second motive why I choose a multi-method approach is based on the assumption that, in qualitative multi-method studies, each method in a way contributes something new that will, in the end, expand the understanding of the studied topic (Morgan, 1997; Tsourvakas 1997). Grbich (2007) pointed out that multi-method studies aim to provide a clearer picture of research questions, and contribute different perspectives through which studied phenomena can be further

explored. By combining interviews and focus groups, I was not only able to gain richer and more meaningful data, but also avoid or minimize certain characteristic weaknesses for each of these methods. Group interaction in focus groups might stimulate new ideas but also focus only on shared ideas and general topics (Levine and Moreland, 1995; Kaplowitz and Hoehn, 2001). While focus groups provide less detailed insights about participants' views or personal experiences (Smithson, 2008), individual interviews can, to a degree, bridge that gap by producing extensive and in-depth data sets regarding a specific topic. Moreover, participants in individual interviews are usually more relaxed and open to discuss more sensitive topics (Zaharia, Grundey, and Stancu, 2008). At the same time, individual interviews do not show how people's views and opinions are created and negotiated during interactions in social settings, which is one of the focus group's main characteristics (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005).

Lastly, by conscious and planned implementation of two methods in the same study, researchers will usually achieve methodological triangulation, which in turn increases the quality of the research. This new, increased knowledge can be used to validate the research results by providing more insight on the topic (Flick, 2000). The term triangulation was first introduced in social science by Denzin in 1970, and it denotes an approach where researchers use different perspectives to study a specific issue (Flick, 2007). Those perspectives include combining different methods, theories, and data to produce a type of knowledge which would not be possible to produce by using only one approach, which in return produces better

quality research (Flick, 2007). Specifically, for this study, I used two types of triangulation: triangulation by data source and between-method triangulation. Triangulation by data source means that I collected the data from different persons or entities (Mabry, 2008). Through such an approach I was able to explore the “degree to which each source confirms, elaborates, and disconfirms information from other sources” (Mabry, 2008; pp. 222). A between-methods triangulation (Denzin, 1970) for this study includes using two methods for data gathering: focus groups and individual interviews. Here, emphasis was put on combining methods that have two different levels: individual and interactive one (Flick, 2007). The hope is that the “side-by side and non-hierarchical comparison of data sets” will produce in-depth, complementary findings that can provide a more “coherent and more nuanced” study of phenomenon (Lambert and Loiselle, 2008 pp. 234).

Triangulation is a common method to assure credibility in qualitative research. Credibility refers to the accuracy of the data, which has to come from the realities of interest groups and not from a researcher’s preconceived hypothesis (Decker et al., 2001). It stands for the “connection between the experiences of groups and the concepts that social scientists use to recreate and simplify them through interpretation” (Baxter and Eyles, 1997; pp. 512). Along with triangulation, the credibility of results was also reached through regular meetings with my colleagues. Referred to as “peer debriefing”, these meetings with researchers who are not directly involved in the study helped me to unveil my own preconceptions

and to discuss evolving ideas about results (Flick, 2007; pp. 19; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

4.2 Data collection

Twenty six individuals, eight females and eighteen males, participated in this study (Table 4.1 and Table 4.2). Of those 26 individuals, 9 participated in the individual interviews and 17 in the focus groups. Overall, 9 interviews and 5 focus groups were conducted during the period from June 9 to July 17 2010. The majority of respondents were hunters ($n=18$) and the rest were identified as non-hunters ($n=8$). From those 9 interviews, 7 of them were with hunters and 2 with non-hunters. As for the focus groups, 3 were done with hunters and 2 with non-hunters. The age of participants ranged from late twenties to mid sixties with the majority of participants being in their mid or late forties. The interviews and focus group discussions lasted between 39 minutes and an hour and 57 minutes with an average length of one hour and 15 minutes.

Table 4.1 Information about focus group participants

Code	Town/Village	Date	Fg. number	Age/Sex
NH-6	Čabar	14.06.2010	Fg.1	Unknown/F
NH-7	Čabar	14.06.2010	Fg.1	Unknown/F
NH-8	Čabar	14.06.2010	Fg.1	Unknown/F
H-10	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.2	67/M
H-11	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.2	65/M
H-12	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.2	43/M
NH-13	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.3	52/M
NH-14	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.3	56/M
NH-15	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.3	57/M
NH-16	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.4	27/F
NH-17	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.4	27/F
NH-18	Delnice	21.06.2010	Fg.4	29/F
H-19	Severina Kupi	01.07.2010	Fg.5	Unknown/M
H-20	Geroovo	01.07.2010	Fg.5	40/M
H-21	Mrkopalj	01.07.2010	Fg.5	39/M
H-22	Vrbovsko	01.07.2010	Fg.5	49/M
H-23	Čabar	01.07.2010	Fg.5	59/M

Fg. = focus group; NH = Non-hunter; H = Hunter

Table 4.2 Information about interview participants

Code	Town/Village	Date	Age/Sex
H-1	Delnice	09.06.2010	44/F
NH-2	Delnice	09.06.2010	47/M
H-3	Delnice	09.06.2010	42/M
H-4	Sedalei	09.06.2010	44/M
H-5	Delnice	10.06.2011	53/M
H-9	Čabar	18.06.2010	54/M
H-24	Klana (Crni Lug)	13.07.2010	Unknown/F
NH-27	Ravna Gora	17.07.2010	47/M
H-28	Ravna Gora	17.07.2010	46/M

NH = Non-hunter; H = Hunter

The decision to include more hunters than non-hunters was influenced by the obvious lack of any previous qualitative data about hunting and hunters in Gorski kotar. As a way to fill this knowledge gap, I put more emphasis on recruiting hunters in comparison to non-hunters. Moreover, since the findings from qualitative research were not meant to be representative nor used for generalization (Valentine, 2005), this “overabundance” of hunters is not considered an issue. Hunter groups consisted of individuals who regarded themselves as active hunters. Non-hunter individuals consisted of people who are not hunters but were keen on discussing their own views of hunting regardless if those views were positive, ambivalent or negative. Non-hunters were not chosen based on their previous exposure or

experience to hunting and/or hunters. When choosing potential participants for both groups, the main prerequisite was that they lived in the region of Gorski kotar. In the end, roughly half of the chosen participants came from the main urban center of Gorski kotar (i.e., Delnice), while the other half resided in smaller towns and villages (i.e., Čabar, Mrkopalj, Sedalci, Ravna Gora, Klana, Severin na Kupi, Vrbovsko, and Gerovo). I did not include individuals from urban and rural areas in order to investigate differences regarding meanings of hunting between rural and urban areas of Gorski kotar but simply to broaden the spectrum of participants and their backgrounds.

I contacted and recruited participants for both individual interviews and focus group discussions through gatekeepers and the snowball approach. Gatekeepers are individuals from particular settings such as organizations “who have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purpose of the research” (Burges, 1984, as cited in Valentine, 2005; pp. 116). The snowballing process stands for the situation where the researcher through one contact recruits another contact, which in turn helps recruit the next one (Valentine, 2005). Through gatekeepers, who were mainly representatives of local hunting clubs or hunting companies, I was able to reach not only those hunters for whom hunting is a hobby and are usually members of local hunting clubs but also those for whom hunting was part of their job description (i.e., professional hunters). In addition, gatekeepers not only aided in recruiting other potential participants but were also individually interviewed.

I also conducted individual interviews in occasions when it was impossible to organize a focus group due to either a small number of participants or when participants held extremely differing attitudes. When organizing a focus group I was guided by the notion that groups should be homogeneous, single-sex, and that several groups with comparable characteristics needed to be organized to allow cross-group comparability (Smithson, 2008). This consequently allows intra-group homogeneity and between group comparison (Conradson, 2005). In each organized focus group there were between 3 and 5 participants. Because these focus groups are somewhat smaller in size than the standard focus groups that have 4 to 8 participants, they have become known as mini-groups. Mini-groups are a relatively new method of data gathering, and although smaller, they are undoubtedly marked by active group dynamics, a kind of “sharing and comparing” that is characteristic for larger focus groups (Morgan, 2012). Moreover, mini-groups enabled me to gain significantly more detailed and in-depth data than is possible in larger focus groups. Lastly, the process of recruitment for mini-groups is less time and effort intensive in comparison to recruitment for standard sized focus groups (Morgan, 2012).

I used the same interview schedule for the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. The questions varied based on whether the participants were hunters or non-hunters. A list of questions from the two interview schedules is provided in Appendices I and II. The scope of topics covered by the interview schedules is somewhat broader than the scope of my study since the data

collection for both the “Hunting for sustainability” project and my study were done at the same time.

All questions from the interview schedule were open-ended, allowing participants to freely express themselves in their own words. Based on the actual conversation, and in order to maintain the naturalness of it, if needed, the order of the questions was changed and/or new questions introduced. If a question or a topic was found to be irrelevant for the participants, the conversation was directed towards other, more relevant topics. Topics that were identified as relevant and important from earlier interviews and focus groups were also discussed in the later interviews and focus groups to see what other participants had to say about it. This means that I adapted the interview schedule through the course of fieldwork by adding new topics and questions to initial questions. I collected the data until I saw a repetition of insights, and could not identify any new themes. This is what Conradson (2005; pp. 137) calls “theoretical saturation”, a term first mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Theoretical saturation means that new data should be collected until researchers get the sense that they have heard all relevant points of view, and no new insights can be further gained.

I recorded interviews and focus groups using an Olympus DS-2400 digital voice recorder, and took written notes during each meeting, making up the field diary. To maintain the confidentiality of the data, I gave each participant a code name. I transcribed the interviews and focus group discussions verbatim into a

password protected Word document. Sections of transcripts were also translated from Croatian into English.

4.3 Data analysis

As an ongoing and iterative process, qualitative data analysis begins during the data collection and continues throughout the research process (Bradley, Curry, and Devers, 2007). For the purpose of this study, I choose a particular method for qualitative data analysis called thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analysis based on segmentation, categorization and (re)linking smaller sets of data before the final interpretation (Grbich, 2007). It consists of identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns (i.e., themes) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It enables concise organization and description of the dataset, and provides interpretation of different aspects of studied phenomena (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Basic concepts in thematic analysis are called themes, which capture relevant insights about the data related to research questions, representing "some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: p.82). They are extrapolated from "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1989, as cited in Aronson, 1994). Whether or not a theme is relevant for the data depends not on its frequency. Rather, it depends on consistency of themes "across and within study participants" (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, and Townsend, 2010: pp. 408). Even more important, the relevance depends on whether the theme

corresponds to the overall research questions and if it deepens our knowledge of the topic of study (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Floersch et al., 2010).

The main reason I choose thematic analysis is that it fits well into the interpretative paradigm and it is suitable for an inductive, “bottom-up” inquiry (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Inductive thematic analysis means that the data is not meant to fit into some preset codes. Instead, codes and the themes are data-driven and directly linked to the transcripts (Nicholas and McDowall, 2012). The second reason that I choose thematic analysis was that it is suitable for an exploratory human dimension study on hunting, given that there are no similar studies done on this topic within the context of Gorski kotar. In that sense, the fact that thematic analysis does not test hypothesis nor generate new theories was not seen as a disadvantage. Instead, the aim was to generate rich and detailed insights regarding the studied phenomenon. Lastly, the decision to use thematic analysis was also driven by a pragmatic reason. Thematic analysis was seen as a more appropriate method for data analysis in comparison to some other similar methods like, for instance, grounded theory. Unlike grounded theory, thematic analysis does not require rigorous implementation of precise coding and interpretative techniques. Instead, it is a relatively open and flexible analytical procedure that is often used by novice researchers in qualitative research.

The actual analysis of this study’s dataset was largely based on the thematic analysis procedure described in the Braun and Clarke (2006) (Table 4.3). What follows is a detailed reconstruction of the six applied analytical steps.

Table 4.3 Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

4.3.1. Familiarizing yourself with your data

I transcribed all audio recordings verbatim, which is an important step in becoming familiar with the data, and the first step toward its interpretation. Transcription was followed by a repeated reading of transcripts. This way I was able to immerse myself with the data, with an aim of comprehending "its meanings and its entirety" (Bradley et al., 2007; pp. 1761). Repeated reading of data enabled me to get an initial sense of particular meanings and patterns that might be relevant

for the following analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Reading the entire transcript prior to the actual coding is also helpful because it provides a strong connection between the concepts and the context behind them (Bradley et al., 2007). During the repeated reading period, I started writing down ideas regarding codes and themes and how these might relate to my research questions. Putting my thoughts on paper from an early stage of analysis enabled a free exploration of the ideas regarding the emerging codes and themes; I also used some of these ideas for my subsequent interpretation and discussion of data. Moreover, such continuous flow of thoughts and ideas prompted cautiousness about imposing my own preconceived ideas about the studied topic, since I had to repeatedly question myself about the truthfulness of my conclusions and how well codes and themes actually correspond to the data.

4.3.2. Generating initial codes

In general, the purpose of coding is to reduce, organize and analyze the data (Cope, 2005). Coding enables the researcher to move from pure data description toward conceptualization of that description (Charmaz, 2003). Within thematic analysis, codes are understood as “the most basic segments, or elements, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006: pp. 88). They can be also described as labels, “assigned to whole documents or segments of documents (i.e., paragraphs, sentences, or words) to help catalogue key concepts while preserving the context in which these concepts occur” (Bradley et al., 2007;

pp. 1761). When coding, it is important that each segment of data receives equal attention, and that, if feasible, researchers identify as many codes as possible (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While thematic analysis does not specify the exact unit of coding (Floersch et al. 2010) I decided to use a line-by-line coding technique. Although not explicitly discussed within the thematic analysis literature, line-by-line coding is a commonly used coding technique in which each line of the written data is coded (Glaser, 1978). Line-by-line coding is part of an open or inductive coding during which the researcher tries to conceptualize the actual data and aims to “produce concepts that seem to fit the data” (Strauss, 1987, as cited in Kelle 2007, p. 201). By coding line-by-line I aimed to gain a thick description of my entire dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While coding the text, I continuously compared newly made codes to the ones already made, and I coded lines of text or segments that described the same concepts with the same codes. During this process, I often re-named codes and re-coded lines and segments of the text. An example of how exactly I coded the text and what constituted as a code can be seen in the Appendix III.

4.3.3. Searching for themes

During this step, I sorted already identified codes under broader themes, which I labeled as categories. Categories consisted of codes that were grouped because they revealed a similar pattern that emerged when exploring the meanings and characteristics of these codes (Floersch et al. 2010). At this point, I started thinking about the “relationship between codes, between themes, and between

different levels of themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006; pp. 89) The final aim was to explore how different codes fit with one another, and to start conceptualizing an overarching theme, which would incorporate combined codes (i.e. categories). An example of what constituted as a category and how I grouped the codes under a category can be seen in the Appendix IV.

4.3.4. Reviewing themes

This is the step during which the researcher investigates the relevance of identified themes. In other words, I explored whether there is a substantial amount of data to support particular themes, whether a theme can stand on its own or should it be paired to a related theme, and whether a single theme needs to be divided into several different themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Patton (1990), categories (i.e., themes) must have internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp. 91). This means that the data within one category fits together in a meaningful way, while categories stay uniquely different from one another.

There are two distinctive steps within the process of reviewing themes. During the first one, the researcher reviews all the codes and data extracted under a particular theme to see whether a theme represents a meaningful pattern that is well supported by the data. Secondly, once the relevant themes are identified, the researcher investigates how well the identified theme corresponds to the entire dataset. In my case, these two steps consisted of detailed rereading of the document

that had all the categories and codes listed in it, and a simultaneous reading of all coded transcripts. During this process I also started building a clear hierarchical organization of themes: what I thought were the main themes I labeled as themes, and subsets of these became sub-themes. Sub-themes were subsequently labeled as categories and sub-categories. An example of this process can be seen in the Appendix V.

4.3.5. Defining and naming themes

This is stage of analyzing data during which the researcher does the fine tuning of the exact themes that will be presented in the final report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The aim is to define what each theme is about, how themes correspond to each other, and what the story behind the overall theme is. This analytical process requires the researcher to go once again through the data under each theme and explore the connections between the data and the theme. For this purpose, I extrapolated all the excerpts from all transcripts that seem to belong to a particular theme and examined whether this data really creates a complete and meaningful story or whether an additional refinement of the theme needs to be done. How meaningful a particular theme is depends on how well it fits with other themes and how related it is to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Table 5.1 (pp. 85) shows which themes were identified as main themes, as well as which particular categories and sub-categories (i.e., sub-themes) were linked to the main themes.

4.3.6. Producing the report

This stage consists of writing-up, a process that Braun and Clarke (2006) refer as a final analytical step. They recommend writing a “concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account” of the story behind the data paying attention that the story is consistent within and across all relevant themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; p. 93). The extracts that will be used in this stage must convince the reader of the themes’ prevalence, and the end result must be a well supported “analytical narrative” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.93).

Final thought

Qualitative methodology within HD has been valued because it produces contextually situated data and reflects a variety of individual perspectives from different participants (Hunter and Brehm, 2004; Raik, Siemer and Decker, 2005). Qualitative methods have also been said to enable researchers to pay close attention to the meaning, and enable an in-depth exploration of the studied phenomena (Tynon, 1997). In this review of the methodological issues associated with qualitative research in human dimensions, I suggest that qualitative methods are relevant, applicable and suitable to the exploration of meanings on hunting in Gorski kotar, Croatia. In the following chapter I explore the participants’ multiple meanings on hunting by presenting and interpreting the main three themes and their corresponding categories and subcategories.

5 Results

The results presented in this chapter are based upon the analysis of data gathered from 9 interviews and 5 focus groups. Each theme represents a collection of tightly connected ideas identified and conceptualized from the dataset. The themes consist of several sub-themes that are presented in the form of categories and subcategories, as indicated in Table 5.1. Each theme corresponds to a different dimension of hunting, and provides a specific answer to the question of what does hunting mean for the people in Gorski kotar. It should be noted that the aim of this and other chapters in this thesis is not to strictly compare hunters and non-hunters' views but to present a wide spectrum of meanings of hunting held by participants. At the same time, occasions in which participants' views greatly differ from each other or create a strong cohesive viewpoint will be clearly pointed out.

Table 5.1 Themes and their corresponding categories and sub-categories

Theme	Category	Subcategory
<i>Hunting community</i>		
	<i>Sense of belonging</i>	
		<i>The value of sharing</i>
		<i>The matter of equality</i>
	<i>Sense of responsibility</i>	
		<i>Earning the right to hunt</i>

Theme	Category	Subcategory
<i>Hunting community</i>	<i>Proper hunter</i>	
		<i>The relative importance of shooting</i>
		<i>The notion of reciprocity</i>
		<i>Knowledgeable hunter</i>
		<i>Stewardship</i>
<i>Multiple dimensions of hunting</i>		
	<i>Diversity of motivations</i>	
	<i>Diversity of functions</i>	
		<i>Personal benefits</i>
		<i>Benefits to local community</i>
		<i>Benefits to game populations</i>
<i>Hunting for wildlife management</i>		
	<i>Attitudes toward nature</i>	
	<i>Quest for balance</i>	
	<i>The notion of game management</i>	

The first theme, *Hunting community*, centers on representations of hunters in Gorski kotar. It contains hunters' perceptions of themselves and other hunters, as well as perceptions of hunters based on the views of the non-hunting community.

The following three categories were identified as part of this theme: *Sense of belonging*, *Sense of responsibility*, and *Proper hunter*. *Sense of belonging* explores what it exactly means to be a member of a hunting community, and depicts the feeling of inclusion within a hunting community as one of the main building blocks of hunters' identity. *Sense of responsibility* describes the necessity of hunters to carry out certain roles within hunting clubs and outlines the circumstances under which a member is allowed to perform the actual hunting (i.e., shooting). The normative characteristics of hunting presented in this category are linked to the next category labeled as *Proper hunter*. This category explores the qualities that participants believe characterize a good hunter in Gorski kotar, and describes what exactly qualifies as a proper hunting behavior.

Multiple dimensions of hunting is a second theme, which depicts the variety and complexity of participants' views on motivations and functions of hunting. Participants' views are divided into two categories: *Diversity of motivations* and *Diversity of functions*. As the label suggests, the category *Diversity of motivations* explores the wide spectrum of motivations behind hunting. Special attention is given to exploring and pinpointing similarities and differences regarding motivations for hunting between hunters and non-hunters. As such, the category offers a look into diverging ranking systems of motivations between the two groups of participants. Moreover, the category depicts the ways in which participants evaluate and legitimize each motivation, and how this is linked to their general support for hunting. The category *Diversity of functions* encompasses participants'

representations of hunting, which are rooted in the various functions assigned to hunting. The term “function” was used to label parts of the dataset in which participants discussed various types of benefits, satisfactions and objectives that hunting brings or ought to bring to people and to their natural environment. The functions are divided into three sub-categories: *Personal benefits*, *Benefits to local community*, and *Benefits to game populations*. *Personal benefits* sub-category explores the benefits that the individual hunters acquire through hunting, while the sub-category *Benefits to local community* explores the benefits that participants believe hunting already provides or has the potential to provide to the local communities in Gorski kotar. The last sub-category *Benefits to game populations* explores the types of benefits hunting and game management brings or ought to bring to the game. As will be shown, many of these functions, especially those concerning *Benefits to local community* and *Benefits to game populations* have a prescriptive character as they illustrate what an ideal hunting situation would look like and who should benefit from such hunting.

The third theme describes the interconnectedness of hunting and wildlife management in Gorski kotar, and is divided into three categories: *Attitudes toward nature*, *Quest for balance*, and the *Notion of game management*. The category *Attitudes toward nature* depicts the tight connection between participants and their natural environment that is characterized by participants’ love and respect toward their environment. At the same time, this connection is characterized by a feeling of definite entitlement to utilize and manage their natural environment, including

natural resources. The category *Quest for balance* depicts the need to maintain the (natural) balance as the main argument behind the participant's support of wildlife management and hunting. Lastly, the category *Notion of game management* explains participants understanding of game management and the role of hunting (i.e., actual hunting) within the context of game management. Special emphasis is given to the issues that participants, especially hunters, perceive as counterproductive and potentially damaging for the future of game management in Gorski kotar.

5.1 Hunting community

5.1.1. Sense of belonging (category)

...If you are not part of this community, I mean – then you cannot call yourself a hunter because this other component - you are, so to say – involved in activities – part of the fellowship – ((part of that)) friendship and among important and nice characteristics of hunters – ((are)) their gatherings, that togetherness, frequent contacts in nature and then the other aspect of hunting, those experiences and the particular stories { }. (H-9, I)

To be a hunter in Gorski kotar means to be part of a large hunting community. The vast majority of local hunters in Gorski kotar are amateur, non-professional hunters that attain the right to hunt through a hunting club membership. Non-members may still hunt within a local clubs hunting ground but they have to pay a fee for the provided right. For many hunters of Gorski kotar the latter type of hunting is simply too expensive so they engage in hunting as members of a

particular hunting club. Saving money is, of course, not the primary motive to become a hunting club member. Hunting clubs bring together people of different ages, sex, professions and lifestyles but with a shared interest and fondness for hunting. Hunting clubs are especially beneficial for hunters who put special emphasis on the social aspect of hunting and for whom socializing is just as or even more important than the actual hunting. Hunting clubs grant local hunters a sense of belongingness and connectedness to their local "hunting family" through which they also become associated with the regional and national hunting community.

The value of sharing (sub-category)

A vital element in the hunting community is *sharing* and it can take different forms, like for instance, time spent together, joint work assignments, or participation in hunting rituals and festivities. Sharing is especially important for validating and giving meanings to the experiences and emotions which occurred during an actual hunt. A hunting event, especially a successful one, becomes truly meaningful once the story about it has been shared with and reflected upon by other hunters. Moreover, the act of telling and sharing hunting stories is one among many rituals that the hunting community values and adheres to. Another characteristic of hunting communities is that the social bonds, such as friendship and comradery that are built or further developed through hunting club activities are also displayed outside the hunting environment. Hunters often spend time with other hunters when they are not hunting or engaging in some other hunting activities.

What was especially noticeable was how greatly hunters valued their relationships with other hunters in the hunting community and how tightly connected they felt to their fellow hunters. However, while hunters described the comradery and friendships within the hunting community in a very positive light, the same could not always be said for the non-hunters. Non-hunters at times criticized the hunting community for being too closed and exclusive. Some non-hunters have found closeness of hunters problematic as they believe it prevents "dirty secrets" of the hunting community to be openly displayed and, if necessary, penalized. Indeed, there was a general agreement among non-hunters that the hunting community often fails to sanction improper behaviors and that hunters often sweep the "dirty secrets" under the rug.

I don't even think that the problem is in the hunting exam and hunting license { }. I think that the biggest problem is that these laws – the hunting clubs don't implement these laws as they should. { } I think we should have stricter sanctions for disregarding the hunting, for illegal hunting { } these things should not be allowed ... ((For example)), I know there is a particular hunting unit that's responsible for a part of a forest – there used to be the most game, everybody used to talk about it, and now you cannot even see a hare, not one red deer. Everybody knows the situation is caused by this particular hunting unit but nothing changes and the unit is still there and that just the way it is. I found that horrific. (NH-16, FG)

The matter of equality (sub-category)

The hunting community is said to be built on the notion of equality in which, ideally, social class should not matter. The traditional green outfit that is immediately associated with hunters in Gorski kotar does not only represent a symbolic bond to their natural environment or a mere way to camouflage oneself

during the hunt. The green outfit should be also understood as a way to blur socioeconomic differences so that the only differences that matter are hunters' skills and preferences. This is not always possible as, for example, the better equipment and sophisticated technology inevitably puts some hunters in a more advantageous position. Still, this inequality was not perceived as very significant according to the participants. It was a different type of inequality that bothered some of them, and it was discussed exclusively among female participants: what bothered these women was the discrimination against female hunters. Females from both participating groups (i.e., hunters and non-hunters) mentioned the low percentage of women in the hunting community and the wide spread stereotyping of women hunters. For example, this is how one female hunter described her experience as a novice hunter:

When I became a hunter and went hunting, everybody would say: Well then, where is your apron? Have you turned off your stove? Who is looking after your kids today?" It was not easy. { } ((By now)) they got used to me, but they have not gotten used to a female hunter. I show up, I will not give up – but I don't think they support it. { } They still ask me: "Is the gun heavy on you? (*H-24, I*)

Therefore, as the female hunter "proves herself" and demonstrates her skills and determination, negative attitudes she was subjected to when she first entered the hunting community will gradually diminish. Nevertheless, she will most likely continue to be perceived as someone outside the usual hunting norms. Female participants from both groups were of the opinion that especially older hunters have a hard time accepting female hunters and that they see females as an intrusion in what they believe to be a masculine activity. One participant explained this by saying that male hunters might feel oppressed by female company as it inhibits

them to act freely, i.e. without female judgment. Some participants, including hunters, found older hunters not only rigid when it comes to embracing female hunters in the hunting community but slow or unwilling to accept all sorts of hunting related changes. Although not discussed in detail and mentioned mostly by younger participants, there was a clear generational divide within the hunting community and a hierarchy of power in which younger hunters were obliged to play by the rules set by the older hunters.

5.1.2. Sense of responsibility (category)

As members of a hunting club, hunters have the obligation to participate in a number of hunting activities. Maintaining hunting facilities (i.e., hunting lodges, shooting stands) and feeding grounds, patrolling through hunting grounds as part of anti-poaching activities, and organizing hunting festivities are just some of the activities carried on within the hunting club. Participation in these activities is mandatory and hunters are obligated each year to commit to a set number of hours to work in the hunting club. How exactly hunters distribute their hours depends on the assignments and goals of the hunting units. Hunting units are small hunting groups that are responsible for the management of different parts of a single hunting ground. Framed by rules and rituals, hunters said this kind of hunting, as opposed to a pure commercial hunting where hunter simply pays for the right to hunt, requires a lot of their time, hard work and money. A hunter must be committed to his hunting club and his colleagues, which explains why hunting within clubs was not

simply regarded as a leisure activity but instead referred to as a “serious hobby”. Through work and time invested in a hunting club, hunters gradually earn their right to hunt. Secondly, hunters also socialize through work and connect with other hunters. Lastly, the work enables and supports the existence of the hunting club since without this effort the hunting club could not operate.

Earning the right to hunt (sub-category)

The idea of “earning ones right to hunt” was crucial for hunters in hunting clubs and was mentioned by hunters many times over during interviews and focus group discussions. Due to the limited number of available game, not all members of the hunting club are able to hunt. The right to hunt was not immediately granted on the basis of one being a hunting club member but was understood as a sort of award for the achieved work and effort. Hunters also perceived the right to shoot as a reward for successful game management. The “reward” argument is one among several mentioned by hunters, all embedded within the idea of “reciprocity”. In other words, since hunters take something out from the natural environment, they must inevitably put something back.

For me hunting is - hunting is: breeding, protection and hunting - hunting stands for all the different work needed to breed a game species - for you to breed a trophy, you will put a great amount of effort to achieve a certain quality. Hunting is – not the necessary evil – but is –to a degree it* is your compensation. There. (H-3, I) ((it* stands for the actual hunting))

A very similar stance was echoed by the non-hunters who were reluctant to give their support to any type of hunting that did not include some element of the

reciprocity. Nevertheless, non-hunters were of an opinion that shooting can be done only if the hunter acts as a steward and were less interested in the successfulness of game management as a basis for the reward. The concept of “earning ones right to hunt”, the notion of “reciprocity”, together with few other concepts are all major components of category labeled as “proper hunter”, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.1.3. The Proper hunter (category)

When talking about hunters and hunting in general, both groups had a clear vision of what is acceptable versus unacceptable behavior within the hunting community. Even when the question of what characterizes a “proper hunter” was not intentionally given, the participants talked about what they considered to be a good or bad hunter and provided examples of a particular behavior. The concept of “proper hunter” was constructed to pinpoint the essence of hunting, and both groups - hunters and non-hunters alike - used the concept to legitimize hunting. What exactly characterizes the proper hunters and what, on the contrary, are the absolutely unacceptable hunters’ attributes will be described in the next few paragraphs.

Relative importance of shooting (sub-category)

To be a proper hunter, one must appreciate the entire experience of hunting, and find enjoyment and satisfaction in various elements of hunting, including those

that are not necessarily related to the actual shooting. Therefore, to focus solely on the end result of a chase (i.e., attaining a trophy), was considered wrong by both groups of participants, who often linked such hunting to a perceived tendency for cruelty and lack of self-discipline. Participants appreciated the ability of good hunters to control their desire to kill, and supported moderation when it comes to actual shooting. In that sense, shooting one or a few animals over a certain period was viewed much more positive compared to the hunting during which great numbers of animals have been shot in a relatively short time period. Humbleness and modesty were greatly valued and participants, especially non-hunters, criticized the pretentiousness of trophy oriented hunting believing it is a fruitful ground for vanity and showing-off type of behavior. Non-hunters also disliked the fact that within trophy hunting so much emphasis is being put on the material benefits of hunting (i.e., actual trophies) and believed that often quantity (i.e., numbers of trophies) dominates over quality. Moreover, some of the non-hunters heavily criticized the lack of morality among local hunters, saying that showing respect towards game and hunting, and behaving responsibly is a must for any hunter. The level of concern among non-hunters regarding the absence of the proper hunting ethic can be clearly seen from the two following quotes:

And when the red deer is shot you can clearly see: if a proper hunter has shot it, he will put the deer in the truck – he will put a twig in its muzzle – a drink will be drunk – and the animal will be driven in – in an abattoir, I guess. And then on the other end there is a hunter that will shoot a deer, that will drive around for three days with the deer, the deer will stink { } he will stop in front of every pub, people will throw bras on in and I don't know what else – I mean – total disrespect of hunting and hunters. (NH-16, FG)

NH-17 (FG) When you are learning about hunting during a course and when you start preparing for the exam, you first start with those codes – how do you call them/

NH-16 (FG) Hunting ethic.

NH-17 (FG) Hunting ethic, that's right. And that is a start; that you learn about it, that you learn about respecting the game and from then we can go further. In a way, you need to really earn the game. And not simply – here you go, you can just shoot it.

This, however, does not suggest that proper hunters should avoid shooting animals or that they should somehow feel ashamed for what they are doing. Although each hunter deals in a unique and personal way with the moral issue of taking an animal's life, several hunters pointed out that shame and guilt should not be part of an actual hunt (i.e., shooting). Nevertheless, only those hunting occasions during which a hunter has shot the animal in a legal and respectful manner are bestowed with feelings of pride and satisfaction.

The views mentioned in the previous paragraph are part of the subcategory labeled as the "relative importance of shooting" that is based on the belief that the "proper hunter" should understand or learn to understand how hunting is not all about killing. Hunters who put too much focus on the actual shooting were not merely criticized because of their "wrongly oriented" moral compass. Just as important was the fact that these hunters failed to give something back to their hunting community and to the natural environment. The perceived selfishness of these hunters was not aligned with the concept of "earning ones right to hunt" and was frowned upon by both groups of participants. The "proper hunter" of Gorski kotar was understood as someone who is a member of a local hunting club and as

such spends a significant amount of time working to benefit his hunting community and the game. A good hunter was portrayed as a *social hunter*, a good friend and colleague who appreciates the value of the hunting community, obeys its written and unwritten rules and fulfills the duties of membership. This and several other arguments regarding what it is to be a proper hunter are nicely depicted by the following quote:

In my opinion, a better hunter is not the one who has shot more. A hunter is someone who really behaves like a hunter in all these segments: regarding fellowship, hunting ethics, behavior, demeanor, whether he dresses like a hunter, wears a hat or not, whether he wears working uniform when he goes hunting, whether he has... there – this for me is a hunter. Not some hunter that has many trophies on the wall or has a full knapsack – that is not ((a hunter)). Besides, in our hunting community we don't think that - somebody is a greater, better hunter if he has shot all sorts of game species. Therefore something else – he can be a great hunter if he is into hunting, if he invests a lot into hunting community, in fellowship, organization (...) Somebody is not a great hunter if he has shot the Big Five Game in Africa or our Big Three Game...that's not it (*H-9, I*)

Knowledgeable hunter (sub-category)

Another often commented characteristic of “proper hunters” is their high level of knowledge. Participants greatly valued hunters who had extensive knowledge of game biology and game management, and knew how to implement it appropriately into hunting practice. A knowledgeable hunter was mostly mentioned in the context of shooting and meant that the good hunter must be able to properly assess whether the quarry is of appropriate sex, age, and health to be hunted:

Really, you also need to know the theory if you are to be a hunter. It's not all about the experience; we need to know what it is that we are looking at, we need to evaluate – it is easy to evaluate when – when

it's in my hand – when I have an antler in my hand and I'm able to say: That is – ((but)) you need to be able to evaluate in the woods. That is what you need to know, and for that you need the knowledge. (H-24, I)

Knowledgeable hunters were usually regarded as experienced and self-disciplined hunters who can restrain themselves from shooting the “wrong” kind of animal (e.g., too young, wrong sex). Moreover, a knowledgeable hunter was oftentimes described as someone who loves nature and possesses genuine respect for animals. Paying respect was important even after the animal was shot, and was done through specific rituals which changed depending on the context of a particular hunting experience. Overall, being knowledgeable was a trait greatly respected by both groups of participants and any perceived lack of it was heavily criticized:

... That hunting passion moves much quicker through ones finger than one's mind. A hunter is someone who can hunt ten Sundays in a row and not shoot anything, and leave behind each Sunday a roebuck because it was not the right one (H-24, I).

I spend a lot of time with hunters and there is this man that I work with. He is such an ardent hunter, he – we literally cannot walk through the woods without him telling me how here he has seen a roebuck, there a buck (...) – ((and this hunter says to me)): “If I see him ((i.e. the buck)), I will shoot him, but if I don't see him I will not shoot at all.” While some other hunter will simply come and shoot the first buck he sees because he does not care – he does not envision that particular trophy; he simply aims to accomplish the following: “I have shot.” The end of the story. (NH-16, FG)

Stewardship (sub-category)

The last but not the least important characteristic of proper hunters was that they were often described as good masters and care takers of their game. Such

mastery can be also described by the more common term, stewardship. In the Croatian context, stewardship is based on the idea of (natural) balance, conservation, long-term benefits and is as such incorporated in the notion of game management, which will be described later within the *Hunting for wildlife management* theme. The most commonly discussed element of stewardship was the concept of “looking after the game”, which was often used to differentiate good hunters from the bad ones. Looking after the game was not seen as something that hunters need to do in order to meet legal parameters but was primarily seen as a hunters’ moral obligation. It was a characteristic of a “good master”: one who manages game in a way to achieve long-term benefits for animals, prevents unnecessary suffering of animals, and is able to subdue his or her desire to bag if it is clear that it will be detrimental to the game population. In addition, stewards were perceived as hunters willing to go the extra mile for their game. Going the extra mile usually included making personal sacrifices and experiencing temporal discomfort. It was believed that through these activities hunters demonstrate their genuine interest and love toward wildlife. The fact that these hunters were able to place benefits for game before their own benefits was greatly valued by participants, especially non-hunters. Indeed, hunters who were recognized to be able to act in this manner were regarded as true stewards and proper hunters:

My colleague’s husband – he is capable – when he is feeling quite ill, when there is a meter of snow on the ground – he will take the car, his own car, damaging it and making it dirty, while he’s driving on those ((forest)) roads – my colleague always tells me: “Ah, before I go to the kindergarten, I have to clean the whole car because its full of deer ticks.” But he is completely into it, he lives for it – his house if full of

trophies. But none of these trophies is gained through illegal killing.
(NH-16, FG)

5.2 Multiple dimensions of hunting

5.2.1. Diversity of motivations (category)

Each of those people ((hunts)) due to some of their inclinations. There are people who really love being in nature. And also due to some social reasons, so they can socialize with those people. And then of course there are those who are so taken up that the most important thing for them is to bag anything just so they bag something. { } (NH-8, FG)

The following section will explore in detail the different motivations presented in the Table 5.2. The purpose is to show that different hunters hunt for different motivations but also that a single hunter hunts for a multitude of motivations. Special attention will be also given to the fact that even though hunters and non-hunters provided a very similar list of motivations, their opinions regarding what they considered as the most or least important motivations for hunting varied greatly.

Table 5.2 Types of motivations

<i>Types of motivations (in alphabetical order)</i>	<i>According to hunter*</i>	<i>According to non-hunters*</i>
<i>Changing the pace</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hunting to relax</i> <i>Hunting to recreate</i> 	<i>Social environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Family influence (i.e. tradition)</i> <i>Friends and co-workers</i> 	<i>Social environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Family influence (i.e. tradition)</i> <i>Friends and co-workers</i>
<i>Experiencing nature</i>	<i>Experiencing nature</i>	<i>Hunting for trophy</i>

<i>Types of motivations (in alphabetical order)</i>	<i>According to hunter*</i>	<i>According to non-hunters*</i>
<i>Hunting for meat</i>	<i>Changing the pace</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hunting to relax</i> <i>Hunting to recreate</i> 	<i>Hunting for meat</i>
<i>Hunting for trophy</i>	<i>Socializing</i>	<i>Changing the pace</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hunting to recreate</i>
<i>Intrinsic motivations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hunting gene</i> 	<i>Intrinsic motivations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hunting gene</i> 	<i>Socializing</i>
<i>Social environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Family influence (i.e. tradition)</i> <i>Friends and co-workers</i> 	<i>Hunting for trophy</i>	<i>Experiencing nature</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Socializing</i> 	<i>Hunting for meat</i>	<i>Intrinsic motivations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hunting gene</i>

*Relative importance of motivation was calculated based on how many participants discussed a particular motivation as well as how important they thought the motivation was in comparison to other motivations

Before providing more details on differing views regarding motivations, we will first take a look at a particular motivation that was evaluated by both groups of participants as an essential motivation. This motivation, labeled as *Social environment*, is interesting as it was stressed as a sort of prerequisite for anyone interested in hunting. *Social environment* refers to the role that social environment, especially a family environment, has on a person's decision to become a hunter. Both groups of participants pointed out that hunters start to hunt under the influence

of their social environment: families, friends, and work colleagues. Moreover, participants argued that the chances of one becoming a hunter were much greater if that person comes from a family with an existing hunting tradition. A parent, close relative or a spouse who hunts would act as a mentor passing not only love and inclination for hunting but also the knowledge gained through experience. As a result, some participants argued that the family influence is the main reason why people become hunters and referred to hunting as a family tradition:

From very early on my grandfather used to take me with him to the woods – he was a hunter, and my father was a hunter, a forester...I used to walk all the times with them in the woods and...I definitely grew fond of it when I was seven, eight, ten years old – when I was 14 years old I become a member of a hunting club, as a probationer, with 16 I passed the exam and then I've waited until I was 18 [...] to get a rifle. It is the love for nature, family tradition so I became a hunter.
(H-12, FG)

While *Social environment* stands for an external influence on ones path in becoming a hunter, the next motivation was said to come from within a person. This internal motivation that was labeled as *Intrinsic motivation*, was mentioned only several times and mostly by hunters. *Intrinsic motivation* refers to a form of inclination that hunters called the “hunting gene” and that was believed to be a sort of inheritance passed from our ancestors. Although said to be present in us all, the “hunting gene” on its own cannot be sufficient to direct a person into hunting. Instead, the “hunting gene” was truly motivating and effective only in the presence of other hunting motivations and, even more important, within an appropriate social environment.

As noted earlier, participants believed that hunters hunt for a multitude of reasons. For instance, when hunters talked about why they hunt, motivations were regularly coupled with each other oftentimes creating a narrative in which each part of the hunting experience seemed to be of equal importance. This is precisely the reason why it was at times challenging to understand the relative importance of each motivation for a single hunter and to single out the most important motivation.

For example, this is how one of the hunters explained why he hunts:

Hunting brings satisfaction; there is a lot of adrenalin { }, ((and a)) stress relief that is of a great importance these days. I mean even the scientific research have shown that it provides a great sense of stress relief - ((there is)) colossal energy within hunting. Something in us, in our genetic code because we used to be hunters... for a long, long time... And then we stopped being hunters, but it stayed in us; in some more, in some less. Naturally, there is, hmmm... contact with nature { } man is in those moment often alone so he has time to think about number of things, for which he usually does not have time { }; motion, physical activity and so in essence it is one – very complex hobby. But then it depends on a person what he has found for himself in hunting...I don't think anybody will tell you that... that he is a hunter because his sadistic inclinations, because he enjoys killing an animal...that might be present in some sick people but not in true hunters. (H-5, I)

Although each hunter had a unique mix of motivations that led him or her to hunt, and it was at times hard if not impossible to identify the most relevant hunting motivation, some of the motivations most often discussed by hunters include *Changing the pace*, *Experiencing nature* and *Socializing*. *Changing the pace* refers to two distinct hunting motivations; the first one is the need to relax, and the second one the need to recreate. Hunters who hunt in order to relax sought solitude and peace from their hunting experience, while those who hunt to recreate wanted

primarily to physically challenge themselves. In addition, as is obvious from the previous quote, hunters oftentimes sought relaxation as well as recreation from the same hunting experience. In any case, the final aim of a person motivated by *Changing the pace* is to recharge, whether mentally or physically. Hunters who hunt in order to experience nature showed a great deal of respect for nature and used hunting trips to enjoy nature and learn about it. The next quote is from a female hunter who enthusiastically recalls the enjoyment she gets from simply being in nature and observing it. Her words also reveal that she enjoys her hunting trips because they represent a welcomed change in her everyday life, and that she hunts both in order to experience nature and to relax (i.e., change the pace):

For me hunting is...something that is mine – I mean escape – I get away from... the rhythm – I have something that belongs to me... it has very little to do with ((having)) a rifle – it can be with me, but... so to say – more important is my binocular... hmmm – camera – observing, looking; ((at)) animal behavior, tracks, movements, ... offspring... that movement in the forest, those scents – a lot of other things – that for instance is what makes me happy. My departure, preparations – quick, disappearing... and... ok, to sit on the shooting stand also has an appeal; to sit, to become still, not to make any noise out in the open and ((to)) hear the silence... Hear the silence and then if something comes – it is great if it does, if one can see it, observe it, and you can always hear something... from birds to other things and if I decide to shoot { } – just because I have my rifle with me ((does not mean)) it has to happen today – that ((shooting)) will come eventually: { } ((shooting)) is not of such importance for me. { } Others things are more important; for me...to go, listen to the silence, experience the forests. { } Well then. For me, this is what hunting is all about. (H-1, I)

Socializing was the motivation discussed by those hunters who found special appeal in being members of the hunting community and who enjoyed the comradeship within it. Since the hunting community and what its membership

means to hunters were already described in the previous section under the *Hunting community* theme, the next quote will suffice to remind the reader what hunting in order to socialize brings to hunters:

The thing I liked the most was when hunters would gather after a hunt no matter whether something was shot, whether something was killed or not and then that company, right? I liked that the most. All in all, love towards nature – that is a must. And love towards animals – that is a must. { } So now that I am head of a hunting unit I prefer, I like more when we work on something, when we do something in the group rather than saying: Now let's go shooting. (H-10, FG)

Therefore, *Experiencing nature*, *Changing the pace* and *Socializing* were the three most important and meaningful motivations for hunters. Non-hunters also viewed *Socializing* and *Experiencing nature* as important motivations for hunting, but they held a common sentiment that hunters primarily hunt for trophy and meat. *Hunting for trophy* and *Hunting for meat* also stand out because non-hunters had a hard time understanding and relating to these issues. Moreover, non-hunters perceived these two motivations as the least positive among all motivations. Hunting for trophy was seen as problematic since it was linked to the notion of an improper hunter whose only goal is to have as many trophies as possible and was viewed as an unacceptable act of showing off:

I don't have anything to do with hunting. I think that is something like a hobby, but...I could never, never become a hunter... ((I think it is)) an expensive hobby and – like now I have tons of cash so I am going to kill a bear for, I don't know, couple of thousand of I don't know what { } Kuna¹ or Euros, I am not sure – and that I'll have its fur hanging from the wall. I don't find that appealing. (NH-18, FG)

Another problem related to the trophy hunting was that it was often mentioned in the context of illegal hunting due to the prevalent belief that one

¹Kuna is Croatian currency

cannot possess many trophies, unless they were taken illegally. Hunters opposed such claims and were very adamant about defending their standpoint. Hunters said that *Hunting for trophy* is not as important as a motivation as non-hunters claimed and that it is only one among many motivations for hunting. Many hunters commented that there is a widespread belief among the general public how hunters hunt only in order to kill and acquire a trophy and strongly argued that this is not at all what hunting is about:

The public opinion is that a hunter is a person who just shoots at those poor cute roe deer doe and so on. But a hunter – that is only one segment in all that he does. Beginning with: supplementary feeding, observing, maintaining trails, watering holes, salt feeding sites, there is so many things here { } And if there were no hunters - we can just say: "So why do we have hunting and shooting?" There is no need to have hunters, but in that case we might ask – in U.S. a similar situation occurred – they had some diseases, and there were no hunters – well now, a state has to pay for these expeditions where hunting and shooting takes place. Therefore hunters do all that for free. And they do it within limits of regulative norms, acts, regulations, programs – nothing gets done outside them. So then – they do one humane thing and they are constantly in the forest, in nature – normally, in order to be able to do all that they have to have that something, that love for hunting ((“hunting love”)) - without it – you don’t become a hunter when your 40 years old – one gets born as a hunter. (H-9, I).

At the same time, hunters were not supportive of other hunters who hunt only in order to shoot animals and acquire trophies. These hunters criticized those who are too focused on trophies, and saw this type of behavior as a primitive, morally wrong behavior. Some of the hunters believed that such hunting behavior must be part of the past and not a feature of a modern hunter:

But there are more and more people that – do not see hunting as hunting – that is as mere killing but as something else. Today even the

foreign hunters that have, err hundred trophies – they simply started hiding those trophies in basements because they feel ashamed because people point fingers at them saying: You are a killer... So there is a change in awareness and people have started looking at hunting from the different angle and perspective than before. You used to be, if you had hundred trophies – you were considered as somebody and the society supported you. { } Today on contrary – you cover yourself and stay quiet so nobody mentions you. (It can be looked at) as a crude primitivism. That is, to satisfy one's personal need through the word killer or murderer. (H-4, I)

Hunting for meat did not receive as much criticism as *Hunting for trophy* although some non-hunters did believe that, occasionally, the game meat is being (mis)used by the individual hunters who sell it on the black market to make some profit. Interestingly, hunters were also critical of *Hunting for meat* motivation. In particular, hunters showed a lack of respect for the hunters who primarily hunt in order to gain game meat and even used a specific term to refer to such hunters – they called them the “butcher hunters”:

There are all sorts of kind: there are trophy hunters, some who are hunters because of meat – which I don't agree with { } I mean, I am a hunter, and I'm interested in trophy while meat is secondary. { } I was never a hunter because of a meat and I find that inconceivable. But there are all sorts of people, all sorts. (H-12, FG)

Overall, in comparison to non-hunters whose statements on motivations were mostly short and stripped down from the detailed explanation, hunters listed more motivations and elaborated in depth about why and how they became hunters. Moreover, unlike hunters, non-hunters usually did not explicitly mention that a single hunter hunts for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, it was clear that they are aware of some local hunters whose hunting activities are driven by multiple motivations. In general, both hunters and non-hunters saw as less positive those

motivations that bring direct material or economic benefits to hunters such as meat or trophies. These concerns had a direct impact on the level of non-hunters' support for hunting. If non-hunters perceived that a hunter hunts only in order to gain trophy or meat, such a hunter would be labeled as an improper, misguided hunter. At the same time, those motivations that bring psychological and/or physical benefits to hunters such as *Experiencing nature*, *Changing the pace* and *Socializing* were seen as more positive. Lastly, many hunters confessed that they enjoyed hunting precisely because the multitude of motivations consequently enabled them to experience a multitude of benefits within hunting. These benefits will be explored under the *Diversity of functions* category.

5.2.2. Diversity of functions (category)

The first set of functions consists of the type of benefits that hunting provides to local hunters, namely to amateur hunters, which are members of local hunting clubs. For these hunters, hunting represents a hobby and their livelihoods do not, unlike professional hunters, depend on hunting tourism that takes place in Gorski kotar's privately or state-owned hunting companies. Referred to at times by both groups of participants as satisfaction hunters get from hunting, these functions were tightly related to the motivations identified as the most important ones in the *Diversity of motivations* category, as shown in the Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Personal benefits to hunters (socio-cultural dimension)

<i>Functions/benefits</i>	<i>Personal benefits to hunters</i>	<i>Personal benefits to hunters</i>
<i>Motivations</i>	<i>According to hunters</i>	<i>According to non-hunters</i>
<i>Experiencing nature</i>	<i>Satisfaction that comes from better understanding of nature; enjoying in nature's beauty</i>	<i>v*</i>
<i>Changing the pace</i>	<i>Slowing down: Relaxing; having time to think about life; putting the challenges of everyday life temporarily aside</i> <i>Speeding up: Recreation; physically challenge oneself, enjoying the rush of adrenalin</i>	<i>Speeding up: Recreation</i>
<i>Socialization</i>	<i>Spending time with friends; building social network; sharing stories, memories; learning about local heritage</i>	<i>Spending time with friends; building social network</i>
<i>Social environment (family)</i>	<i>Continuation of family tradition, passing the inclination and knowledge on hunting and nature to next generations</i>	<i>Continuation of family tradition; being introduced to hunting directly through family members</i>
<i>Trophy</i>	<i>Getting challenged by the chase and getting satisfaction from ones final "reward" - trophy</i>	<i>Getting satisfaction from ones final "reward" – trophy; prestige that comes with having good quality trophy; showing off with ones trophy; being proud regarding ones</i>

		<i>achievement</i>
<i>Meat</i>	<i>Preparation and consumption of traditional dishes during hunting festivities and at home</i>	<i>Consumption of game dishes at home and during hunting festivities; financial gain by selling game meat on black market</i>
<i>Intrinsic reasons</i>	<i>Insufficient data on this motivation</i>	<i>Insufficient data on this motivation</i>

√* = means that the satisfaction was recognized but was not elaborated upon; it was obvious that non-hunters thought that hunters love spending time in nature but they did not explicitly state this

Personal benefits to hunters from the hunter's point of view

Hunters hunt due to a number of reasons. Consequently, their satisfaction is composed of different benefits and extrapolated from the entire hunting experience. According to hunters like D1-13, the aim of hunting is to get “*first of all mental and physical health and simply a fulfillment*”. A unique fulfillment can mean different things to different people and it also changes depending on the context. During the wild boar open season, fulfillment might mean hunting in a group with an emphasis on the friendship, collaboration and chase. On the other hand, during a roe deer open season, the same hunter will get satisfaction from a hunt that emphasizes observation, physical challenge and chase. The next quote illustrates that even though the context of hunting might change, the feeling of fulfillment hunters experience does not:

I love it all { } since I also have a dog { } when it's hare hunting season I prefer the hare hunting. When it's roe deer hunting season I love to hunt roe deer { }. If I have a red deer during the rut, that is something most beautiful when you hear that sound of bellowing during a hunt, when you're stalking them... when it's chamois ((hunting season)) you go chamois hunting and you hike these mountains, you wait... observe – each hunt has its own enchantment { }. (H-12, FG)

Success in hunting, according to hunters, happens every single time. A hunting trip does not need to result in shooting an animal, and in most cases it does not. Success that comes with shooting is welcomed, but if the animal is not shot, a trip is still valued as successful:

Each time we head out is a success and each heading out brings something new, something that has not been experienced so far. And continuous learning - nature is really unknown in so many ways and it constantly offers something new and... you (re)experience it time and again. (H-9, I)

Experiencing nature

Not surprisingly, the motivations that hunters emphasized as the most important ones were also the ones that they got the greatest benefits from. In other words, hunters experienced the greatest satisfaction by hunting in order to experience nature, socialize and to change the pace. When it comes to nature, hunters' desire to experience nature stems from, as they frequently argued, their love for nature. Satisfaction, according to hunters, often comes from a mere observation of wildlife:

We saw today 7 red deer and 5 roe deer. This is a satisfaction that no Zoo can provide, you know? To hunt is not to see and shoot the animal... shooting the animal is only the last step in hunting. Hunting is therefore experience, socializing... (H-3, I)

Their ardent interest for nature does not stop with game species but is directed toward other wildlife as well. Both game and non-game species are sometimes “hunted” in a more unconventional way:

I sometimes go to hunt with my camera. And I have... 1000 photos approximately - photos of wild boar with little ones or ((photos of)) piglets and the sow coming out – I don’t have the rifle and I don’t miss it. I’ve got my camera. That satisfies me – ((having)) 100 photos gives me greater satisfaction than one piglet in... the freezer { } (H-24, I)

Whether observing from the ground or from the higher level of the shooting stand, hunters enjoy the sounds and images of nature but also the expectations and the unknown that accompanies those moments. They say it is of a particular importance to learn about nature from first hand experiences. They claim that the numerous hours spent in nature give them a better perspective and understanding of nature, a thing that other people who do not hunt lack. Below is a quote that illustrates the range of satisfactions hunters get by experiencing nature. According to this hunter, it is not enough to simply look at nature; the secret is in knowing how to look.

But I never go in the woods, let’s say, the rifle is with me – ((I don’t go)) with some intention, plan to bring back something in my backpack – the main purpose somehow is to relax { } ((to)) observe nature, to enjoy the peace, silence, and each and every hunter, who ever hunts – in hunting there is always something new, something that has not been experienced so far. That means that hunting is one very thick unread book that you keep reading and reading, you learn and learn and you are constantly coming to new understandings and conclusions – normally, if you are that type of a hunter who knows how to enjoy those things and ((how to)) observe. There are hunters who don’t see some things; they miss on so many things – who actually don’t know how to observe their environment. (H9, I)

Changing the pace

By being in nature and through hunting, especially individual hunting, hunters are able to temporarily detach themselves from the usual rhythm of everyday life. Being alone in nature helps them to relax, get rid of the accumulated stress and look at things and situations from a different perspective. The next quote belongs to a hunter who is one of the rare hunters that openly admitted to enjoy trophy hunting. This is not the only satisfaction he gets from hunting:

I relax the best when I sit on the shooting stand and for two, three hours I only watch, listen – I don't think about anything. The person can then { } physically unload a bit { } you don't think about anything. Not about the bills, not about this or that... (H-12, FG)

While relaxation and contemplation might be one way to recharge one's mind, stalking and the actual chase of a quarry can recharge one's mind as well as one's body. Hunters differ greatly regarding the significance such activities and instances hold for them, but they all agree that hunting, especially what they regard as the "actual hunting" (i.e., shooting) is flooded with energy. This is an intense period during which hunters mentally and physically challenge themselves by aiming to outwit the quarry. For those rare hunters who openly said that they enjoy this part of hunt, the enjoyment comes from the energy, passion, and surge of adrenalin that accompanies these moments.

Socialization

The third major set of benefits comes from hunting in order to socialize. The need to socialize was time and again mentioned within the context of rural places, especially regarding the life quality in rural places. Hunters would point out the fact that people from a rural area have, in comparison to people living in urban areas, very limited opportunities to socialize. For instance, when one of the hunters was asked whether being a member of a hunting community is of any importance to him, he relayed:

Well it is important for me... in any case since man is a social being... this ((is a)) region where a man does not have the opportunity to do all sorts of things like in the cities – here hunting practically offers one among rare opportunities to socialize, to be among people. { } You know for yourself that in this villages – you are either in a hunting club, { } in a fishing club or in a firefighter unit, right? (H-5, I).

Participants complained that Gorski kotar is a poor region characterized by a high emigration rate and low population density. As a result of numerous long-term economic problems, young people have left their homes in search for jobs and economic security. The villages of Gorski kotar have never been smaller and emptier, said participants. For people living in these villages, isolation and loneliness are real threats, especially if they belong to older generations. By providing a platform that enables regular meetings and other social activities, hunting acts as a glue that ties people of Gorki kotar together and “*brings a new life quality*” (H-19, FG). People bond through hunting and many hunters become good friends, spending time together not only during hunting activities but outside them too. For some hunters, however, socializing through hunting has an additional

dimension. Through hunting they are able to learn more about the local history and cultural heritage of Gorski kotar:

V: How important is it for hunters to be members of that ((hunting)) community?

It means a lot to me – I have this group now { } and except for the two of them we are all from Delnice - I have a pretty old group – old based on their age and they are all from Delnice - and we all get on pretty well together. And when we get together { } the five of us meet up there, we have this hunting lodge and then we sit down and talk, and... I don't know, I used to, but now I don't know anymore how to speak in my local dialect. { } So I really enjoy ((being)) with these people when they start talking in dialect – they will take a sip and then they ((will ask each other)): “Do you remember that?” It really matters a lot that I can socialize with these people – you can always hear something, you revive something... I am lucky that I am in the group with these older people from Delnice. It bonds me with them and to my region. I find it important to have that. (S-12, FG)

Social environment (family)

As mentioned in the section on motivations, many hunters become hunters because their fathers, relatives or spouses hunted. Other hunters were influenced by their friends or work colleagues. Since these hunters did not explicitly discuss whether such influence brought any direct satisfaction to their lives, we can only guess what exactly hunting has brought to them and whether it had, as we might assume, a positive impact on the relationship with the person who initiated them into hunting. Nevertheless, hunters do get a special satisfaction if affection for hunting is passed from one family generation to the next one. This contentment was observed in hunters who had young children and said that they hoped their children will one day become hunters too. Moreover, children of parents who hunt were

exposed to nature from their youth, an even though they might have not taken up hunting, they still possess a great knowledge about nature. Hunters were especially satisfied with the fact that they managed to pass onto their children the knowledge, respect, and love toward nature:

My son is 17 years old and honestly, I would love for him to become a hunter... him too I take with me so that he can experience that and I sincerely hope that – he will graduate next year – that he will study forestry and go in that direction*. I don't force him. I don't talk about it but I do direct him in a discreet (laugh) way. (*H-I-5, I*).

My daughter is disinterested ((in hunting)), she is a fine young lady that does not understand that part of her mom and I understand and respect that, why should we all think the same, but I do take her to the woods – not often, but I do take her - to the shooting stand to see the bears – to experience that world a bit, right? She is not afraid to go in the woods in a sense that she can take a dog and walk 5 km – that means I achieved something – that connection with the woods, with all of that. (*H-I, I*)

Trophy hunting

When it comes to hunting for trophies, two types of satisfaction were identified. The first type is the satisfaction hunters get from the chase when they test their physical and mental strength. If they succeed, they are rewarded with a trophy, from which comes the second type of satisfaction. The notion of a “reward”, mentioned already under the Earning ones right to hunt category, refers to the belief that for the hunters who are members of hunting clubs, a trophy is perceived to be a kind of reward for all the time and effort they put into managing the game and hunting ground. A trophy does not solely mean shooting an animal with the outstanding CIC² points but an animal of an appropriate sex and age. For many

²CIC is a scoring system for the assessment of trophies, mainly of European big game

hunters the trophy becomes truly meaningful when the whole hunting experience is shared and discussed among hunters. Display of the trophy is also crucial, not only in the context of “showing off” to other hunters, but in a sense that the displayed trophy can immediately call into ones memory a particular hunting experience. All of the above-mentioned is nicely elaborated in the next quote:

It would be cynical of me to say that it is not important to gain a good quality trophy because... first of all, all hunters want to take pride in every single one of their trophies, especially if the trophy has been acquired... legally { } And each hunter normally wants – now I’m talking about that hunting pride - to shoot... as good trophy as he can – in the end that is his pride, firstly for his own sake and then for the sake of other hunters { }. When I look at any one of my trophies I can run the entire movie in my head... I hope to be able to do that even when I get older because if I cannot do that.... then the entire hunting is meaningless – if I could not remember and relate something positive to a trophy that I see on the wall. (H-5-13)

Personal benefits to hunters from the non-hunter's point of view

Non-hunters, in comparison to hunters, listed a rather low number of personal benefits. Non-hunters would, unlike hunters, often criticized many of these benefits and were in general much less willing to describe hunting as a source of positive and fulfilling personal benefits. The most negatively described benefits were those that stem from trophy and meat hunting. The main issue regarding benefits from trophy and meat hunting was the belief that hunters can be truly satisfied only in cases when they have shot the game and acquired a trophy/and or meat. Moreover, attaining trophy and/or meat was oftentimes linked to pretentious behavior, prestige, “hunting passion”, hunting “for fun”, illegal hunting, all of

which was condemned by non-hunters. There is an additional reason why non-hunters often perceived benefits related to trophy and meat hunting as inappropriate. Non-hunters believed that many trophy and meat hunters do not apply the previously described element of reciprocity. In other words, these hunters were believed not to earn their right to hunt; they were said to be taking more out from nature than they were giving back. Non-hunters could not justify this type of hunting since they believed that in hunting, a mere satisfaction of one's personal needs cannot be morally acceptable.

Some of the few positively viewed benefits include experiencing nature, ability to recreate, spending time with friends, and continuation of family tradition. The main problem concerning these benefits is that non-hunters did not discuss them in depth. This makes it hard to interpret the meanings behind them, and makes the benefits hard to distinguish from the motivations that they stem from. Overall, although it was obvious that non-hunters did not evaluate all personal benefits as problematic and debatable, it seems that they were quite concerned about what they perceived as the negative personal benefits.

Providing benefits to local community (sub-category)

A second set of hunting functions were those that hunting provides to the local community, listed in the Table 5.4. The discussion on these functions was led by the idea of how the local community, besides hunters, should be, or is already in a position to benefit from various hunting activities. Hunters in particular felt that

the hunting community is a vital part of the local community in Gorski kotar. The organized and structured nature of the hunting community was believed to be of an asset for carrying out various volunteer based local activities (e.g. environmental clean-up etc.). These and other so called "eco-actions" were recognized and welcomed by the non-hunters, too. Another service mentioned by both groups was the game meat and its availability on the local market. Venison dishes are especially considered a specialty and are traditionally served at particular social events such as weddings. Other functions that the participants discussed include hunting tourism, prevention of damage by game, damage compensation, and prevention of wildlife disease. According to both hunters and non-hunters, hunting tourism, prevention of damage by game, and damage compensation were singled out as the three most important functions and these will be explored in the following section.

Table 5.4 Benefits to local community (socio-cultural and socio-economic dimensions)

<i>Functions/benefits</i>	
<i>Benefits to local community</i>	<i>Benefits to local community</i>
<i>According to hunters</i>	<i>According to non-hunters</i>
Hunting tourism	Hunting tourism
Prevention of damage by game	Prevention of damage by game
Damage compensation	Damage compensation
Prevention of wildlife disease	<i>Not mentioned</i>
"Eco-actions"	"Eco-actions"

Hunting tourism

The most commonly mentioned function by both groups was hunting tourism i.e. commercial hunting. At the moment, money generated through commercial hunting directly benefits privately or state owned hunting companies, and the professional hunters or game wardens that work there. Indirect financial benefits were also mentioned, especially for the private leaseholders whom do not utilize hunting as their main source of income. Namely, it is believed that these private companies use hunting tourism as a platform to make business deals with their partners. Even local hunting clubs offer commercial hunting and use money generated through it to support running of the club. A portion of money from the commercial hunting is also dispersed among local restaurants, hotels and others who provide accommodation services:

Hunting tourism is a targeted tourism. So if you have bred good quality game species, foreign clients, ((or)) any other clients will wish to shoot it and will pay a certain fee for it. When a guest comes to Gorski kotar, and he wants for example to shoot a bear, he does not simply come from Germany, shoot the bear and leave. He will pay a toll; he will spend some money on tourism services in Delnice, he will pay the fee { } to a hunting club or a leaseholder. So the whole community will benefit from it. (H-3, I)

In general, participants from both groups perceived that the benefits from hunting tourism are already spread among hunters and a wider community; they supported this distribution of finances. Nevertheless, they wondered whether hunting tourism has the potential to become a more significant source of income for the whole region. The skepticism was most likely fueled by the recent local and global economic downturn, which has in many ways paralyzed the development of

this region. Skeptics said that hunting tourism cannot become a significant economic industry as it has reached its maximum due to Gorski kotar's habitat limitations, limited number of interested clients, and high costs of operating such tourism. Other participants believed hunting can bring more money to the region by offering, for example, authentic game meat cuisine. They also supported the idea of diversification of hunting activities that would, beside usual services, offer non-consumptive services like a "photo-hunt". Despite differences in their opinions, all participants believed that commercial hunting was going to be the future of hunting, with a common agreement that hunting is increasingly becoming more businesslike. In other words, a view was held that the current hunting is become increasingly oriented toward generating profit by offering hunting opportunities to clients. Not all were happy about the commercialization of hunting but it was viewed as an inevitable process. Those that supported the commercialization thought it would directly and indirectly benefit the local economy.

Another idea shared by all participants was the notion of hunting as a practice that is traditional for Gorski kotar and part of its local culture. In their opinion, hunting in Gorski kotar was recognizably distinctive and at times even better when compared to hunting in other Croatian regions. Participants believed the uniqueness of the region and its hunting practice should be wisely branded and marketed through hunting tourism. A result would be a smart touristic promotion of the region that would have a positive financial impact for the local communities of Gorski kotar.

Damages done by game: prevention and compensation

Discussion on damages caused by game was most often brought up by non-hunters. They believed that preventing human-wildlife conflicts is one of the main reasons to manage game and thought that hunters are responsible for keeping the wildlife away from human settlements. The chances of animals coming in close proximity of human settlements concerned participants as it posed a threat to their safety and could lead to damages to private property and agricultural crops. Regulated hunting i.e. shooting was perceived as a way to prevent these risks, as seen from the next quote:

((Population control)) simply must be planned. That kind of relief is needed for the people here because it matters to us – as much as it is beautiful it is also dangerous to be with these animals. This needs to be taken into consideration. Because of that I am not against hunting – let them ((hunters)) be responsible and shoot what needs to be shot.
(NH-7, FG)

Non-hunters had a somewhat partial understanding of the actual way the damage prevention and compensation system is regulated, as many of them have never experienced game related damage. Nevertheless, even the possibility of a human-wildlife conflict happening, like for example a wildlife-vehicle collision, worried them. Most concerned were those participants who have experienced or witnessed close encounters with large game species, like brown bears or roe deer in the perimeters of their villages. These feelings resulted in the belief that the current system of damage prevention and compensation is not the best, and should be improved.

Hunters were of opinion that it is indeed the hunters' responsibility, as the leaseholders of the hunting grounds, to prevent and compensate game related damages. They were satisfied with the result of their efforts but were worried about the perceived increase in population numbers of some species (e.g., brown bears). They thought this could lead to an increase in damages that would consequently put an additional managerial and financial pressure on the hunting clubs.

Benefits to the game populations (sub-category)

The third major set of functions consisted of functions that were directly benefiting the game. These benefits are presented in the Table 5.5. According to participants, one of the major functions of hunting is to manage game species, and to manage them appropriately. Under appropriate management, participants understood the type of management that aims to sustain "balance in nature". Participants believed that humans destabilized natural balance and saw hunting as a way to create and maintain a new type of balance that can benefit humans as well as wildlife. The actual term "balance in nature" and its meaning within the context of game management will be discussed more within the Hunting for wildlife management theme. In the meantime, the next quote is given to help explain what participants understood under the term (natural) balance and to illustrate some of the most common outcomes believed to occur if hunting ceased to exist:

I think that men have great impact ((on nature)) { } where people manage game and where they feed it more { } the number of animals is higher. { } If there was no hunting activity there would be losses, { } an attack towards game because they would be left with no food,

game would put an even greater pressure on crops that they are already eating { }. By now game is already used to living here – so if you don't feed it over the winter – it ((the game)) will be buried under and it will die. (*H-19, FG*)

The expression “balance in nature” was often offered as a seemingly straightforward answer to the question of why hunting is good or necessary for game populations. Some of the participants found it sufficient to simply mention the term balance without describing additional benefits that resulted from maintaining this balance. Others, usually hunters, discussed the term balance more in depth and provided a more detailed list of balance related functions that directly or indirectly benefited game populations. This list usually included some of the following benefits: reaching and maintaining optimal population numbers, preventing animal starvation, preventing unnecessary animal suffering, maintaining a healthy gene pool and viability in populations. These benefits were extremely important for hunters, as they believed they provided the obvious justification for hunting and game management. In their opinion, these benefits could not only explain that hunting does not have any negative impact on game population but that hunting is crucial if we want to have a viable game population.

Table 5.5 Benefits to game populations/nature (ecological dimension)

<i>Functions/benefits</i>	
<i>Benefits to game population/nature</i>	<i>Benefits to game population/nature</i>
<i>According to hunters</i>	<i>According to non-hunters</i>
<i>Managing game species:</i> -perceived as the primary benefit that encompasses the following ones:	<i>Managing game species:</i> -perceived as the primary benefit that encompasses the following ones:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintaining balance in nature</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintaining balance in nature</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reaching and maintaining optimal population numbers of game</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reaching and maintaining optimal population numbers of game</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preventing animal starvation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preventing animal starvation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preventing unnecessary animal suffering</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preventing unnecessary animal suffering</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintaining healthy gene pool in populations</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not mentioned</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maintaining good viability</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not mentioned</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Looking after the game</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Looking after the game</i>

At the same time, while non-hunters agreed on the majority of the above mentioned functions, they were usually not as vocal as hunters. Moreover, non-hunters' support of hunting and game management heavily relied on their belief that game management controls the game overabundance and thus decreases the risks of human-wildlife conflicts. Consequently, non-hunters were less interested in benefits

that hunters claimed population control brings to animals such as a healthy gene pool or viable population. Instead, they were much more interested in hunting benefits that had a direct impact on their lives, such as damage prevention or hunting tourism. This is not to say that non-hunters thought of hunting as providing services exclusively to humans, but that they primarily discussed benefits of hunting from a people's point of view.

Despite the difference in opinions between hunters and non-hunters, there was one particular benefit of hunting for game that was important for both groups of participants. This benefit was referred to as "looking after the animals" and regularly emphasized as an essential element of game management. As a reminder, the concept of "looking after the game" was previously mentioned in the *Hunting community* theme as a characteristic of a *Proper hunter*. The representation of hunters as caregivers that help animals by preventing unnecessary suffering was one of the main arguments behind non-hunters' support for hunting, and hunters' justification of hunting. Below are two quotes, first from a non-hunter and second from a hunter that nicely illustrate these attitudes:

Ok, I respect – our local hunter and as much as I can tell through my work – they are very active and they do all sort of things: eco-actions and they look after the game and I find that great.“ (NH-18, FG)

“I find it* appalling - because for instance last winter in Gorski kotar there was more than 1,5m of snow and game was left on its own, that is left to predators - wolf and others – and not only that but the temperatures were very low – ((game)) was exhausted and all that – not even one activist came to Gorski kotar and said – here, I will give one apple to or take one bale of hay to the game so it will survive. But hunters were those who carried the heavy load and this makes it

obvious who is a hunter, who is a provider, and who the one that can only criticize. (H-4, I)

((when participants said it, he was referring to the anti-hunting argument that claims that all hunters are mere killers whose only goal is to acquire as much trophy as possible)).*

5.3 Hunting for wildlife management

5.3.1. Attitudes towards nature (category)

Nature plays a special role in the lives of people from Gorski kotar. When participants talked about this region and its characteristics, it was nature they talked about the most. Listing forests and water as the most important natural resources, they pointed out the richness of nature: high biodiversity and abundance of animals. This, they claimed, makes the region unique not only from the rest of the country but also from many parts of Europe and world in general, and it is what symbolizes it:

{ } and all this biodiversity in the end ((is a symbol of this region)) – all of these animals species, the abundance of animals species that inhabit this place – I mean now we talk only about...animal species, but there is also habitat, plants { }. (H-5, I)

To depict just how special nature in Gorski kotar is, participants emphasized the presence of large carnivores: brown bear, lynx and wolf. The carnivores' presence, according to them, shows how healthy, pristine and *wild* the ecosystem of Gorski kotar is. A unique combination of attributes makes this place stand out as an "oasis" and a "green heart of Croatia". Participants showed a great deal of love

toward nature and were very proud of “their” nature. Moreover, they talked about how tightly embedded people from Gorski kotar are in the natural environment and prided themselves for having a better appreciation and understanding of nature and natural processes compared to the people from other parts of Croatia. At the same time, although participants believed that locals possess a high level of conservation awareness, they also recognized that nature is often undervalued and taken for granted:

Treasure... great treasure, precisely those large carnivores and because of that we are rich but we are not even aware what we have. I don't think we are aware of that. I don't travel much around the world but based on what I read and hear and see – we are not aware of our – of all the treasures and I think we simply need to... conserve it. (*H-1, I*)

Besides having an immense respect for nature, participants also showed a great deal of interest in it, especially toward charismatic wildlife species such as large herbivores and carnivores. They were intrigued by these large mammals, and were often able to easily recollect a story about a particular species. These stories described both first-hand wildlife experiences as well as those experienced by a third person, and talked about admiration, curiosity, love, fear, disgust, and other feelings people held toward the species. Regardless of whether a particular species evoked positive or negative attitudes in participants, the species was, in most cases, seen as a legitimate and inseparable part of this region. Even those species that were perceived as pests, dangerous or too abundant, were said to be a crucial part of the region's ecosystem. Participants supported the interventions into populations of

such *problematic* species but stressed the importance of human-wildlife coexistence:

In Gorski kotar man is part, part of... hunting ground, let's call it like that. Because basically it is a symbiosis, a coexistence of man and carnivores and high game and everything that inhabits this place. We live on a such a small space and we – we have become so close to each other, and on the other hand we live closer because what was once meadow and pasture { } – these are now overrun and game has simply moved to our yards. And today we are simply neighbors. So when you get up in the morning you open a window and you can say "Good morning" to a bear and in the evening "Good night". The same goes for other species. We are simply now in this position and we have to not only respect it but live with it. (H-4, I)

Participants were able to tolerate occasional human-wildlife conflicts but the perceived high level of tolerance regarding wildlife is not unconditional. It has been recently put under a test as the population levels of some species are increasing or at least believed to be increasing. Another commonly held belief is that the reduction of agriculture in the last decades changed the landscape of Gorski kotar resulting in an increase of forested areas. The end result, according to participants, is that the wildlife is getting closer and closer to human settlements. Close encounters with wildlife species like brown bears worries people, especially non-hunters, as it changes an already established dynamic between humans and wildlife:

I think that the situation is bearable... people go to the woods, they do, people work, encounters happen, all that is fine, but now the animals have started coming down, these young bears ((come)) to the villages - that has its own reasons – forest, nobody mows the meadows, forests are expanding, populations are increasing, supplementary feeding, { } natural increase, { } ((animals)) are coming down and this consequently brings... some issues because for instance it is not pleasant if you go for a walk in the afternoon and you are not sure whether you will meet a bear on the road or not. I am not talking about Delnice but about smaller villages – I am talking about

Gorski kotar. When children play football in Mrkopalj the bear is looking at them... from the woods, from about 300m... well now, how enjoyable is that? ... I mean. *(H-1, I)*

The need to control animal populations in cases when wildlife becomes a problem for local people was part of participant's belief in human domination over nature that includes management of wildlife and other natural resources, including forests. Forest and game management were perceived as legitimate practices that have a long and deep social and cultural significance for the whole region. For example, forestry is considered as a traditional activity and the region's core economy through which generations of locals earned their daily bread. Based on these views, none questioned the ownership over forests or human rights to manage them. When it comes to wildlife, the situation was a bit different. For instance, one non-hunting participant who held strong anti-hunting attitudes questioned the logic behind the current human-animal relationship, claiming that humans do not have the right to manage something they did not initially "create". He used the following metaphor to express what he saw to be a dubious logic behind the ownership and management of game:

{ } In a national park I have stumble upon... an inscription - that said: "Do not pick the flowers that you have not planted... Right? { } Similar is true for this ((game)). Nobody has planted it... therefore nobody should touch it, right? And if by some chance, these "grand" hunters contributed somehow to all of this, if they would plant something, in quotation marks – then they might be able to manage it. ((But)) they have only inherited it and now they act as some sort of heroes..." *(NH-2, I)*

Hunters' standpoint on game ownership was that the game does not belong to them or solely to them but to all people of Croatia. Hunters, they claimed, have

been legally assigned to manage the game and they must do it in a sustainable way that will in the long run enable the conservation of game species for the subsequent generations:

So normally we also have to be smart, if we want to have something that we will be able to manage tomorrow and leave something to our children, then we have to manage it in such a way that we don't meddle with merits that will later results in new merits – so our forest is the principal, and we can only use the interest – we must leave the principal to our next generations – and the same is true for game and everything else. (*H-5, I*).

Even though participants, especially hunters, did not explicitly question the humans' right to dominate over wildlife or to manage game, they still felt obliged to justify why wildlife management is a necessity of today's world. What exactly constitutes this justification will be described in the next section.

5.3.2. Quest for balance (category)

Both groups used the notion of *maintaining balance* to legitimize wildlife management. According to their claims, nature has an optimal state within which it can operate and in the past this state has been maintained by nature itself. Due to severe anthropogenic pressure the balance has shifted, and the stability of the whole system jeopardized. It is not realistic to expect things will ever go back to how they were, and the reason for this is the inability of human nature to flex and adjust:

Man changed everything { }. The only mistake of nature is man – and man is the cause of everything – cause of all troubles. Therefore – problem needs to be changed, cause needs to be changed. Man has to change, but we try to adjust everything to us – we will change everything if it is to our benefit, but sometimes it doesn't go that way.

Actually, nature regulates all things very well. It just that it is a bit too slow for our lifetime – we wouldn't even be able to experience all this. So we force things... *(H-9, I)*

It is evident that the participants viewed human activity as the overwhelming source of problems in nature. Even though some of participants thought that the way nature functions is the best possible way, nobody thought humans can stop or that they wish to stop to intervene in nature. Some participants thought that the profoundly altered and damaged state of nature cannot be "left alone" to balance itself out. Therefore, to regain some kind of balance in nature, humans must continue to interfere.

Hunting as such – hunters say that if there was no shooting as it exist now, and if animals were not killed - that they would be terribly abundant. At least that is what they say, and I trust them. And probably – some defined number needs to be maintained, so that is doesn't multiply. Especially regarding roe and red deer – they say they reproduce intensely. *(NH-6, FG)*

However, participants understood that interfering with nature in order to maintain balance is not done solely for the sake of nature. Instead, interests and demands of human society play a major role, and this new type of equilibrium in nature, is a result of humans' attempt to balance the needs of humans and the needs of nature. Wildlife management or more precisely game management was seen as a pragmatic approach to achieve this goal. On the one hand, it is meant to bring the population numbers of game as close to species biological optimum but below its social capacity. On the other hand, it is a source of satisfaction for hunters, rewarding them for their time and effort that was put into managing the game and the hunting ground. Without this type of intervention both humans and nature

would inevitably experience some sort of negative consequences. For the wildlife a lack of game management could lead to a substantial increase in population numbers resulting in overabundance, outbreaks of diseases, increased pressures on the habitat (e.g., damages on bark etc.), and radically changed prey-predator dynamics. On the other hand, all these changes in the population dynamics of wildlife could lead to frequent human-wildlife encounters increasing the chances of wildlife related problems such as safety risks, property damage, damage compensations and others. Finally, the right to hunt was mentioned as something that would also be negatively impacted by the lack of game management. In the next section it will be explained what exactly participants understood under the term game management and what they perceived as functional and legitimate game management.

5.3.3. The notion of game management (category)

According to hunters, game management and hunting, here meant in the broad sense, was essentially one and the same. Hunters often defined hunting by using a very formal description that depicted hunting as a process composed of three major components: game breeding, game protection and the actual hunting (Figure 4.1). The pursuit and shooting of game were considered as the main components of the actual hunting. Non-hunters also stressed the tight connection between game management and hunting. Still, their description of game management was less formal and they identified two, not three components as the

main building blocks of game management, namely the game protection and the actual hunting.

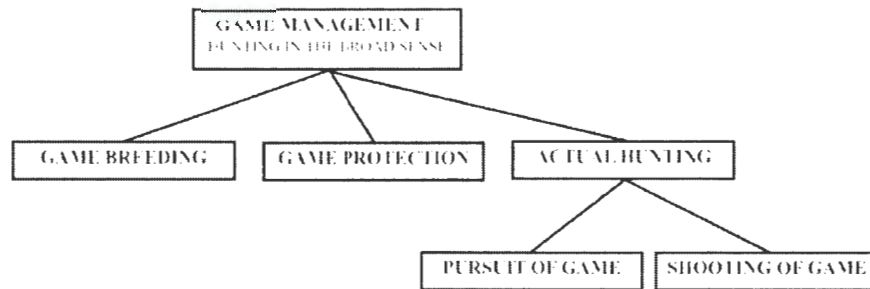


Figure 5.1 Definitions of hunting

Participants thought that hunters ought to breed, protect, and harvest the game in a manner that will sustain a certain balance between wildlife and humans. As noted earlier, participants believed in the importance of sustaining the balance within and/or with nature, and thought that the natural balance in Gorski kotar has shifted. Participants felt that, consequently, humans need to interfere and considered game management the most appropriate instrument to establish and maintain the new balance. Not interfering was simply out of the question as the vast majority of participants found it difficult, if not impossible, to imagine wildlife of Gorski kotar without being put under some sort of management. In addition, participants could not depict a single type of game management that would not be based on hunting.

Hunters usually commented that game management, which is not based on hunting, cannot even be regarded as a game management:

V: ((So we cannot manage game without hunting the animals?))

“No, it is not possible. It is not possible, because of the impact of natural increase ... and harvesting needs to be done... it needs to be done – hunting cannot consist of only game feeding, observation etc... No, animals have to be harvested from their habitat through hunting - shooting is necessary - shooting is necessary... due to different reason: due to the love, the need... (H-I, I)

Hunters claimed that game management is rooted in “reciprocity”, a concept mentioned previously in the *Hunting community* theme. Hunters stressed that they cannot simply shoot and take animals out from nature but must also put something back. They believed that the act of giving back to nature can be achieved through the processes of game breeding and game protection. These processes are based on various measures and activities, including the following: population estimation, projection of long-term population dynamics, supplementary feeding, prevention of illegal hunting, crowd control in the hunting ground, sanitary control, disease control, and predator control. A final aim is a healthy population with a steady population growth. Only in those populations where a sufficient natural increase is achieved can a properly regulated hunt occur. As stated by hunters, all of the above activities are controlled through two regulatory systems; one is put in place by the state, and the other by the hunting community. The first system of regulations (i.e., legal state regulations) consists of formal acts that prescribe the required sex and age structure of hunted animals, as well as the seasons, techniques, and other conditions that make the hunting legitimate. The system of regulations stipulated by

the hunting community prescribes management of hunting organizations, as well as the appropriate hunting behavior within the hunting community and during the hunt. This latter regulatory system is in essence a mix of formal and informal regulations that define the moral code of hunting.

In general, participants viewed game management in Gorski kotar as good management that could be improved but whose basic structure should not be changed. Hunters would oftentimes give examples of things that they believed to be indicators of successful game management in Gorski kotar. For instance, high quality trophies, higher abundance of certain species in comparison to their numbers in the past, successful conservation of brown bear, presence of large carnivores, and adequate damage compensation were all said to result from a proper game management.

Still, game management in Gorski kotar is not without its challenges. Hunters were often frustrated due to poor legal regulations that are said to limit their work while non-hunters criticized bad implementation of what they otherwise considered as relatively good regulations. Most concerns and criticism came from professional hunters who were alarmed about the increased emphasis on profit in the current game management. In their opinion, gaining money through game management was hard if not impossible. More specifically, ecological limitations of habitat and a high level of game predation by large carnivores were seen as the main challenges behind commercially profitable game management. For hunters that regarded hunting as a sport it was also morally unacceptable to make profit

through game management as it diminishes the meaning of the sport and turns it into pure business. Hunters believed that game management which primarily focuses on gaining profit does not provide long-term benefits for the game and fails to contribute to its conservation. Game management practiced in privately owned hunting grounds was commonly used to illustrate the detrimental effect of profit oriented game management:

Allegedly some private lease and concession holders think like: "I'll take it ((hunting ground)) for 10 years, I will exploit it, devastate it and then I'll denounce the agreement and farewell. Listen - that is a problem. We ((local hunting club)) think long-term and we even consider increasing the abundance, quality of ((game)) structure. (*H-11, FG*)

Wolf management was another problem that, besides regulations and commercial hunting, bothered hunters. They were very angry about the fact that they cannot manage wolves due to their status as a fully protected species. They considered wolves as major pests whose level of predation on red and roe deer was described as catastrophic damage done to *their* (i.e., hunters') game. Illegal hunting of wolves would not be happening if wolf was a game species, claimed hunters. Although it was the problem with wolves that pained Gorski kotar's leaseholders, the real problem was the government. According to hunters, the state was only interested in collecting money from the leaseholders and was not really interested in the leaseholders or their problems. At the same time, the actual presence of wolves was perceived as something to be proud of, and as a confirmation of proper game management. However, hunters felt that local knowledge of wolves and other carnivore species is not valued enough. They felt that it has been overpowered by

“foreign knowledge” originating from countries that already shattered their population of large carnivores. The fact that the hunters and Croatian people in general are “being told” by international legislation how to manage and protect these species was a sore point for some hunters. Hunters felt frustrated and manipulated, and also stressed that this situation needs to change in the future, as expressed by the following hunter:

We should consider ourselves lucky because we did not destroy what others have destroyed long ago and we should be proud of it – on the other hand we need to conserve and know how to present it. { } I don't think we are using the right stance – { } we put ourselves in a position where others are still telling us what to do, teaching us, when instead we should be teachers to others. And we should charge these teaching lessons... So this is a process that... needs to begin... (H-4, I)

5.4 Summary

Insights presented under the theme *Hunting community* depict hunting in Gorski kotar as a profoundly social activity, a fact recognized and validated by both hunters and non-hunters. The social features of hunting are formed and maintained through the hunting community i.e. hunting clubs, and these clubs were found to play an immense role in defining the meanings of hunting. Indeed, it is hard if not impossible to discuss the identities of hunters in Gorski kotar without discussing what membership in such a community means to them. Hunting clubs are not merely organizations through which hunters are initiated into hunting but social networks through which they become embedded into their local social and natural environment. The *Hunting community* theme also revealed the role of ethical norms

in hunting. In particular, the category *Proper hunters* showcased that the participants regularly used a set of norms represented under the notion of the proper hunter to provide their understanding of what is an appropriate and what an inappropriate hunting behavior.

The theme *Multiple dimensions of hunting* revealed that participant thought of the hunting community as a diverse, heterogonous community. There were great differences regarding what hunters find appealing in hunting and why they started hunting in the first place. Moreover, through participants' descriptions of personal and communal benefits, as well as the benefits for the game, arose the complex portrayal of hunting as a structure composed of varying cultural, socioeconomic, and ecological dimensions. Hunters generally perceived all three dimensions as equally relevant, often stressing that the general public needs to realize that others, as well as hunters, benefit from hunting. On the other hand, non-hunters evaluated differently each dimension and had the most support for the type of hunting consisting of all three dimensions.

The *Hunting for wildlife management* theme revealed the two main messages. Firstly, when it comes to the human-wildlife relationship, the balance is the most desirable state. Secondly, game management is the best approach to attain and maintain the balance. Consequently, the theme uncovers managing game as one of the strongest arguments behind participants' justification of hunting. The unique traits of this argument are that it represents one of the rare occasions where both groups held a unanimous viewpoint, and that the participants rarely questioned the

argument or the rationale behind it. Even those non-hunters who were highly critical of some other aspects and dimensions of hunting, supported game management and believed that it truly benefits the natural and social environment.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

In the results chapter I provided a detailed account of participants' meanings of hunting in Gorski kotar. These insights were clustered under the following themes: *Hunting community*, *Multiple dimensions of hunting* and *Hunting for wildlife management*. These three themes cover a spectrum of closely related issues which when taken together into consideration, form a detailed portrayal of hunting in the region of Gorski kotar. In this chapter, I will interpret each theme separately, and explore whether it corroborates or disputes the existing hunting literature. Due to the interconnectedness of the three main themes and its sub-themes, the interpretation of each theme will occasionally incorporate particular insights from the other two themes as well. In the second part of this chapter I stress the key findings of my study, and provide recommendations for the future management programs as well as for the future research on hunting.

6.1 Hunting community

The theme *Hunting community* depicted some of the main characteristics of hunting in Gorski kotar by exploring the meanings of hunting in regard to the hunting community. The hunting community (i.e., hunting club) represents the essential element of hunting in Gorski kotar. As all hunting activities are undertaken through the hunting clubs, these organizations inevitably shape the nature of

hunting in Gorski kotar. In particular, hunting clubs were found to be linked to three distinct representations of hunting and hunters: sense of belonging, sense of responsibility, and the proper hunter.

Sense of belonging: hunting as a way to socialize

Hunting in Gorski kotar is an activity with a profoundly social character. This social character is first and foremost a result of the way in which hunting in Gorski kotar is organized: as a network of highly connected and well structured hunting clubs. The right to hunt is granted through hunting club membership, and hunters will inevitably, solely by hunting within the same hunting club, spend a considerable amount of time together. From this initial socialization, by spending hours and hours together, and sharing everything from game meat to experiences and memories, hunters gradually build firm relationships with other members of the hunting community. The extensive socialization creates a sense of belonging, and a feeling of an inclusion into a world with its own set of rules and merits. Many hunters appreciate the closeness and fellowship of the hunting community, through which many existing friendships are strengthened and new friendships build. Many hunters also believe that this aspect of hunting enables hunters to experience the hunting in a deeper and a more meaningful way. All of this might explain why hunting to socialize was found to be such an import factor in defining the appeal of both hunting and hunting community for the hunters of Gorski kotar.

The importance of socializing in hunting was found in other studies on hunting, and socializing was identified as one of the most important motivations for hunting (Good, 1997; Gigliotti, 2000; Littlefield, 2006; Radder and Bech-Larsen, 2008; Boglioli, 2009; Chitwood et al., 2011). Littlefield's (2006) study on hunters in the rural south of U.S. showed that many hunters value camaraderie of the hunting community more than the actual hunt. For these hunters, which Littlefield regarded as experientials, the company of their fellow hunters allowed a total immersion in the hunting experience (Littlefield, 2006). Together with their fellow hunters they created a "shared experience and shared history and friendship" that resulted in a long-term sense of community (i.e., "communitas") (Littlefield, 2006; pp. 132). In his study of hunting in rural Vermont, Boglioli (2009) found that the value of social interactions during a traditional week-long hunting within a deer camp was far greater than the actual chance to shoot the deer in the camp's surrounding. Moreover, hunters in Boglioli's study described the deer camp quite similar to the way hunters in Gorski kotar talked about hunting clubs: as social settings characterized by (male) bonding, friendship, storytelling, humor, ritualistic consumption of venison and respect towards elders (Boglioli, 2009). The major difference, however, is that the hunting clubs of Gorski kotar are much more permanent social settings than the deer camps, and as such have a stronger impact on the identity of hunters and meanings of hunting in general.

An additional factor that makes the social aspect of hunting so valuable is undoubtedly the rural character of this region. Due to low population density and

dispersed villages, Gorski kotar offers limited opportunities for social gatherings. Isolation and even marginalization were perceived as real threats by many participants who felt exceedingly physically, socially, and economically isolated from the rest of the country. The sense of isolation is not uncommon among residents of Gorski kotar; this was also shown by a study done by Lukić et al., (2009). In this context, for those who hunt, hunting might be seen as a way to avert social isolation and marginalization, and improve the level of life quality. That hunting can serve as an important social platform in the rural areas challenged by economic hardship was also found in studies done by Hompland, (1999, as cited in Bye, 2003; pp. 149), Bye (2003), and Krangle and Skogen (2007).

Sense of responsibility: Hunting as a process

As stressed by many hunters, hunting requires a high level of personal commitment. Not only does becoming a hunter take a certain amount of time and include specific rites of passage (e.g., passing the hunting exam, becoming an apprentice, shooting ones first game etc.), but once a person becomes a hunter, he or she will spend many hours working in the hunting club and on the actual hunting ground. Being a member of a hunting club more often than not requires that hunters participate in an array of hunting activities and that they invest a significant amount of their time, money and effort. Hunting in Gorski kotar is a year-round process, and it refers not only to the shooting of game but to the whole notion of game management. Unlike in North America, where hunters are involved in only the

harvesting (i.e., population control segment of game management), Croatian hunters are the game managers. They are responsible for the implementation of all three steps of game management: game breeding, game protection and the actual hunting (i.e., shooting). It is therefore not surprising that many hunters who participated in this study have a strong sense of responsibility toward the game, a sentiment at times followed with a sense of entitlement and ownership of the game.

That the hunting in the hunting clubs is perceived as a long-term process, which requires a high level of involvement, can be also recognized in the way hunters discussed the actual hunting (i.e., shooting). More specifically, the sub-category "earning ones right to hunt" revolves around the idea that the right to hunt in the hunting clubs is deserved over a period of time, and is not simply taken for granted. "Earning ones right to hunt" is not so much a hunting regulation as it is an ethical norm. It supposes that hunters, through the game management, establish an ongoing state of reciprocity. That is, since animals are "taken" from the nature during the actual hunting, hunters are required to give something back to nature. Or put the other way around: only in cases of successful game management can hunters be rewarded with the right to hunt. For hunters, giving back to nature translates into specific acts of breeding and protecting the game, the two essential components of game management. For non-hunters, it is directly linked with the notion of stewardship.

The Proper hunter

Based on what both groups of participants said, affiliation between hunters and their hunting community can be best described as being at the same time both physical and symbolic. It is physical because the actual organization and the membership are tangible and real, and hunter's rights and obligations within the hunting community are clearly stated. At the same time, the connection is symbolic, as even when hunters are outside the hunting arena, they still represent the hunting community. A single hunter is rarely perceived just as an individual hunter. Rather, especially in the eyes of non-hunters, a single hunter often represents other hunters as well, and his or her actions may be reflected upon a whole hunting community. Hunters were well aware of this process and of the continuous evaluation of hunting. They understood the value of having and maintaining a positive image of hunters, and the importance of this image for the perception of the hunting community and legitimization of hunting in general.

The *Proper hunter* category depicts an ideal image of the hunter, and deals with the question of *Who is entitled to hunt in Gorski kotar?* This category describes four essential traits a proper hunter of Gorski kotar must possess. Firstly, the proper hunter was perceived as a good member of the hunting community. He or she was seen as a social, friendly member who abides to the written and unwritten rules of the hunting community. Secondly, the proper hunter is someone who appreciates or has learned to appreciate the entire hunting experience. Such a hunter does not focus solely on the actual shooting and understands hunting as

something other than just a means to collect trophies. Thirdly, the proper hunter possesses a great deal of knowledge about game and game management, and knows how to meaningfully implement it. Lastly, the proper hunter is a steward to the game. This is a hunter who has a great deal of appreciation and love toward wildlife and who actively “looks after the game” to assure long-term benefits for the game.

In particular, discussions on stewardship focused on the moral obligation of hunters to look after the game, importance of self-imposed restraints, of making personal sacrifices, being a “good master”, maintaining the balance in nature, and conserving populations of species for the future generations. This description, which greatly emphasizes the morality behind hunters’ behaviors, is similar to the definition provided by Dixon, Siemer, and Knuth (1995, as cited in Holsman, 2000). They defined stewardship as a moral obligation of individuals to care for the environment. Their “ethic of personal responsibility” states that the individuals need to act morally in a way that takes into account future generations and the integrity of natural systems (Dixon et al. 1995, as cited in Holsman, 2000). Within wildlife management, especially in the North American context, stewardship is a well recognized concept (Leopold, 1949; Holsman, 2000; Treves and Martin, 2011; Bruskotter and Fulton, 2012). However, there exist different understandings as to what stewardship actually means (Holsman, 2000; Bruskotter and Fulton, 2012). For instance, some researchers define stewardship as direct actions (i.e., behaviors) that positively impact wildlife (Bruskotter and Fulton, 2012) while others define stewardship as attitudes (e.g., a lack of support towards conservation of species)

(Treves and Martin, 2011). According to Bruskotter and Fulton (2012) this ambiguity is detrimental to HD research as well as for the constructive communication with managers, stakeholders and researchers. In this sense, this study is a first step in defining more clearly the meanings of stewardship in the Croatian context.

Overall, the concept of *Proper hunter* is heavily rooted in the morality of hunting and has a strong normative character. It depicts an ideal image of the hunter, an image that both hunters and non-hunters continuously employ to differentiate between the proper and improper type of hunting. This moral norm, in other words, is used to legitimize hunting. Non-hunters applied the proper versus improper hunter dichotomy to describe the type of hunting they support, and used examples of real hunters from their local communities to back up their viewpoints. Consequently, if they thought that these hunters lacked the traits of a proper hunter, they were less supportive of hunting in general and more skeptical about any kind of positive contribution hunting might have for the social and natural environment. At the same time, hunters understood well the importance of having a positive image of hunters and were using the traits of the “proper hunter” to give justification for hunting in general. In doing this, they often contrasted the good, or the proper hunter on one side, and what they believed to be the false, misguided interpretations of hunting and hunters on the other.

What the concept of *Proper hunter* clearly illustrated is that, similar to many places around the world, “hunting is predominantly a moral issue” (Simpson and

Cain, 1995; pp. 182). Even though my study did not specifically focus on the morality of hunting, the results show that talking about hunting in Gorski kotar means very much talking about wrong versus right conduct of hunters (i.e., about the ethical code of hunting). Nevertheless, the specific focus of these discussions was not whether humans have the right to kill animals but rather under which circumstances can the animals be killed. This was true for both hunters and non-hunters. This attitude resembles the one observed among hunters in rural Vermont (Boglioli, 2009). Hunters in Vermont, although having a great deal of respect towards animals, did not see a moral dilemma in killing animals and were “unapologetically utilitarian in their interactions with the other life forms around them” (Boglioli, 2009; pp. 46). They did however, like Croatian hunters, have their own unwritten rules of what constitutes a proper, respectful hunt and/or a proper hunter.

6.2 Multiple dimensions of hunting

The question *Why do people hunt?* can be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation addresses peoples’ motivations while the second addresses the exact reasoning on why hunting is or is not an acceptable and valuable activity (Wood, 1997). The second interpretation is in essence focusing on justification of hunting and its benefits (Wood, 1997). Researchers have pointed out the need to be explicit and provide a clear distinction between motivations and benefits of hunting, in order to avoid “confusing the benefits of human actions with the ultimate cause of

these actions" (Boglioli, 2009; pp. 65). Benefits might at times be part of the cause, but that they are never the only cause (Boglioli, 2009; pp. 65). Following this reasoning, the theme *Multiple dimensions of hunting* provides answers to two questions: *Why do people hunt?* and *What functions does hunting provide?*. The first question specifically addresses peoples' motivations to hunt and the second the perceived benefits of hunting.

Diversity of motivations

Participants perceived the hunting community as a diverse group of people whose differing personal preferences propel them to seek different hunting experiences. There was a general understanding that there exists a multitude of motivations for hunting and that each hunter can be motivated by several different motivations. These results were not unexpected as they were in line with previous research on motivations in hunting (Decker and Connolly, 1989; Gigliotti, 2000; Hanna, 2007; Radder and Bech-Larsen, 2008). This study also confirmed that, due to the existence of multiple motivations for hunting, hunters in Gorski kotar experience a spectrum of different satisfactions from hunting. The insights on the multiple motivations and multiple satisfactions found in this study suggest that what one hunter from Gorski kotar finds satisfying in hunting might not be equally satisfying for some other hunter. In other words, these results confirm the basic HD concepts of multiple satisfactions in game management (Hendee, 1974).

Hunters and non-hunters talked about similar if not identical motivations for hunting. However, the perceived level of relevancy of each of these motivations varied greatly among the two groups. The majority of hunters reported that they predominantly hunt in order to experience nature, socialize and change the pace. Similar findings were also found in research done by Pinet (1995), Gigliotti (2000), and Radder and Bech-Larsen (2008). At the same time, non-hunters believed that hunters predominantly hunt in order to gain trophy or meat, which were the precise two motivations hunters said are definitely not the most important motivations in hunting. That is, while hunters described hunting as an experience oriented activity, non-hunters thought about hunting as a goal oriented activity. When the motivational orientation framework proposed by Decker and Connolly (1989) is applied to the data gathered from the Croatian hunters, it appears that the hunters in Gorski kotar are largely governed by the affiliative and appreciative orientations. On the other hand, according to the non-hunters, hunters in Gorski kotar are predominantly governed by the achievement orientation.

It was also evident that the participants evaluated the appropriateness of motivations. In general, both hunters and non-hunters saw as less positive those motivations that bring direct material or economic benefits to hunters such as meat or trophies. These concerns had a direct impact on the level of non-hunters' support for hunting. For instance, some non-hunters criticized trophy and meat hunting believing that this hunting does not reflect the element of reciprocity (i.e., that hunters have not earned their right to hunt). As non-hunters also believed that a

satisfaction of one's personal needs cannot be morally acceptable, thus they had difficulties justifying hunting if it was done only in order to gain trophy or meat. These findings corroborated the results from previous studies, which have suggested that the support for hunting directly depends on the motivations for hunting (Kellert, 1978; Heberlein and Willebrand; 1998; Bissell et al., 1998; Willebrand, 2009). Furthermore, in these studies, just like in Gorski kotar, trophy hunting received the lowest level of support in comparison to other types of hunting.

On the other hand, results from Gorski kotar diverge in several aspects from the abovementioned HD studies on hunting. Firstly, the subsistence hunting, which is the type of hunting that has received the most positive attitudes in previous studies on hunting (Kellert, 1980; Kellert, 1988; Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998), does not exist in the Croatian context, and was therefore not discussed among the participants. Secondly, hunting for meat did not receive as positive attitudes as expected, and was even frowned upon by some hunters. At the same time, it was clear that the consumption of game meat during the hunting gatherings represents a customary practice cherished by Gorski kotar's hunters. Even more, the Croatian hunting ethic dictates that the meat does not go to waste but that it is utilized by hunters and/or a wider non-hunting community. Overall, the criticism towards hunting for meat was somewhat of a surprise as this type of hunting, whether understood as part of subsistence hunting or as part of hunting for recreation and meat, usually receives a relatively high level of support (Kellert, 1980; 1988; Wood,

1997; Heberlein and Willebrand, 1998). One of the possible explanations for the reserved opinions regarding hunting for meat in Gorski kotar is maybe that it is perceived as a remnant of the region's troublesome past when, due to poverty, game was illegally taken for food by the locals. Hunting primarily for meat might be thus seen as a somewhat primitive and morally dubious type of hunting that is in conflict with the modern sportsmanship standards of the Croatian hunting ethic.

Thirdly, results from this study suggest that the way motivations are evaluated and justified is very contextual and depends on whether motivations are perceived to be a) the sole b) the main or c) only one among many motivations for hunting. For instance, motivations like hunting for trophy and meat were perceived as very negative only in cases when they were seen as the main or the sole motivation for hunting. In reality, though, hunters rarely hunt due to a single motivation; they are usually driven by several motivations. These motivations can range from those that are perceived as positive (e.g., hunting to experience nature) to those more negatively perceived (e.g., hunting for trophy). Due to this composition of motivations both hunters and non-hunters would perceive the hunting driven by multiple motivations as (more) positive. This type of hunting would also receive a higher level of support from the non-hunters. That the same motivation can be perceived as both excessive and moderate, depending on the particular situation, was also observed in other case studies within the HUNT project (Fischer et al., In press).

Diversity of function

The sub-theme *Diversity of functions* reveals that the participants understood hunting as a process that provides various functions to Gorski kotar's social and natural environments. First and foremost, for the hunters of Gorski kotar, hunting represents a specific means to relate to their environment. It enables hunters to create and maintain the relationship with their family, friends, local community and nature. Hunting contributes to a hunters' perception of themselves and plays an active role in how they see their social and natural environments and relate to them. These findings are in accordance with the findings from studies on hunters done by Marks, (1991), Bye (2003), Littlefield, (2006), Krange and Skogen (2007), Chitwood et al. (2011). For instance, Chitwood et al. (2011) also found that hunting plays an essential role in shaping hunter's individual and social identity. Chitwood et al.'s study showed that for dog hunters in coastal North Carolina, hunting "defined who and what they identified with and how they differentiated themselves from others" (Chitwood et al., 2011; pp. 135). Hunting provided meanings to relationships with other hunters, including family members and friends, creating a sense of togetherness (i.e., "sameness"), as well as the sense of otherness (i.e., "selfhood") (Chitwood et al., 2011; pp. 129). Just like the hunting in Gorski kotar, dog hunting in coastal North Carolina represented a platform upon which hunters built their social relationships in the local context (Chitwood et al., 2011).

The second set of functions regarding Gorski kotar's hunting included functions that extended beyond the hunting community, providing socio-cultural

and socioeconomic benefits for the entire local community. Specifically, commercial hunting generates income and provides local employment. Hunting prevents or minimizes human-wildlife conflicts thus creating a valuable sense of security for the local people. Hunters organize or participate in community events, such as “eco-actions”. Hunting provides the game meat for the meat market. Hunting is also seen as an integral part of the local culture, a traditional practice that tells a story about the people and the region of Gorski kotar. Studies like the one done by Milbourne (2003a; 2003b) have also described hunting as a practice that provides various socio-cultural and economic benefits. Local residents in Milbourne’s study were of the opinion that hunting, among other things, provides pest control, local employment, has a social/leisure function, and brings the rural community together (Milbourne, 2003b). Hunters, in particular, perceived hunting as a “golden thread” and the “social focal point of local life” that provides a range of social activities for both hunters and the general public (Milbourne, 2003a; pp. 167).

Moreover, just like in the case of hunting in Gorski kotar, in rural communities studied by Milbourne (2003a; 2003b) and Chitwood et al., (2011), hunting was represented as a socially embedded cultural practice and a critical element of rural community identity. Yet, it is important to stress that for the participants of Gorski kotar, hunting was not the only element of their community identity or even the most important one. While they did perceive hunting as their local cultural practice and some claimed it to be a traditional practice, it was clear

that non-hunters did not see it as significant, either socio-culturally or socioeconomically, as did the hunters. In that sense, as Milbourne (2003a) notes, hunting is a socially inclusive practice, although in places like Gorski kotar, with a relatively high percentage of hunters, where hunting is highly visible, and well established, hunting can have a significant influence of the people's conception of "rural", that is, on their construction of rurality (Milbourne, 2003b).

The third set of functions included those benefiting the natural environment. Within this context hunting was perceived as a means to maintain the balance in nature and assure viable game populations. Both hunters and non-hunters saw hunting as the essential tool for Gorski kotar's game management. Overall, through participants' descriptions of personal and communal benefits, as well as the benefits for the game, a complex portrayal of hunting emerged as a process composed of three dimensions: socio-cultural, socioeconomic, and ecological. A large portion of this complexity and multidimensionality is driven by the existence of two different types of recreational hunting in Gorski kotar: local hunting and hunting tourism. Each of these two types provides a distinct set of benefits. For instance, socio-cultural benefits are largely created in hunting clubs through local hunting. Socioeconomic benefits are linked to hunting tourism, and are especially characteristic for the private or state owned hunting companies. On the other hand, ecological benefits are sustained through both local hunting and hunting tourism. Nevertheless, when participants talk about benefits of hunting, they usually defined

them in a more general way, without explicitly pointing out from which type of hunting a particular benefit originates.

The socio-cultural, socioeconomic, and ecological dimensions of hunting played an important role in the legitimization of hunting in Gorski kotar. The results from this study revealed that the functions of hunting, if perceived as contributing to its natural and social environment, might be a constructive means to legitimize hunting. For instance, Milbourne (2003a; 2003b) found that support for hunting was greater in those rural communities where residents perceived hunting to be providing a greater number of socio-cultural and economic functions. What was also interesting regarding hunting in Gorski kotar is that participants did not put the same weight on all functions of hunting but instead valued one function as more or less positive compared to others. This pattern was particularly noticeable among the non-hunters. More specifically, socio-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of hunting, especially when directed at individual hunters, received the lowest level of support. For instance, a hunter's opportunity to shoot an animal or to socialize was seen as somewhat less positive than the opportunity for the community to financially benefit from commercial hunting. The ecological dimension of hunting (i.e., benefits to the game) was in most cases seen as more positive than socio-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions that were directed at individual hunters. Moreover, socio-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions directed at the local community were seen as more or equally important than the ecological dimension.

The challenge with this sort of evaluation and ranking system is that it is based on a small number of participants and is very contextual. Therefore, it should not be generalized. Nevertheless, it was clear that non-hunters were most supportive of hunting in which all three dimensions of hunting occurred simultaneously. This type of hunting, in which both hunters (i.e., hunting community) and local community benefit from hunting, was also greatly promoted by hunters. Indeed, hunters' justification of hunting was oftentimes based on the claim that hunting in Gorski kotar provides various functions at once. In addition, while hunters emphasized the need to have all three dimensions of functions present in hunting, they especially emphasized the ecological dimension. Firmly settled within the context of game management, the ecological dimension was the focal point for hunters' justifications of their activity.

Overall, hunters and non-hunters had very definite expectations regarding hunting and the way it should benefit their natural and social environment. The wide spectrum of these benefits confirms that hunting needs to be seen as more than simply a management tool. More research needs to address the social role of hunting in rural communities and livelihood and well being of local people (Milbourne, 2003; Chitwood et al., 2011; Nygård and Uthardt, 2011). Today, there is a growing number of studies on hunting that explore hunting as a multidimensional and multifunctional activity (Milbourne, 2003a, Milbourne, 2003b; Bauer and Herr, 2004; Willebrand, 2009; Fischer et al., 2012). Neglecting the multidimensionality of hunting and focusing exclusively on its ecological

dimension may create conflicts in rural communities, especially if hunting has a significant economic and cultural value for the people (Fischer et al., 2012). In order to avoid such conflicts, the field of hunting tourism is becoming more and more aware of the importance of social sustainability, that is the “ability of a community to be involved in tourism in a way that honours democratic modes of governance and sustains the values and ways of life that people wish to live by” (Dale, 2001, as cited in Nygård and Uthardt, 2011; pp. 387). In the end, sustainable hunting can only be reached when multiple dimensions and functions of hunting are being simultaneously taken into account (Bauer and Herr, 2004; HUNTING for Sustainability, 2012).

6.3 Hunting for wildlife management

The theme *Hunting for wildlife management* explored participants’ views and attitudes regarding game management, including their opinions on the role of the actual hunting (i.e., shooting) in Gorski kotar’s game management. A large portion of this section was intentionally directed toward investigation of participants’ meanings of nature. The reasoning behind this decision was the belief that, in order to investigate the issue of game management and the support or lack of support behind it, special attention needs to be given to participants’ views on nature. Moreover, previous research has shown that people’s views and attitudes regarding nature can have an impact on peoples’ attitudes toward a particular

management activity (Fischer and Young, 2007; Buijs, Fischer, Rink and Young, 2008; Pitkanen, Puhakka and Sawatzky, 2011).

Most participants shared a similar representation of nature. The representation of Gorski kotar's nature was conceptualized through several approaches, including discussions on characteristics of nature, on the value of these characteristics, and discussions on the human-nature relationship. The majority of nature characteristics mentioned by participants were delineated in the form of positive attributes. Participants valued nature in Gorski kotar as aesthetically beautiful, profoundly diverse in terms of biodiversity and uniquely distinct from the rest of Croatia and the world in general. The exact value of these positive attributes was perhaps best expressed in the feelings of pride and love that participants held toward nature, and in the way they emphasized nature as an obvious symbol of the region.

Among the most often discussed positive attributes of nature was the concept of balance. The concept of balance was based on the belief that it represents an optimal state in nature defined, for example by (high) biodiversity and dynamic prey-predator cycles. Both hunters and non-hunters believed that today balance can only be achieved through an active human interference with the processes in nature. This attitude was largely based on the conviction that humans changed the natural process so much so that nature lost the ability to maintain the balance on its own. This stance is an important finding as it represents the focal point of participants' justification and legitimization of game management in Gorski kotar. In that sense,

this study supported previously mentioned studies by Fischer and Young (2007) and Buijs et al. (2008) by showing that the way participants' legitimized hunting and game management was indeed linked to the particular way they discussed and conceptualized nature.

As mentioned earlier, the third approach used by participants to conceptualize nature was to discuss the human-nature relationship. Here again, the opinions of non-hunters were very similar to those of hunters, as all but a single participant believed that humans have the right to utilize nature, and to (properly) manage natural resources. This sentiment is part of what is within the field of natural resources often referred to as the utilitarian or materialism wildlife value orientation (Dayer, Stinchfield, and Manfredo, 2007). The opinions of participants in this study regarding the human-nature relationship were similar to those found by Hunter and Brehm (2004), who also explored wildlife value orientations among rural participants and identified utilitarian values as most predominant. Hunter and Brehm's (2004) finding was consistent with other studies on wildlife values that argue that, in general, the utilitarian sentiment toward nature is the main wildlife value for residents of rural areas (Kellert, 1996; Vaske, Donnelly, Williams, and Jonker, 2001). Nevertheless, data from Gorski kotar also points toward the existence of other values such as attraction/interest, environmentalism, and respect (Dayer et al., 2007). In their study Hunter and Brehm (2004) identified other wildlife values as well, and cautioned about the misconception of assuming there is a constant value orientation among rural residents. Moreover, Whittaker et al.,

(2006) noted that the specific wildlife value orientations identified in studies on value orientations cannot be used to determine the level of support for the specific management actions. Rather, information on value orientations is valuable for determining the level of support for a general management action such as, for instance, hunting (Whittaker et al., 2006). Therefore, while the results from Gorski kotar do not reveal attitudes toward species specific management, they do show that there is a relatively high level of support for hunting as a management strategy.

The three approaches used to construct the specific social representation of nature in Gorski kotar are quite similar to the findings of Buijs et al. (2008). Their study on representations of biodiversity lead them to identify three main components. These include people's views on the functions and benefits that can be provided by biodiversity, attributes associated with nature, and views on the relationship between humankind and nature (Buijs et al., 2008). Buijs et al. (2008) stressed how understanding these representations of biodiversity can deepen our understanding of attitudes toward, and management of, biodiversity. In addition, these representations can help sort out the similarities and differences among participants and identify the distinct conflicts over management of biodiversity (Buijs et al., 2008). Even though hunters and non-hunters may not share completely the same values or beliefs regarding hunting, constructions of nature amongst both groups are similar. This should be considered good news for the future of game management in Gorski kotar. Namely, when game management (i.e., hunting) is understood and/or communicated as a strategy to maintain the balance in nature, it

is highly supported by the non-hunters. Campbell and Mackay (2003) also found a high level of support for hunting when hunting is perceived and presented as a wildlife management strategy.

Lastly, the theme *Hunting for wildlife management* reaffirmed the previously mentioned argument on how hunters in Gorski kotar cannot simply be referred to as hunters only. Instead, hunters perceive themselves, and are perceived by the non-hunters, as game managers responsible for implementation of different phases of game management. To be able to achieve good game management and successfully run their local hunting clubs, hunters of Gorski kotar need to be familiar not only with wildlife ecology but also with economics. They need to be capable of maintaining a positive balance each fiscal year. In that sense, hunting clubs, especially those that offer commercial hunting and depend on this source of income, might be considered some sort of small business. It is within this ecological-economic framework and through the institutions governing it, that the majority of the current challenges facing game management in Gorski kotar occur. Wolf management is likely one of the best examples of such challenges. Here, national and international legislation on wolf conservation clash with the judgment of hunters who perceive management based on this legislation as ecologically and economically unsustainable. Consequently, the conservation of wolves and the successful management of species that wolves prey on (i.e., game species) become problematic. Even more, the communication and trust between the government representatives and hunters is put into jeopardy as well. In a country where the

government traditionally relies on hunters to play an active role in conservation of game and non-game species, such disruption in communication should not be taken lightly, as it might have a negative impact on wildlife conservation in the near future.

6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the cultural and social context of hunting in the area of Gorski kotar. The aim was to explore participants' views and attitudes towards hunting, and to understand the role of hunting within Gorski kotar's social and natural environment. In the following section I will outline some of the key findings of my thesis and suggest the contribution it may make within the HD discipline. I then provide recommendations regarding the future policy development on hunting and game management in the region of Gorski kotar. I end this section with a set of recommendations for future research on hunting.

Key findings

This study revealed that hunting in Gorski kotar is a historically rooted, well established and highly organized practice that provides a spectrum of specific roles for both the social and natural environment. In particular, hunting is seen as a legitimate way to utilize natural resources. Indeed, participants strongly advocated for hunting as part of game management, claiming hunting is, among other things, necessary as a population control and conservation tool. In addition, within the

context of commercial hunting, hunting tourism is seen as a means to generate and diversify sources of income for this relatively poor rural region. Most importantly, this study revealed the power of hunting in bringing people together and creating a palpable sense of belonging. Hunting played an important role in shaping and defining individual, group and local identities. Hunting, characterized by its specific rituals, obligations and privileges, was for many hunters more than just a hobby: it was a way of life.

Due to this multidimensional and multifunctional nature of hunting, public acceptance of hunting in Gorski kotar is relatively high. The participants' support and legitimization of hunting stems from their understanding of hunting as an activity that offers various cultural, socioeconomic, and ecological benefits to the people and the region of Gorski kotar. Even the participants who did not hunt were generally quite supportive of hunting, especially when it was perceived as a tool for population control, as part of the local identity or as hunting tourism. At the same time, this study clearly showed that a participants' support is not unconditional. Many non-hunters and hunters approved of hunting only when hunters adhere to the norms of a "Proper hunter". In addition, there were many aspects of hunting that participants did not approve and/or found difficult to relate to. Indeed, many non-hunting participants found it difficult to relate to the killing of an animal, which remains central to hunting. However, the important message here is not that these participants were against hunting and hunters per se, but that they were critical of certain aspects of hunting. Since the participants thought of hunting as an activity

driven by different motivations and consisting of different functions, many of which were supported by participants, they did not condemn hunting in general.

Contributions for the HD discipline

One of the significant ways in which this study contributes to the field of HD is that it showcases the need for doing HD research outside the North American context. HD insights and concepts that are relevant for a particular region might prove to be unimportant or even misleading when directly applied to another region. For instance, in comparison to the situation in North America or Scandinavia, hunting for meat was not as important motivation in Gorski kotar. As a result, hunting for food and hunters' self-reliance were not found to be important factors in legitimization of hunting in Gorski kotar. Moreover, the significant role of context and context specific insights was found to be important not only regarding HD literature but other literature on hunting as well. Many of the challenges that the modern hunting is said to be faced with were not found significant in the context of Gorski kotar. For example, I did not find traces of animosity between local and non-local hunters or of conflicts between rural and urban hunters. In addition, unlike many western countries in which there is a clash between urban newcomers and rural residents and their differing values, I have not found signs of such conflict in Gorski kotar. Overall, when studying hunting in different geographical contexts, meanings of hunting might differ substantially from one case to another. Thus, we should not assume that the modern hunting has some

sort of universal functions or that it faces universal challenges that ask for universal solutions. Rather, hunting must be studied in relation to its cultural and social context.

This study also illustrated the merits of expanding the usual focus of HD studies on hunting. Through a detailed investigation of meanings of hunting, I was able to explore hunting as an activity with multiple dimensions. Beyond the traditional ecological and economic dimensions of hunting, which are typically the focus of HD studies on hunting, I was also able to explore cultural and social dimensions of hunting. This enabled me to explore the role hunting plays in construction of local, group and individual identities. Participants identified these and other socio-cultural functions of hunting as benefits that can have a positive contribution to their lives. The real value participants placed on the socio-cultural functions of hunting, as well as the major role these functions played in legitimizing hunting, signifies that it is indeed worthwhile to pay attention to the social and cultural aspects of hunting.

As intended, the qualitative approach used to study hunting in Gorski kotar has proven beneficial for exploring its cultural and social aspects. In addition, through the flexible nature of interviews and focus group discussions I was able to fine-tune my research questions so that the information gathered reflects the issues of hunting that were pertinent to the participants. The lengthy and detailed data on hunting gained through this study improved the existing, somewhat limited information regarding hunting in this region. Moreover, the responses regarding

meanings of hunting did not only answer my research questions; these data are a source of information for any subsequent studies on hunting. Plus, this information also provides direction for future regional development and game management plans. While qualitative research is not by any means a novel approach in the field of geography, it remains to be an underrepresented approach in the HD arena, including those studies on hunting. I hope that this study and its insights will convince other HD researchers to utilize the numerous advantages and strengths of qualitative research.

Recommendations for the development of hunting policy

The hunting community should be aware that the particular way in which hunting is communicated to the general public directly impacts public acceptance of hunting (Campbell and Mackay, 2009). Hunters should be careful regarding the message they send to the public, and use the strategy that communicates aspects of hunting that the public supports and can relate to. For instance, communicating hunting in terms of commercial hunting and placing the entire emphasis on trophies, hunting for fun and/or economic benefits might create or increase the negative perception of hunting. This is especially true if other, more positive aspects of hunting, such as ecological and cultural benefits of hunting are not simultaneously presented and communicated to the public. At the same time, even though the ecological benefits of hunting received strong support from all participants in this study, promoting hunting only as population control tool might not be enough in the

long term. This study indicated that the current support for hunting in Gorski kotar originates from the multidimensional and multifunctional nature of hunting. Hunters in Gorski kotar should utilize this knowledge and communicate hunting in these terms if they wish to maintain or improve the acceptance of hunting in the near future.

At present, there are no anti-hunting organizations in Gorski kotar, and overall, the anti-hunting movement in Croatia is weak, lacking a clear strategy compared to what exists in Western Europe. Nevertheless, hunters in this study are under the opinion that the Croatian society scrutinizes hunting and questions its morality. Morality of hunting, including the ethical behavior of hunters and ethical norms of hunting, was found to be a central issue among non-hunters. What my research, as many other studies on hunting suggest then, is that morality has become an unavoidable topic for discussion on modern hunting (Simpson and Cain, 1995; Gunn, 2001; McLeod, 2007). Whether they like it or not, hunters and those involved in game management will not be able to avoid discussing the morality of hunting when communicating with the general public. How hunters deal with this issue could influence considerably the public's acceptance of hunting. For instance, hunters could familiarize themselves with the concept of the "Proper hunter". Understanding what aspects of this norm are of paramount importance for non-hunters and why this is the case might assist them in improving the negative image of hunters.

The results of this study might also be useful for those involved in Gorski kotar's regional development. This research found that there is a persisting sense of isolation among the study's participants. Many participants felt that they have been left behind, forgotten or even betrayed by the government, which at times manifests itself in participants' feelings of despair and apathy. As an activity that involves only a portion of Gorski kotar's residents, hunting, of course, is not the perfect antidote against the sense of isolation and marginalization. However, hunting can improve the quality of life for the people of Gorski kotar by creating a meaningful relationship with their natural environment and a sense of community. Moreover, existence of a successful, and profitable commercial hunting could also benefit those who are not directly involved in hunting. These issues need to be integrated into regional development programs where constructive efforts can continue to sustain hunting in the region.

Future directions: recommendations for the future research on hunting

This study depicted a large number of meanings of hunting, many of which can and should be further explored. For example, there was a clear indication that both hunters and non-hunters want to see more benefits from hunting tourism. At the same time, both groups saw a number of challenges preventing the actual progress of hunting tourism. Future studies on hunting could explore if and how exactly hunting tourism needs to be developed. While regional plans reference

hunting tourism as an industry holding potential for the regional economy, at the moment it is still not clear how this idea can be actually executed.

Future studies on hunting might also want to investigate more closely the process of becoming a hunter. While the number of hunters in Gorski kotar is not on the decline, hunters were concerned about the possible decline in hunting participation. Future research could explore factors that play a role in someone becoming and remaining a hunter. These and similar studies could also explore the masculinity within the hunting community and its role in hunting participation. While male hunters claimed that the hunting community is open to female hunters, it was evident that there are obstacles to the immersion of female hunters.

There were also many complaints regarding hunting legislation, especially ones concerning species such as brown bear and wolf. Conflicting perspectives on how these two carnivore species should be managed might create even greater tensions in the future, further damaging the fragile relationship between the hunters and the government. Efforts should be made to improve communication between parties through such means as meetings, workshops, and shared briefings.

Finally, insights from this study should be used to design subsequent attitudinal studies on hunting in the region of Gorski kotar. A longitudinal approach to studying hunting would allow attitudinal monitoring, thus understanding when and why views on hunting change over time. This way, the challenges regarding hunting and game management could be identified before they develop into more serious problems. Information like these could very well improve the decision

making process, allowing a quick reaction to the existing problems and increasing overall effectiveness of the decisions. Opinions about hunting as those depicted in my study should be used by those involved in the hunting and rural development decision-making processes in order to make policies that truly reflect the needs and opinions of those who are directly affected by these issues.

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Appendix I: Interview schedule for semi structured interviews and focus groups with hunters

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Questions</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	Short introduction of the focus group participants or in-depth interview informants (<i>for example, their occupation, hunting preferences, whether they are part of any hunting related organization</i>)
<i>The local area</i>	<p>Can you tell us a bit about the area here, from your perspective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you see this place (in comparison to other places)? • How do you see the future of this place? <p>What comes to mind when you think of the land and the land use here in this area?</p>
<i>Own approach to hunting</i>	<p>How and why did you take up hunting?</p> <p>What do you do when you're hunting?</p> <p>What does hunting mean to you?</p> <p>5 probe for all elements of hunting and its potential content and meaning: Types of hunting, where one hunts, game species, guns, clothing, dogs, meat, trophies, ethics, social relations, lodging, management, quotas, seasons, prices, property rights, hunting rights, commercialization</p> <p>How do you see the future of hunting here in this area?</p> <p>How do people here generally <i>start</i> to hunt?</p>
<i>Others' approaches to hunting</i>	<p>What you think of other forms of hunting?</p> <p>What characterizes them?</p> <p>Do you think other hunters hunt for the same reasons as you, or do you think there are differences?</p>
<i>Land management and relationship</i>	<p>How do you think people should ideally manage this land?</p> <p>Can you tell us/me about wildlife in this area?</p>

<i>with animals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Species, population, preferences – <i>probe for descriptions of animals</i> <p>Which animals <i>belong</i> to the area, in your view?</p> <p>How should the wildlife be managed and by whom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Probing for a range of relevant game, predator and pest species, and habitat management in general</i> <p>What is your opinion on hunting as a part of wildlife management?</p> <p>Who should benefit from hunting?</p> <p>What is your view on population estimates?</p> <p>Who provides information on wildlife that you trust?</p>
<i>Legal and illegal hunting</i>	<p>What types of hunting are illegal in this place? What do you think about these?</p> <p>Under which conditions would these types of hunting be justifiable, in your view?</p> <p>What do you think of people who are opposed to hunting (e.g. animal rights activists)?</p>
<i>Biography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age Education Work Other interests Other things that seem relevant in the context

Appendix II: Interview schedule for semi structured interviews and focus groups with non-hunters

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Questions</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	Short introduction of the focus group participants or in-depth interview informants (<i>for example, their occupation, whether they are part of any nature related organization</i>)
<i>The local area</i>	<p>Can you tell me a bit about the area here, from your perspective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you see this place (in comparison to other places)? • How do you see the future of this place? <p>What comes to your mind when you think of the land and the land use here in this area?</p> <p>How do you think people should ideally manage this land?</p>
<i>Own approach to hunting</i>	<p>What is your view on hunting?</p> <p>What does hunting mean to you?</p> <p>Who hunts here [in your area], and why?</p> <p>Are there differences between different forms of hunting, in your view?</p> <p>Do you know any hunters?</p> <p>If anti-hunting sentiments are expressed, probing into personal history of being against hunting, reasons for this, social influences etc., for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you remember when and why you came to be of this opinion? • What about your family and friends – do they share your view?
<i>Land management and relationship with animals</i>	<p>Can you tell us/me about wildlife in this area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species, population, preferences – probe for descriptions of animals <p>Which animals belong to the area, in your view?</p>

	<p>How should the wildlife be managed and by whom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probing for a range of relevant game, predator and pest species, and habitat management in general <p>What is your opinion on hunting as a part of wildlife management?</p> <p>What is your view on population estimates?</p> <p>Who provides information on wildlife that you trust?</p>
<i>Legality of hunting</i>	<p>What types of hunting are illegal in this place?</p> <p>What do you think about these?</p> <p>Under which conditions would these types of hunting be justifiable, in your view?</p>
<i>Biography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Education • Work • Other interests • Other things that seem relevant in the context

Appendix III: Example of line-by-line coding

V: But surely it ((hunting)) gives something to you since even though hunting is pretty expensive there are still many people who hunt?

D1-13: It does. Hunting brings satisfaction; there is so much adrenalin in it... Stress release that is today quite important. I mean, even scientific studies have shown that it helps release a large amounts of stress – ((there is)) a large amount of energy in the hunt. So (something) ((is)) in our genetic code because we were hunters for such a long time...for a very, very long time...and then we stopped being hunters, but it is still present in us, in some more and in some less. That is normal, *, ...connection with nature – very often man is alone in those moments and then he has time to think about so many different things, something he often does not have time to do in his everyday life, like I said he is in the contact with nature, ((there is)) movement, physical activity and so that ((hunting)) is actually one – very complex hobby. And it depends from one person to another what ((exactly)) one finds for himself in it...I believe nobody will tell you...that he is a hunter because he is driven by some sadistic thrusts, because he likes to kill an animal...that might be present only in ((the mentally)) sick people, but never in a true hunter..

V: What do you seek when you go hunting, when you are in the nature – what do you seek to find in hunting, what does hunting mean for you?

D1-13: like I told you. Well – first...hunting is a sport full of adrenalin...just as parachuting, bungee jumping, canoeing and anything from those...mmmmm – connection with nature, observing what is happening in nature...for instance I spend much more time – speaking about my hunting activities – on feeding of animals, on observation, that on the actual hunting ((harvesting/killing)) act itself. Many people are not aware of that and it is not clear to them ((that hunting is not merely about killing)). But when I am actually hunting, when I take my rifle and when *,... I intend to harvest something...that is, that is a great rush of adrenalin, a passion that a person that does not hunt cannot understand...

Comment [V4] : Getting satisfaction from hunting
Comment [V5] : Hunting fueled by adrenalin
Comment [V6] : Hunting fueled by energy
Comment [V7] : Relief of stress through hunting
Comment [V8] : Intrinsic activity – hunting in genetic code of humans
Comment [V9] : Connecting to nature through hunting
Comment [V10] : Using hunting as time for thinking –for a contemplation (getting away from everyday rhythm)
Comment [V11] : Connecting to nature through hunting
Comment [V12] : Hunting as physical activity
Comment [V13] : Hunting as a complex hobby
Comment [V14] : Acknowledging the diversity within hunting community
Comment [V15] : A notion of the „true hunter“
Comment [V16] : „True hunter“ is not as sadist
Comment [V17] : True hunter does not enjoy in the killing act of a hunt
Comment [V18] : Observing the nature through hunting
Comment [V19] : Connecting to nature through hunting
Comment [V20] : Major constituents of hunting are not killing/shooting – the „actual hunting“
Comment [V21] : Multidimensionality of hunting
Comment [V22] : Feeding and observation are main part of hunting (in GK)
Comment [V23] : Criticizing misconception of hunting
Comment [V24] : Perceiving gap between two worlds: hunters and non-hunters
Comment [V25] : Overflowed by adrenalin and passion when actually shooting

Appendix IV: Example of categories with corresponding codes

Hunting community (category)

II-5

Acknowledging the diversity within hunting community
 Importance of „hanging out „together in hunting
 Importance of being part of hunting community (viewing humans as social beings)
 Being a member of hunting community – obeying laws - loosing individualism
 Hunting community is a whole world put in small proportions = good and bad people

II-24

Older hunters carry „old“ ideas
 Majority of hunters - older age (current state of hunting)
 Number of young hunters is increasing
 Respect toward old hunter
 Old ideas need to change – modernization of hunting
 Importance of hunting stories
 Translation of hunting experience into hunting stories - exaggeration – negative
 Growing number of young hunters
 Majority of hunters is of old age
 Hunters are influenced by the peer group of hunters
 Equality in hunting community
 Believing that young hunters fail to understand the importance of knowledge

II-1

Acknowledging differences in hunting community Finding joy in shared hunting experience (sharing it with other hunters)
 Importance of shared experience and hanging out together in group hunting
 Being aware of young hunters
 Making no (hierarchical) distinctions based on hunting preferences in hunting community
 Foreign hunters tend to spend longer time periods hunting
 Local hunters tend to have shorter hunting experiences

NH-27

Seeing increase in numbers of hunters
 Young hunters have a great(er) desire to kill – to hunt
 Acknowledging the existence of good and bad hunters

II-28

Being disappointed by hunting community – people in it
 Negative perception of older hunter
 The divide between younger and older hunters
 Thinking that old hunters have too much power
 Observing decrease in numbers of hunters

II-9

Remembering the hunting of the past (Yugoslavia)
 Long tradition of hunting and forestry in this region
 Perceiving hunting in Gk (and probably in Croatia in general) as pretty disorganized
 Young hunters care more about shooting good trophy
 Young vs. Older hunters seek different things in hunting
 Proper hunter must be part of hunting community – socializing

Fellowship – constituents of hunting community
 „Hunting houses“ as a stage for significant hunting activities
 Importance of „hanging out“ together in hunting community
 Acknowledging the existence of bad hunters (not obeying hunting ethics)
 Local hunters usually hunt in the local area

II-10, II-11, II-12

Hunters are people who love to spend time together – love to hang out H-12
 Perceiving themselves (hunters) as being special type of people H-11
 Hunting less as one gets older H-12
 Today's hunting is different than that from the past *II-11*
 Young hunters love to prepare game dishes– is this new trend? *H-11*
 Male hunters who cook game dishes *II-11, II-10*
 Hunting includes a lot of intense work *H-10*
 Acknowledging the diversity among hunters H-12
 Seeing some other hunters as trophy hunters H-12
 Seeing some other hunters as meat hunters H-12
 Disapproval of hunters who hunt only because of meat H-12
 Acknowledging the existence of good and bad hunters H-12
 Seeing oneself as a trophy hunter (and not being interested so much in the meat) H-12
 Young hunters are almost exclusively local people H-12
 Importance of sharing stories (reminiscence) with other hunters H-12
 Maintaining connection to the old local traditions through hunting community H-12
 Importance of being part of hunting community H-12
 Proffering to be in hunting community made of local people H-12
 Predominantly male hunters in the hunting club H-12
 Importance of shared hunting experience *II-11*- Inviting non-members to group hunting

Organizing hunting as a way to connect people – to celebrate common roots *II-11*
 Perceiving hunters as game breeders and conservationists *II-11*
 Hunting community=hunting family – sharing common interests *H-11*
 Giving legally gain game meat to the doctors H-12

NII-16, NII-17, NH-18

Acknowledging the existence of different (good and bad) hunters *NII-17, NII-16, NH-18*
 Observing the abundance of improper/bad hunters in hunting community *NII-16, NII-18*
 The importance of red deer hunting within hunting community *NII-16*
 Hunting community as a mirror of entire Croatian society & acknowledging the existence of different (good and bad) hunters *NH-17*
 Negative image of hunters in media is made by hunters themselves *NII-16*
 The notion of somehow „deserving to hunt“ *NH-17, NII-16*

II-3

Importance of being part of hunting community
 Perceiving shooting done in „silence“ as not a real shooting
 Paying respect to shot animal
 Being proud (feeling lucky) for having different game species in their local HC
 Perception of aging in hunter community (money as a barrier)

NII-6, NH-7, NII-8

Acknowledging the differences within hunters *NII-8*
 Acknowledging the existence of good and bad hunters and hunting *NII-8*
 Remembering political hunting (prestigious) from ex-Yu time *NII-7*

II-19, II-20, II-21, II-22, II-23

Limited knowledge about local hunting clubs *II-19*

Professional hunters only kill „game waste“ *II-19, II-21*

Negative changes for way local hunters hunt *II-22*

Distrust in private leaseholders *II-22*

Perceiving lack of control in private leaseholders *II-22*

The notion of the „butcher hunters“ *H-21, H-22*

Becoming a hunter - (importance of social environment) *II-19*

Early childhood exposure to hunting and hunters *II-19*

Hanging out together very important part of hunting *II-19, II-22*

Importance of hanging out together *II-19*

Hunting as a job *II-19*

II-4

Acknowledging differences between hunters

Perceiving oneself as different from other hunters (p.5)

High importance of hunters hanging out together AND
multidimensionality of hunting

The importance of shared experience in hunting

Hunters as a tight group

Acknowledging the diversity among hunters

Each hunter finds something else for himself in hunting

Belief that in the past hunters were more oriented to trophy
hunting

Changes in hunting practice (less percentage of hunters willing to
kill game)

NH-2

Perceiving hunters as a closed group of people

The notion of hunters as social elite

Emphasizing relationship between affluent people and hunting

Acknowledging the difference within hunting community

NII-13, NH-14, NII-15

Acknowledging that there are bad and good hunters *NII-13, NII-14,*

Appendix V: Example of themes and their corresponding sub-themes (i.e., categories and sub-categories) and codes

(This particular theme was eventually divided into several sub-themes that are associated with the Hunting community and Hunting for wildlife management themes)

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place				
	Connectedness of people to Gorski kotar	To place		
		Expressing love	Being proud	
		Gk is a better place	An oasis	"Green heart of Cro", Little Swiss
			Different people	
				Adaptive, quiet

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Connectedness of people to Gorski kotar	Gk is a better place	Wilder (therefore) better nature	Pristine nature
			High biodiversity, preserved nature	Symbol of GK
				Especially game AND all 3 carnivores
			Great habitat	
				Predators
			Diverse landscape	Forest, water
			Healthy ecosystem	
			Exceptional NR	Forest (especially), water
				Silence
			Better attitude toward nature	Higher ethics
			Social and cultural diversity	

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Connectedness of people to Gorski kotar	Gk is a better place		Richness of culture
		Unique place	Like no other	
		Every place is special		
		Beautiful region		
			Diverse	
			Wild	
		Good geographical position		
		Change in demography		
		Concerned about problems	Hard life	Beautiful nature is not enough
			Bad economy	
			Emigration	Stagnation

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Connectedness of people to Gorski kotar	Concerned about problems	Lack of industry	Only forestry
			Bad utilization of natural resources	Forests wildlife
			Lower biodiversity	
			Forests overgrowth	
			Not understanding the cultural/biological richness of place	
			Uniqueness of place is not used	Lack of economy that would utilize this
			Rurality – social limitation	
			Politics	
				Local
				State
			Undeveloped tourism	

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Connectedness of people to Gorski kotar	Concerned about problems	Bad infrastructure	Roads
			No perspective for youth	No jobs
			Harsh climate	
			Continuous economic crisis	
			Low pop density	"Empty villages"
			Aging population	
			Loosing traditional way of living	
			Neg. impacted by privatization	
			Feeling of being forgotten by state	
			Bureaucratic and financial barriers to authenticity	Story about "trout"
			Poverty	

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Connectedness of people to Gorski kotar	Concerned about problems	Centralization of state	
		Isolated – closed		
			Positive	Less impact by global warming
			Negative	Everybody knows everybody
		Rural place		
	Close connection between hunting and forestry			
		Forester is also a hunter		
		Hunting natural result of forestry	Part of forestry management	By-product
		Not necessary	Z1-7	
		Connectedness of habitat and species (game)	Cannot be looked at separately	
	Characteristic green outfit	Hunters/foresters/agriculture	Physical and symbolic	

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Hunting tradition in Gorski kotar			
		Hunting is tradition		Some disagree
		Better in Gk hunting culture in Gk compared to other regions	Pride because of that, especially among hunters	
			Distinctive	
			Higher ethics	
				Less illegal hunting
			Better regulated	
			Obeying dress code	
			Obeying hunting rituals	
			Part of Gk culture	
		Hunters being proud of their local h. club		

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Hunting tradition in Gorski kotar	Tradition of game dishes (weddings, festivities?)		
		Perceived as sustainable		
		No or little specialized hunters		
		Hunting brings people together		
		Local hunters hunt in local area		
		Linking people to each other, their history and culture		
			Locals coming together	
			"Incomers" usually do not hunt (Bosnians)	
		Hunting part of local culture		
		Not an important part of economy and/or part of peoples' lives		
		Predominantly individual (big game) hunting	Less group hunting	

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Hunting tradition in Gorski kotar	Observing changes	"Green hunting"	Shooting/trophy not as important
	Traditions in families – identity			
		Preference toward one species	Passed through generation	
		Wish to pass it on to new generations	Teaching them about nature/wildlife	M2-11, M24, M1-5
	Hunters as part of local community			
		Locals appreciate hunting		
		Hun. community embedded in local place		
	Hunting tourism			
		Satisfied with the development in HT		
		Dissatisfied with the development in HT		
		HT reached its limit		

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Codes	Notes
Hunting and local place	Hunting tourism	Used to promote region	In the future	
	Logical use of natural resources	Forests	Most important economy	
		Game		
	Sustainable management of natural resources in Gk			
	Ideal use of Gk's natural resources	Smart utilization		Sustainable management, avoiding threats to people and having financial gain
	Regional development	Being authentic		

