



Felony or act of justice? – Illegal killing of large carnivores as defiance of authorities



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ABSTRACT

Large carnivore management in Finland implemented under international conservation agreements has faced a severe legitimacy crisis as Finnish wolf conservation lacks both normative and empirical legitimacy. Local people challenge the authorities via active and passive resistance which manifests in illegal killings of large carnivores and in support and silent acceptance by community members. This article examines the sociopolitical dimensions of illegal hunting in a holistic manner by categorizing the crime according to the characteristics of the hunting violator and the motives for illegal actions against large carnivores, and by examining illegal hunting as a defiance of the authorities by revealing the neutralization techniques used. Data have been collected from District Court sentences and Police Investigation Records over a 6-year period (2005–2010). In addition, two hunting violators and two game management officials were interviewed. Illegal killing of large carnivores is a sociopolitical crime and manifests as explicit resistance and indirect defiance of game management authorities and EU-drafted management actions. Neutralization techniques are used to negate the shame from the stigma and sanctions associated with violating the law. Hunting violators have become noble bandits as they defy the central authorities whilst supporting local people in their struggle to maintain a livelihood and a safe living environment in large carnivore territories. The challenges inherent in the conservation of large carnivores in the context of a defiant agrarian activity address the means that develop the predators' role as a community resource.

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1. Introduction

Large carnivore conservation in Finland consists of the requirements of international conservation agreements, including the *favourable conservation status* enjoyed by species in the European Union's conservation policy, and politics based on socio-economic-political consensus to reflect the demands of stakeholders to enhance procedural and environmental justice (Lehtinen et al., 2003; Rawls, 2003).

Conservation policies have relied on parameters that measure ecological sustainability; in other words, population size, extent of range and any changes occurring within these. A national conservation status assessment is conducted for Finnish species using IUCN criteria and according to this all four large carnivores; that is, brown bear, lynx, wolf and wolverine, are species under consideration (Rassi et al., 2010). Wolf conservation in particular has faced severe challenges as the wolf population has drastically decreased

since the implementation of the first national management plan in 2006 from about 250 wolves to 140 wolves (in 2014) (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a). According to estimates based on population parameters, even as much as 25–30% of the total wolf population in Finland is currently missing because of supposed illegal killing (Kojola et al., 2011). The illegal killing that threatens the conservation status and undermines conservation efforts have been dealt with using a more punitive regime and increased penalties.¹

Hunters are considered a key stakeholder group in Finnish large carnivore management (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a). Hunters voluntarily provide large carnivore track data and annual track

¹ An amendment (232/2011) to the Criminal Code stipulates that any illegal killing of large carnivores will be treated as an aggravated hunting offence, and sentences were therefore tightened. In addition, the indicative value of game animals was raised in 2010 to make the financial or other gains of committing a hunting offence less attractive. The amount of compensation to the state varies according to whether the animal was a juvenile or adult. The indicative value for wolverine is up to €16,500, for lynx up to €2,100, for bear up to €15,500 and for wolf up to €9100.

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censuses. Derogations on the basis of population management are granted for lynx and bear, whereas derogations for wolves have been granted only on a damage basis after the consideration of comprehensive damage.² Altogether, approximately six percent of the Finnish population are hunters and their social bonds to the rest of society are strong. All hunters are members of the Finnish Wildlife Agency, which has a legal and regulatory role in game and hunting management. The majority of hunters are also members of local hunting clubs, and hunters and hunting clubs play an important role, not only in game management, but also by performing a significant social role in rural communities (Pellikka et al., 2007).

The key element of successful large carnivore conservation is that the legislation and management actions have both normative and empirical legitimacy. From the normative point of view, it has been shown that there is a lack of socio-cultural legitimacy in Finnish wolf conservation when wolves cause damage to rural livelihoods. Traditional hunting with the assistance of dogs has been hindered due to the fear of losing hunting dogs to the wolves, rural people have had to arrange school transportation for their children, and restrict their leisure activities in the natural environment to protect their safety (Borgström, 2011). The lack of legitimacy is especially evidenced when local people argue that the Finnish wolf conservation legislation violates their civil rights, including their right to security and property (Bisi et al., 2010). This article recognizes the importance of this socio-cultural legitimacy deficit among local residents and hunters in the large carnivore territories. Implementation of conservation efforts do not fit into people's everyday lives, and thus, cause opposition against top-down regimes.

In Finland, from the normative point of view, there is not any lack of legal legitimacy considering representation of relevant stakeholders, transparency or accountability, or lack of political legitimacy considering the extent to which the main substantive features of the conservation regimes are acceptable (Borgström, 2011). However, a number of studies have been conducted on people's attitudes towards large carnivore management in Finland (Liukkonen et al., 2006; Mykrä et al., 2006; Bisi and Kurki, 2008; Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2008), and they indicate a legitimacy crisis that appears when people living in large carnivore territories do not find management actions acceptable (Borgström, 2011). Hunters and rural people have found the large carnivore conservation regime established largely through the EU Habitats Directive lacking in terms of place-based policy, and at the same time, management authorities are regarded *pro-conservationist*, and the population management objectives are felt to be filled with *green agenda* (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a). The challenge from the local people directed at the authorities is expressed through rejection, which shows itself in hidden passive behavior and feigned ignorance concerning the illegal killing of large carnivores (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014b). This may be seen as community support for illegal killings and hunting violators. Other forms of challenging the authorities include resistance and concrete actions targeted against something – in this case referring to the illegal killing of large carnivores.

It has been interpreted that the illegal killing of large carnivores occurs in large numbers and the drivers of the phenomenon need to be further examined to result in more informed socially sustainable wildlife management. When deconstructing the poaching phenomenon, von Essen et al. (2014a; 632) “call for a more

integrative understanding that moves illegal hunting from being approached as a ‘crime’ or ‘deviance’ to being seen as a political phenomenon driven by the concepts of defiance and radicalization.” This is an essential approach to the issue also for Finland, where illegal killing is dealt with using a more punitive regime instead of recognizing the nature of the crime. In this article, the sociopolitical dimensions of illegal hunting are examined in a holistic manner. The first objective is to categorize the crime according to the characteristics of the hunting violator and the motives that accompany illegal actions toward large carnivores. The second objective is to reveal the neutralization techniques and to study illegal hunting as the defiance of the authorities, as supported in von Essen et al. (2014a) and Eliason (1999) when seeking out a potential theoretical basis for sociopolitical illegal hunting. Lastly, this article concludes with the management actions necessary for more socially sustainable large carnivore management.

2. Theoretical framework

Illegal hunting as rural defiance requires a normative approach since traditional instrumental theories explaining illegal hunting are insufficient in cases where economic gain is not the main driver of illegal killing. In social psychology, the research on illegal hunting has been largely built on Sutherland's differential association theory of how the crime is learned in the socialization process, that is, how individuals learn not only how to commit specific crimes but also how to rationalize them (Curcione, 1992; Forsyth and Marckese, 1993; Green, 1990). In this study the theoretical basis to examine illegal hunting as rural defiance rests on Sherman's *defiance theory* (1993), which relies on the following conditions: (1) the offender is alienated from society and authoritative agents; (2) the sanctions are perceived as unfair and stigmatizing; and (3) the offender does not internalize the shame associated with the sanction. The theory helps to understand that stigmatizing and harshly treating hunting violators increases their likelihood of re-offending, especially if their social bonds with the sanctioning society are weak and the penal code is unjust. Criminals may negate the shame from the stigma and sanctions associated with breaking the law by using neutralization techniques. Interestingly, although Sherman's theory focuses on finding the effective deterrents to reduce the crime rate, the use of defiance theory also offers a way to enlighten the radicalization processes that lead law-abiding hunters over the edge toward committing crimes. These elements are also present in this study. Defiance in the illegal hunting context has been studied for example by Filteau (2012) to gain an understanding of how interactions between game wardens and poachers is an important consideration for garnering voluntary compliance.

To study how hunting violators negate the shame from the stigma and sanctions associated with violating the law, the neutralization techniques introduced to sociological literature by Sykes and Matza (1957) serve as an effective tool. In their study of juvenile delinquent behavior learned in the process of social interaction, neutralization techniques were found to be the justification for deviant behavior and was largely learned behavior within cultures/sub-cultures. Neutralization that qualifies hunting violations as *acceptable* serves as a strategic defense tool by offenders that have been caught, as well as a psychological mechanism for the individual to justify the illegal actions (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Therefore, neutralization could be used after an illegal act to seek to reduce the blame or before committing the act to seek self-conscious approval that it is acceptable to choose to perform the act (Lanier and Henry, 2004). It is important here to note that neutralization techniques are discourses by which hunting violators not only seek to justify and rationalize their behavior, but also defend a particular rural identity and way of life, and also

² Very recent increase in the wolf population have occurred during the preparatory phase of the new management plan and derogations in a population management basis were granted in the early 2015.

express rural protest (Woods, 2003; Enticott, 2011). Neutralization techniques in the wildlife context have been studied in a variety of cases (Curcione, 1992; Forsyth and Marckese, 1993; Forsyth et al., 1998; Eliason and Dodder, 1999; Eliason, 2003, 2004; Bell et al., 2007; Enticott, 2011).

3. Materials and method

The triangulation of data sources was found to be necessary to reach a deep description of the illegal killings of large carnivores. To profile hunting violators and to present descriptive statistics on them as well as the targeted large carnivore species and to categorize the crime, the investigation records for all cases of large carnivore illegal hunting from Police Records for the six-year-period from 2005 to 2010 were requested. Records from a total of 131 cases from which the time, place, sex and age of the suspect, the targeted species and a short description of the suspected crime were gathered. In addition, information from the District Courts in regard to the conclusions of all cases of illegal hunting of large carnivores ($n = 26$, excluding the Ahvenanmaa district) from the same six-year-period, from 2005 to 2010 were requested. Altogether 25 replies from a total of 27 cases were received from which five had to be dismissed as they did not meet the set requirements. After additional requests there were a total of 26 District Court conclusions. This information contained the target species, the sex and age of the suspected person, the number of people involved in the case and the given verdict (imprisonment, day fines, withdrawal of hunting licenses, compensation payments based on indicative value of the animal). To categorize the crime, the classification of the offender's motive to illegally kill a large carnivore was made by the author and is based on the District Court conclusions.

To examine illegal hunting as a defiance of the authorities, the author interviewed two large carnivore hunting violators and two game management supervision officials. The interviewed hunting violators are from different parts of Finland and have no connection to each other. One lives in the reindeer herding area (indicated as hunting violatorth in the text) whereas the other one does not (hunting violator^{ou}). The game management officials interviewed are also from different parts of Finland (official,¹ official²). Extra effort was exerted to ensure they were totally anonymous keeping in mind that the researcher has an obligation and right to professional confidentiality. Only the author met the interviewees, and has access to the resulting material. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The tapes are marked with the date but no other identification is available. Recording the interviews was found to be necessary in order to make sure the author's interpretation of the interview content was true to the interviewee's intended meaning.

Finding hunting violators willing to be interviewed appeared to be extremely challenging. The aim was to interview more hunting violators but only two accepted the request. The author collected contact details from the District Court conclusions and approached violators via telephone. Contact was made with several individuals and informal discussions about the topic occurred with hunting violators who were not keen to participate in an actual interview. The two game management supervision officials were chosen according to their geographical position and both were willing to participate in an interview.

Interviews were implemented in a semi-structured manner with visual stimuli – pictures related to large carnivores and their management, illegal killing and conservation stakeholders. These pictures acted as a provoker for the issue at hand. Interviewing with stimuli gave an opportunity to approach the sensitive issue in a subtle manner. These stimuli provided an atmosphere where the interviewed person found himself in the position of a third person.

Therefore, they did not have to express their own opinions toward the species or to reveal their own actions considering illegal killings of large carnivores, but to act as an observer of the consequences of the current policies and express their understanding of how conflicts have developed. There were 13 pictures altogether. The first set of images included all four large carnivores in Finland. They were brought to the table at once without asking any questions to gauge the response. Afterwards, when placing the pictures on the table, a short description of the picture at hand was presented. Two of the pictures dealt with illegal killing, pictures of large carnivores that had been killed and a map of known acts of illegal killing made according to the District Court's sentences. Four pictures dealt with stakeholders including the authorities, media, game management actors and conservationists. Three pictures dealt with large carnivore management actions, past and present. All pictures were further discussed and further questions were expressed when necessary.

The transcribed interviews as well as citations from the media/newspapers were treated as descriptions of real incidents and cases constructed in their social world. This was the case in interpreting the motives behind illegal killing, examining the neutralization techniques as well as in studying the signs of defiance of authorities.

4. Results

4.1. Who is doing what?

According to District Court sentences for 2005–2010 hunting violators ($n = 64$) are 50-year-old males (range 21–71). These results support the fact that crime and criminality are predominantly male concerns. Nurse (2011), in identifying wildlife offenders, found that wildlife crimes involve male behavior such as aggression, thrill-seeking or having an adventurous nature. According to District Court sentences for illegal killing in Finland for 2005–2010, the prosecutor withdrew hunting license in 83% of cases. This means that at least eight out of ten hunting violators are hunters, and therefore, members of the Finnish Wildlife Agency, which has a legal and regulatory role in game and hunting management. Hunting itself offers excitement and adventure, and anger is found to be one of the driving forces behind the illegal killing of large carnivores (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014b). Peltola et al. (2013), in profiling hunting violators, have found elements of the passion crime, especially in illegal wolf hunting. This aggressive behavior may also be interpreted from the District Court conclusions in cases when an illegal hunting incident had elements of extra effort put on killing the species, such as repeatedly running-over an animal with snow mobiles. Hunting violator^{ou} described aggressive feelings when talking about the loss of a hunting dog to wolves *“Anger toward wolves is sometimes really immense, like really deep black hatred so I could rip it [wolf] to pieces with my bare hands.”*

At that time, 2.3 men (range 1–6) took part in illegal killing; therefore, being part of a more or less organized action. Hunting violator^{ou} describes the group work as follows *“We have a so-called rapid reaction force here. We have five men with snow mobiles ready to go. Everyone knows his job and trusts each other ... Five snow mobiles have left from this building. Maps have been studied, who goes and where. Wife said that this is like a battlefield, headquarters.”* The verbal or financial support of community members indicates that more people are involved in illegal killing than is seen in the legal documents. According to hunting violator^{ou} *“We have local authorities and forest owners here. They will report to me whenever they see wolf tracks”* and *“This autumn it is like 20–30 kg of moose meat that I got. From vets, dentists, widows, landowners.”*

All four large carnivore species were found to be the target of

illegal killings (Table 1). The percentage of wolves and wolverines is quite high compared to their population size. In Police Investigation Records, cases where the targeted species has been a brown bear covers 51% of all cases, whereas the distribution of species in District Court sentences has been quite even. In the case of the brown bear, there are several reasons for the difference between the percentages in the Police Investigation Records and the District Court sentences. First, there is a lack of evidence of the use of illegal carrion bating in illegal bear hunting. Second, the carcasses of bears are harder to hide, and therefore, more easily spotted on the terrain by game wardens or other hunters for example. Third, the killing of brown bears as a big game species may be considered stealing from the common good as there are annual killing licenses for brown bears for the whole country and the annual quota depends on regional population trends (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a). Official¹ explains that “After an increase in the hunting quota for bears outside the reindeer herding area, law-abiding bear hunters have started to oppose the illegal hunting of bears.”

There are different attitudes towards illegal killings of large carnivores depending on their species-specific characteristics as well as the damage they cause. Official¹ states that “If you look it way way back, as the bear is associated with majestic attributes then the wolf is considered as pure evil”. Official² concludes “Here is the most mournful case [wolf], it doesn't have a place in the reindeer herding area. Sentenced to death”. In the reindeer herding area, the wolverine might be considered the worst beast, whereas outside the reindeer herding area the wolverine is seen as more or less harmless. Hunting violator^{ou} describes the wolverine as “You can tolerate it. I saw it once when I was ice-fishing. It just jumped around and looked me back. Sure it's blood-thirsty, but still...”.

4.2. The motives behind illegal killing – categorizing the crime

The motives behind illegal killing can be interpreted from the conclusions of the District Court sentences. The motives were classified as disagreement with the game policies, financial, self-protection, abetting a friend and accident (see Table 2).

Disagreement with the game policies was identified as the motive in cases (67%) where the illegal hunt was performed determinedly and consciously by acknowledging the targeted species and the motive did not fit into other categories. This was understood to be due to disputes over national and regional large carnivore management, as the presence of the targeted species was not favorable in the area. One might argue that killing the large carnivore might benefit the household financially when the target species was more or less interested in and able to prey on domestic animals. Hunting violatorth concludes that “One might say it [killing] is because you benefit for the pot or in cash. But that's not the case. You don't kill it [bear] to get its head or skin. It's totally something different. Because it's predatory.” Although the killing of a predatory animal may

Table 1
Large carnivore species targeted in illegal killing in the six-year period 2005–2010 in District Court sentences and Police Investigation Records.

Species	District court sentences 2005–2010		Police investigation records 2005–2010	
	n	n%	n	n%
Brown bear <i>Ursus arctos</i>	8	26	67	51
Grey wolf <i>Lupus lupus</i>	8	26	24	18
Lynx <i>Lynx lynx</i>	9	29	20	15
Wolverine <i>Gulo gulo</i>	6	19	20	15
Total	31	100	131	100

Table 2

Hunting violators' motives for illegally killing large carnivores from District Court sentences. Data consists of 64 offenders.

Motive for illegal killing large carnivores (n = 64)	n	n %
Disagreement with the game policies	43	67
Abetting a friend	11	17
Self-protection	5	8
Financial benefit	4	6
Accident	1	2
Total	64	100

reduce damage to stock, the motivation had deeper roots. In cases where a man has the right to protect his/her property, the motive could be seen to be financial, but in the case of protected species with no actual rights to influence local large carnivore management, the motive is to resist the authorities and their lack of proper management actions (see Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a, 2014b).

The motive was categorized as *financial* in cases (6%) where a bear was dressed and butchered in the field, meat was found in the freezer and the motive did not fit into other categories. If the conclusion revealed the premeditated thought of the offenders to reduce the local damage being caused by a bear, the motive was categorized as disagreement with game policies.

The motive was categorized as *self-protection* in cases (8%) where the large carnivore had threatened the life of a hunting dog or the life of the offender. In all these cases the offender had reported his actions to the police and every case was found not guilty of illegal killing. In one case the motive was found to be *accident*, as the hunter thought that the animal was a species that was legal to hunt. The motive was categorized as *abetting a friend* in cases (17%) where the offender was not the main actor in the illegal hunting of the species, but was helping to transport and/or store the carcass later on.

Tradition and cultural reasons were dismissed in the main categorization; although, in the case of reindeer herders and hunters that might be one motivation. In this study it has been concluded that as traditional reindeer herding is in conflict with national large carnivore management (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a), and as traditional hunting does include elements of the significant role of hunters in the community as protectors from the threat of large carnivores (Pohja-Mykrä et al., 2005), these traditional and cultural motives fall under *disagreement with the game policies*.

4.3. Neutralization techniques in use

Sykes and Matza (1957) have divided justifications of deviant behavior and neutralization techniques into five major types and all those types were also found in this study. The *denial of responsibility*, *denial of injury*, *denial of the victim*, *the condemnation of the condemners* and *the appeal to higher loyalties* are all techniques that will be further examined here.

After Sykes and Matza (1957), at least four additional types of neutralization have been identified, these being the metaphor of the ledger (“I've done more good than bad in my life”), the claim of normality (“Everyone is doing it”), denial of the negative intent (“It was just a joke”) and the claim of relative acceptability (“There are others worse than me”) (Lanier and Henry, 2004). These techniques, however, are not examined in this study.

4.3.1. The denial of responsibility

The denial of responsibility means that delinquent acts are due to forces outside of the individual and beyond his or her control such as a bad company, a slum neighborhood etc. In effect, the

delinquent approaches a *billiard ball* conception of himself in which he sees himself as helplessly propelled into situations (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

Peltola et al. (2013) found that illegal killers as political criminals do tend to seek understanding and support from the local community, and refers to the statement by the local game authority “If the growth of wolf numbers is not restricted it is likely that illegal killing increases”. This statement from 2005 in eastern Finland where there is the greatest wolf density reveals a denial of responsibility in placing the acts of local hunting violators contingent with national game policies. Interestingly, during the following years dozens of wolves were illegally killed in the eastern parts of Finland (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a).

In this study the denial of responsibility was mainly seen in as how society has forced local communities to take the law into their own hands. Locals call for understanding not only from national management authorities but also from authorities at the EU-level. Hunting violatorth describes the need to be acknowledged as follows: “All those authorities in Brussels they should come here. Rub some blood on their clothes and put them into forests to wander. Do you think that they still think that the bear is cute, kind a cutie. Or if the bear will eat from their pockets too, then they might understand it. Of course we can have predators here, but enough is enough.” An extreme example emerged in 2013, when a hunting violator committed suicide after getting caught for three illegally killed wolves together with 29 other hunting violators. This hunting violator left behind a message where he blamed green people and the EU for his decision to kill himself (Pesonen, 2013).

The national hunter's organization (Metsästäjäläitto) in Finland in the past few years have systematically denied the role of hunters in illegal killings by describing hunting violators as *outsiders* that differ from law-abiding hunters. This statement is inconsistent with the fact that at least eight out of ten offenders held hunting cards (see Chap. 4.1). However, the organization came out in early 2013 in the editorial of their magazine *Jahti* by stating that if wolf policies are implemented in a local manner illegal killings will also decrease (Kontro, 2013). The emphasis has moved from denial to pointing out that illegal actions are understandable in the current situation where national large carnivore policies do not meet the needs at the local level. This refers to denial of responsibility, as in the absence of formal management, informal management takes place out of necessity.

4.3.2. The denial of injury

The denial of injury means that the delinquent can make the distinction between acts that are wrong in themselves and acts that are illegal but not immoral in evaluating the wrongfulness of his behavior (Sykes and Matza, 1957). A hunting violator may feel that illegal killing does not cause any significant harm despite the fact that it violates the law.

The denial of injury presents hunting violators as the ones that are controlling the local carnivore population, as the national game management authorities are not able or willing to do that. Population growth has been seen as intolerable, and illegal killing has been seen as harmless to the overall population but necessary to diminish local conflicts with species. According to hunting violatorth “There have been more and more of those predators. And behind the eastern board there are numerous of those species. They won't end ever.” Official¹ stated in order to explain why other hunters support hunting violators that “Yes, they approve of the illegal killing of lynxes because there are so many of them, it won't hurt the population.”

When interviewing hunting violators, the very first reactions of both interviewees, when placing the pictures of the four large carnivores on the table, was to bring up the fact that large predators have been secretly reintroduced in the area. Hunting violator^{ou} says

that “It was an older teacher that told me that. He went hunting with a mate and they spotted a pick-up truck with cage on it. They asked what the hell are you doing. They said that they are from the zoo and just have to release these somewhere.” The reliability of the stories rests on trustworthy friends, on people that are more likely to be trusted than the faceless authorities. This refers to the deep lack of confidence in the authorities. In particular, wolves are seen as trans-populated by the state and game management officials, and therefore, being a species that has not arrived naturally in the area. This refers to the idea that the wolf does not belong in the area, and killing them is justified as they are an *introduced* species.

4.3.3. The denial of the victim

In the case of the denial of the victim, the injury is not really an injury but rather a form of rightful retaliation or punishment and by a subtle argumentation the delinquent may move himself into the position of an avenger (Sykes and Matza, 1957). The victim can then be transformed into a wrong-doer that deserves to be punished.

Hunting violators may claim entitlement, for instance, in the case of losing a hunting dog or stock. According to hunting violatorth “When you wait for it [predator] to come. The feeling of revenge, yes it emerges when it mauls hundreds of lambs, then you appeal for a killing license and you don't get it. After two weeks you think what's the point. So it is in one's eyes that thing [illegal killing].” Hunting violator^{ou} describes how “Revenge was a part of it. When I saw my wife's sorrow, what she felt after the dog had been mauled. It was her “Spot”. It was like a child had been killed.” However, when it actually comes to killing these feelings may differ from the feelings that acted as drivers. Hunting violator^{ou} describes his first wolf killing as follows: “When our first hunting dog died, oh my god how it ate at a man, you know ... Those nights I spent outside ... But then I got poison ... When thinking afterwards I didn't feel any satisfaction, I wasn't sad either but totally numb. I carried it on my shoulders and it helped me – finally I could look my wife in the eyes and say that “hey woman, I've protected my family.”

The nature of the large carnivores has been described as being somewhat cruel in order to justify that those species deserve to be killed and humans have a right to their revenge. Hunting violatorth explains that the “Wolverine is so devilish, it doesn't kill for food but just rips reindeers and leaves them suffering.” This kind of villainization of the victim have long roots, as humans have in the past divided animals into good and bad, and even into moral and immoral to justify either protection or persecution of the species (Mykrä et al., 2005; Pohja-Mykrä et al., 2005). In historical writings the wolf has been described as a *brutal beast that tears a child away from his mother's breast* (Magnus, 1555). The role of the wolf has always been the villain of the story; although, the *insidious* brown bear and the *gluttonous* wolverine have had their share (Pohja-Mykrä et al., 2005; Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2008).

During the interviews with hunting violators, there were discussions about the behavior of the predators. Hunting violatorth explains that “There are suspicions that those predators are not just immigrants from Russia but someone is bringing them. They come somewhere around villages and have no natural fear toward humans. During moose hunting they were surprised to see that wolverines didn't fear the hunting dog at all. Just let humans come nearby.” It emerged that these predators were not behaving as their species should, instead they were bold and entered residences without fear. In the case of wolves, this de-legitimization of the victim itself refers to the idea that wolves are not a species with a pure genome but released or escaped wolf dogs. In recent years, there has been public discussion about the purity of Finnish wolves and the confrontation of hybrids and pure wolves has been strongly presented by an active private association called *Taajamasusi* (Sub-urban Wolf) who repeatedly refers to wolves as ‘porridge-eating-

dogs'. A similar discussion has occurred in Sweden, where the wolf is stigmatized as a tainted immigrant from the east or a government-bred hybrid instead of being the *traditional* or *pure* Swedish wolf (von Essen et al., 2014a).

4.3.4. The condemnation of the condemners

Sykes and Matza (1957) define the condemnation of the condemners as a rejection of the rejecter. This means that the delinquent shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the motives and behavior of those who disapprove of his violations. He may claim that his condemners are for example hypocrites or driven by personal spite.

In their study, Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki (2014b) found that when someone from the community witnesses an illegal killing of a large carnivore and informed the authorities, he/she was described as a watermelon, a person whose view of life differed from that of the locals. On the other hand, these *snitchers* were considered to be seeking questionable fame and glory or to have borne malice over old incidents, and are therefore getting revenge. The point is to judge the aims of such snitchers as questionable or lacking the common sense of justice, and therefore, as condemners to be condemned.

The lack of understanding about the challenges facing local reindeer herders in herding reindeer under the pressure of predation from large carnivores together with unjustified envy was described by hunting violatorth as follows: “They [outsiders] have a clear opinion that those humbug reindeer herders deserve all [punishment] they are getting. They are envious of livestock. However, there is not much to be envious of.” Hunting violator^{ou} describes envy as something that locals have created in their own minds without any connection to reality “Well, yes, there is some envy and resentment. You know, they are just ordinary people and they think that I have some damn halo over my head. And I have said that I just want a peaceful and modest life here, I haven't been around marketplaces to show my case.”

4.3.5. The appeal to higher loyalties

The fifth and last neutralization technique from Sykes and Matza (1957) contains internal and external social controls that may be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of smaller social groups to which the delinquent belongs, such as hunters or reindeer herders in this case. It is important to note that the delinquent does not necessarily repudiate the imperatives of the dominant normative system, despite his failure to follow them. The hunting violator may see himself as caught up in a dilemma that must be resolved at the cost of violating the law.

It may be interpreted that the illegal killing of large carnivores would not be such a successful and hidden criminality without the support of close groups, in other words, the local community. This community support is found to be somewhat strong especially in the case of wolf killings, as hunting violators are doing us a favor for the peace of the community that everyone else is too afraid to do (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014b). Illegal killings are examples of group work supported by other community members; therefore, not only including the offenders but maybe numerous other people. Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki (2014b) found that people may support illegal killing on the basis that deviating from shared group attitudes may pose a risk to relationships and at its worst the whole life of the community would turn over. Official² describes local community pressure as follows “Then there is some prudence among authorities whether to delve the case or not, they [hunting violators] are old acquaintances and thus, authorities are put in a difficult position. This happens especially when there is a common acceptance of illegal killings in the community.” This highlights the precedence of

life-world relationships and local ways of life above allegiance to authorities not only in the case of hunters or ordinary citizens but also in the case of authorities responsible for surveillance of illegal killings.

4.4. Illegal killing in the defiance context

4.4.1. Alienation from authoritative agents and society at large

Hunters as a key stakeholder group hold a position where their deep-rooted distrust of authority has led to competing views on large carnivore numbers. In Finland, there is a public debate on who has the correct information – is it hunters who know the exact numbers, movements and behavior of large carnivores or is it game researchers and authorities. The monitoring of large carnivore populations is based on observations recorded and reported by local large carnivore contact persons, i.e. hunters (Pellikka et al., 2007), and as the conflict has heated up in the past few years, the hunters have both locally and regionally refused to pass information about predators' tracks and track censuses to the game researchers (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014b). If the wolf pack is not monitored, then no one knows whether it is illegally killed or not. In addition, the treatment of illegally killed predators, that is, when hunting violators hide the carcasses, further confuses the understanding of large carnivore numbers. Official² describes the situation as follows: “No-one trusts the official population estimates. All that talking and fighting in the media, and everywhere. We are totally in the dark because we don't know the number of individuals.” This Shoot, shovel and shut up is an effective strategy when hunting violators see the need to control local large carnivore numbers and express their indirect defiance targeted at game management authorities and EU-drafted management actions (see Liberg et al., 2011). This refers to alienation from the authorities, and consequently, a weakening of the social bonds between hunters and the authorities may increase the likelihood of hunting violators re-offending (see Sherman, 1993).

These processes have deepened distrust even more, and official game authorities and researchers are therefore challenged not only by hunters but by the local community members that support illegal actions (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014b). Support for illegal killing and for the hunting violators emerges through verbal spurring or even encouragement, or silent support and approval of the act. The illegal killing of large carnivores is found to be a more or less organized action with backup support from the community (see 4.1.). von Essen et al. (2014a) found that attributes of a *good poacher* includes insider status, and illegal hunting is committed as part of a social group. This is also the case in this study, where hunting violators act in the interests of the community, not against it. A hunting violator in the reindeer herding area explains community support as follows “Of course they back up hunting violators. If you have a herd in the forest then it helps you too.” but interestingly, continues with “However, some herders do judge you whether it helps their work or not.” Therefore, it is important to notice that people's attitudes vary among stakeholders and community members.

Hobsbawm (1959) in studying sociopolitical crime in an English setting suggests that even local authorities may support *rebels* when the community resists the central administration. This support for illegal killing and for hunting violators may also be seen among local authorities such as the police or game management authorities, as they may have conflicts of loyalty, and therefore, find themselves supporting illegal killings. In Finland, there was a case of the illegal killing of three wolves from one wolf pack in January 2013, where altogether 30 perpetrators were involved (of which 15 were prosecuted), including a person from the national Game Council. The chief constable on the case, also a member of the national Game Council, stated during the investigation, “As it has

been said in the public discussion, this norm of justice, it doesn't match common sense. I have to say that the aggravated hunting offence does not fit into my sense of justice although I'm not in a position to judge. These are just common people, not criminals." (Vähäsarja and Karhula, 2013) In this study, official¹ concludes that "I'm rather worried about these hunters, how they cope after getting caught. The same kinds of feelings are shared by other officials. Those ordinary people are getting into big trouble, just like that, and how will they cope. Also, the local hunting culture suffers a lot."

It seems that these hunting violators have become noble bandits as they rob from the central authorities whilst supporting the local people in their struggle to make a living and a safe living environment in large carnivore territories. The predators have become a symbol of conflict between the administered and the administrator, in other words, locals and EU administration (for similar results see Pyka et al., 2007). Hunting violator^{rh} concludes that "In Brussels, they have no shame at all. They just let the predators be." It may be interpreted that it is not only hunters that are alienating from authorities but the whole local community members especially in the wolf occurrence areas.

Hunters as a sub-culture have faced vast changes since the protection of large carnivore species in accordance with international conservation agreements and the Habitats Directive in the 1990s, which involves strict protection that does not allow hunting as a management measure with threatened species (EY Case C-342/05). The normative social world of hunters has not met the requirements set from the command and control of national game management authorities (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014a), as the hunters have played a substantial role in the community in the case of harmful species over the past 700 years (Mykrä et al., 2005; Pohja-Mykrä et al., 2005). Importantly, reindeer herders also find their Sami cultural environment to be in conflict with the aims and means of the national management authorities (Magga, 2007). Hunters and reindeer herders may therefore act in defiance to protect their values, actions and role in the community.

4.4.2. Externalizing the shame associated with the sanction

Neutralization techniques were examined in chapter 4.3 to show how hunters negate the shame from the stigma and sanctions associated with violating the law. Caution should be used against interpreting the interviewed when examining the techniques. Neutralization may be a verbal form of cognition as a defense of behavioral intentions in the motivational process of the crime as well as afterwards to relieve cognitive dissonance (Sykes and Matza, 1957), and there is no way to separate those in this study. Interestingly, all neutralization techniques found in this study are also present in contemporary media, public discussions and hunting magazines, thereby politicizing acts of illegal hunting. This discourse has challenged the official strict line based on the protection and intrinsic value of large carnivores set in conservation focused management aims. According to official¹ "A person or a group, they seek that approval with these small pieces and come to the conclusion that illegal killings are the right way to handle predators. Game policy is one thing where the authorities can't handle local problems. Trust in the game management authorities is pure zero; they think that they have total ignorance on the local level and therefore ignore them."

Interestingly, the neutralization techniques may have notable effects on a larger scale. The discussion of the purity of the wolf genome in denial of the neutralization point of view is essential as a defense in court as a suspect of illegally killing wolves. In Finnish legislation you can be sentenced only when the targeted species is a pure wolf, not a wolf dog. When using the denial of the victim as a defense, a further claim arises that predators should be *wild* again, meaning that hunting those species would bring back their fear of

humans.

The use of neutralization as a way to allow illegal hunters to justify their criminal behavior based on perceived injustices and legitimacy deficits in the sociopolitical context refers to the fact that illegal killings of large carnivores need to be moved away from being viewed as a crime or deviance committed by a few individuals (von Essen et al., 2014a). It may be concluded that by granting illegal killing a permissible status, the community has identified a lack of the necessary actions by the game management authorities. Therefore, this is indirect resistance to the authorities by the whole local-level community, not just hunting violators, and the use of neutralization techniques allow otherwise law-abiding members of society to engage in criminal activity.

4.4.3. Perceiving the sanctions as unfair and stigmatizing

In Finland, recent changes have increased the punishments to halt and reduce the growing number of illegal killing of large carnivores, mainly wolf (see Chap. 1). To be effective these deterrents should counterbalance defiance and render the net effect of sanctions irrelevant (Sherman, 1993). At this time, no research is available on whether these changes have reduced illegal actions in Finland, but it is more likely that raising the compensation fees have had no effect on sociopolitical crime. Hunting violators will not cease their activities as they see the regime as illegitimate, and severe criminal sanctions are easily seen as unjust (see also Borgström, 2011). The executive director of national hunting organization stated during the preparatory phase of the previously mentioned amendment to the Criminal Code that "by only increasing punishments, illegal acts will not be diminished" (Hiidenmies, 2014). Official² considered the possible impacts of tightened punishments as "An aggravated hunting offence will have an effect, criminal acts will be even more hidden but they will also be more difficult to operate. Ex-tempore acts will be diminished as it demands careful planning". However, the interviewed hunting violators were very skeptical about the possibility that these measures will reduce instances of the crime. Hunting violator^{ou} describes the feelings as follows: "When the crosshair is on that cur you just don't think about sentences. A man has a need to shoot at that time, there is no time to think about consequences. That's how it goes." Another hunting violator^{rh} backs up as follows: "If you are after the species, you don't think about anything else. Oh, here is 16,500 euros! It just doesn't cross your mind." However, prohibited hunting may have some drastic effects at least afterwards, as hunting violator^{rh} describes, "Yeah. It's way of life here. You go hanging in the lodge and hunting ... grouse, waterfowl, and moose of course. It's like all that keeps you sane is taken away. Hands tight then. It hurts, in fact it hurts a lot." It may be interpreted that hunters and local community members perceive the sanctions as unfair and view them as stigmatizing.

There are examples where communities have raised collective funds to pay bail and fines for illegal hunters (Bell et al., 2007; Warchol and Johnson, 2009; Mischi, 2013), and such occurrences were also present in this study as official² mentioned "The community doesn't judge hunting violators but most probably supports them, financially too." The support may also be in the form of free consumables as cited in chapter 4.1. The presence of financial support has been discussed especially in social networks and it may be argued as a form of defiance when supporting illegal killings at the local level.

5. Discussion

The boundaries between livelihood crimes, folk crimes and social crimes are not discrete, as their categorization is contingent on the social reaction to and aftermath of the crime as much as the

perpetrator's motives (von Essen et al., 2014a). For example, media and local rural discourse may have a detrimental effect on how the crime is dealt with in public, or hunting violators might be set on a pedestal in spite of the violators' initial motives (see also Forsyth and Marckese, 1993; Colomy and Granfield, 2010). In this article, when interpreting the motives of hunting violators from District Court conclusions, neither the actor nor society could have an influence on the categorization made by the author. However, by using legal documents, the depiction may remain thin, as nuances may be lost. For example, interpreting thrill/sport as a motive is challenging, whereas antipathy toward the species in hand may be clearly indicated when the actual act of killing included some brutal elements. Tradition and cultural reasons were also dismissed, although in the case of reindeer herders and hunters, that might be one driving force.

Illegal killings of large carnivores can be categorized as socio-political crime, as the main motivation is disagreement with the large carnivore management policies under the control of the Habitats Directive. The illegal killing of large carnivores may be committed as part of a social group with the support of the community. Results indicate that hunting violators have become righteous outlaws and are considered *good poachers* by many of local citizens. There are signs that illegal killing may be widely regarded as acceptable, and even positive, by local people. Community support for hunting violators has been found in previous studies when hunting or fishing is felt to be a part of a traditional lifestyle (Okihiro, 1997; Bell et al., 2007), or community members share common emotions with the hunting violators, such as fear toward large carnivores or frustration toward the authorities (Pohja-Mykrä and Kurki, 2014b). It may be concluded that illegal killing of large carnivores is performed as both implicit and explicit resistance, although there are no signs of direct protest, such as carcasses left on the ground for the authorities to find (see Holmes, 2007). Instead, the carcasses were hidden in most cases.

The wolf seems to be the main conflicted species. The re-colonization of wolves in Finland since the late 1990s occurred concurrently with the strict protection set by the EU Habitats Directive and has brought the traditional sense of a safe life to the core of political and social arenas. Whilst biosecurity issues within human societies are violated, the research on *species-specific attitudes* and their impact on disputes over conservation regimes are needed. In addition, the impact of management actions, such as derogations on the basis of population management, in empowering hunters and local citizens to influence wolf management and to consider wolves as community resources, should be examined.

To formulate effective deterrents to illegal killing and increase compliance with wildlife law there is a need to emphasize the nature of the illegal killing of large carnivores. As a sociopolitical crime in defiance of the authorities, management actions must satisfy special requirements. A traditional command and control approach to regulation, with the strict prohibition of the killing of large carnivores together with tightened criminal sanctions may not result in a minimizing of instances of illegal killing. According to Sherman (1993), a crime committed in defiance cannot be dealt with by increasing punishments, as a lack of procedural fairness will result in a delegitimization of the authorities and more crime. Nurse (2011) points out that a more punitive regime is an inadequate solution to address wildlife crime levels unless the existence of different types of offenders and criminal behaviors are recognized and addressed in the policy and enforcement practice. Illegal killing of large carnivores, mainly wolves, is not a sign of a criminal mind but a socio-politically determined defiance of the authorities and represents larger processes where wolves have become a symbol of the rural protest against conservation regimes (see also Skogen and Krangle, 2003; Buller, 2008; Sjölander-Lindqvist, 2008;

von Essen et al., 2014b). It is not only about civil disobedience, or acting as a *rebel*, but an inner need to defend the hunter's role as the protector of the community and perform the necessary *act of justice*. These findings bring to a conclusion that hunting violators are socialized into the practice of illegal killings, as supported also by the Sutherland's differential association theory (see Eliason, 1999). When acknowledging these findings, group identifiers, role communication and social sanctions within the cooperation of local residents should be considered, to enhance practices that change the community perception of hunting violators as *good* into *bad*.

The sociopolitical dimensions of illegal hunting are captured in the concept of everyday resistance (Holmes, 2007), and most probably include elements of a broader agrarian rebellion. This being so, Woods et al. (2012: 579) warns that this radicalization may result in rural residents becoming "*increasingly hardened in their resolve and increasingly willing to move toward more radical forms of protest to fight their case*" (see also von Essen et al., 2014a). To prevent the antagonist positioning of conservation measures and traditional agrarian values there is a need for research that engages with questions related to the responsive and deliberative governance of natural resources management and conservation. Management actions should prioritize local-level socio-cultural needs and incorporate local people as noteworthy actors in the policy making process instead of seeing them as bystanders who should agree with whatever policies or measures the Government offers. In addition, the existing values related to the use of natural resources have to be acknowledged. Instead of demanding that attitudes change based on the intrinsic value of predators and a wider perspective than is currently experienced, more advanced approaches are needed. Large carnivores as a common community resource at the local level with usable value may have a positive effect (such is the case with brown bears, see Chap. 4.1). Support of hunters as an essential stakeholder group as well as important actors in their community is vital in order to implement a successful large carnivore management regime.

Frandy (2009) describes illegal killing as follows: "There are as many types of poachers as there are reasons for illegal killing, from Robin Hood to ivory poachers, from wolf-shooting ranchers in the American West to the traditional Sámi fishermen on the Deatnu River, whose indigenous rights were stripped to promote wildlife tourism. However just or unjust the law-breaking, illegal killing is nearly certain to be a form of political dissent and resistance against dominant ecological management." von Essen (2015) in her study found that large carnivore management is dominated by technical-ecological expertise, leaving no place for alternative formulations, and this will result in increasingly non-communicative forms of resistance toward policy. This study addresses the findings above by stating that the aim of maintaining a favorable conservation status for large carnivores, and managing large carnivores in a manner that is ecologically, economically and socially sustainable will fail if the driving force of the management is to pursue an indefinite favorable conservation status to the detriment of social sustainability.

6. Conclusions

Motives for the illegal killing of wildlife, large carnivores in this case, is not gaining a direct benefit for the pot or in cash, but is a form of political dissent and resistance against dominant conservation regimes. This study provides an insight into the discourses that show how the rural identity and way of life is defended and how rural protests toward conservation policies are expressed. Sociopolitical illegal killing of large carnivores has brought the understanding of both legitimacy deficits and rural-urban conflict, where hunters perform as a substantial stakeholder group.

Alienation of traditional rural life from society at large, community support for illegal hunting and the neutralization of the stigma and shame associated with the sanctions, all address rural defiance against the authorities and illegitimate conservation regimes. Illegal killing of large carnivores is a *rural crime* performed by hunters, but there are signs of a larger rural protest toward the illegitimate top-down conservation regimes applied at the EU level. The use of defiance theory broadens our understanding of how conservation law enforcement strategies such as more punitive regimes may increase illegal killing and support for it instead of acting as a deterrent. Illegal killing of large carnivores, mainly wolves, is a sign of increasing and powerful non-communicative resistance, and must be considered a serious signal of a need to bring measurement tools for successful conservation policies other than those relying on technical-ecological expertise to the fore.

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