

This article was downloaded by: [Norsk Institutt for Naturforskning]

On: 20 May 2015, At: 00:48

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Human Dimensions of Wildlife: An International Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uhdw20>

The Persistence of an Economic Paradigm: Unintended Consequences in Norwegian Wolf Management

Ketil Skogen^a

^a Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), Oslo, Norway

Published online: 19 May 2015.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Ketil Skogen (2015): The Persistence of an Economic Paradigm: Unintended Consequences in Norwegian Wolf Management, Human Dimensions of Wildlife: An International Journal, DOI: [10.1080/10871209.2015.1006796](https://doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2015.1006796)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2015.1006796>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Research Article

The Persistence of an Economic Paradigm: Unintended Consequences in Norwegian Wolf Management

KETIL SKOGEN

Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), Oslo, Norway

Most conservation conflicts have “material cores” in the sense that interests tied to economically motivated landscape transformation are pitted against conservation. These aspects of the conflict resemble issues that are regularly handled within established political and bureaucratic contexts, such as those regulating the interaction between the state and the agricultural sector. Mitigation efforts normally target such conflict issues, which can apparently be addressed by means of economic compensation or incentives. However, many controversies have additional aspects that are fundamental to conflict development. These are rooted in social tensions and processes of social change that may have less to do with conservation per se. Therefore, mitigation efforts that address economic loss may lead to unintended consequences, in that they aggravate other aspects of the conflicts. Norwegian wolf management is a prime example, as conflict mitigation is almost entirely directed at livestock producers—even in areas with little livestock.

Keywords wolf management, conflict mitigation, unintended consequences, Norway

Introduction

Most conflicts over conservation seem to have obvious “material cores” in the sense that interests tied to economically motivated resource utilization or landscape transformation are pitted against conservation. In many cases, these aspects of the conflicts resemble issues that are regularly handled within established political and bureaucratic systems, such as those regulating the interaction between the state and the agricultural sector. As a consequence, mitigation efforts normally target such conflict issues. This is the case with large carnivore conflicts in Norway, which is our example here.

Norwegian research over the last 15 years—partly commissioned by the authorities that develop management strategies—has shown that this approach is deficient. Large carnivore conflicts are embedded in deeper societal tensions. This was evident in 2003, and the topic of a presentation at the 2003 World Parks Conference (WPC).

Address correspondence to Ketil Skogen, Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), Gaustadalléen 21, 0349 Oslo, Norway. E-mail: ketil.skogen@nina.no

Norway and Sweden share a trans-boundary population of approximately 300 wolves. DNA analysis has established that the native Scandinavian wolf population went extinct, probably in the 1970s. All wolves in the existing population descend from immigrants from the Finnish–Russian population. While large parts of Norway have extensive livestock husbandry, this is not the case in the present wolf area. Settlement there has historically depended on logging and timber industry in the northern part, and farming without rough grazing in the south.

Social Conflicts

Our studies have demonstrated that conflicts over wolves are *social* conflicts (e.g., Figari & Skogen, 2011; Krangle & Skogen, 2011; Skogen, 2001; Skogen & Krangle, 2003). People who oppose wolf protection are often much angrier with their human adversaries than with the animals, and the conflicts reach beyond controversies over management practices. Anti-wolf attitudes predominantly prevail among people who are firmly rooted in traditional land use practices and in a rural working-class culture. These attitudes are not always—or even predominantly—related to adverse material effects of wolf presence at the individual level. Wolves are seen as a threat to rural lifestyles because they kill hunting dogs, reduce local moose and roe deer stocks, and cause some fear among locals. But few people have ever encountered wolves or had their dog attacked, and the effects wolves have on game populations vary (Gervasi et al., 2012).

There are aspects of these conflicts that are not directly related to the wolves, and general development trends in rural areas constitute a key factor. Government efforts to maintain rural settlement are not as effective (or as extensive) as they once were; even rural Norway is exposed to the forces of economic modernization and globalization. The dominant narrative among people with cultural ties to the resource-based economy is one of economic decline, leading to depopulation and dismantling of private and public services (Krangle & Skogen, 2011; Skogen, Mauz, & Krangle, 2008). Importantly, this happens in a time when a conservation ethos has achieved a prominent position in the public discourse, and manifests itself in practical land management. Some social groups interpret these changes in the valuation of nature as driving forces behind the decline in resource industries, and as a threat to a traditional rural lifestyle that rests on a resource economy and entails forms of outdoor recreation based on harvesting (Krangle & Skogen, 2011).

But the population is increasingly diverse even in rural areas, and pro-wolf attitudes are certainly present. For many rural residents the utilization of nature is decoupled from economic activities and relegated to leisure. Traditional consumptive recreation activities may lose their significance, being bound to disappearing livelihoods entailing physical interaction with nature. Even in small rural communities, we now find landscape interpretations that embrace wilderness, where the wolf can be a strong symbol of an authentic nature (Figari & Skogen, 2011). This deviates from a traditional landscape interpretation, where human appropriation of nature is seen as necessary and benevolent (Krangle & Skogen, 2011; Skuland & Skogen, 2014).

Just as the concept of wilderness is tied to the idea of what once was, the notion of productive nature is associated with continuity and heritage. For people rooted in traditional, resource-based land use, the traces of ancestors' hard work to tame the wilderness express the inherent meaning of the physical environment. This cultural landscape must be saved from "re-wilding" (Figari & Skogen, 2011). It also means that humans can legitimately control creatures that cause problems and that do not perform any meaningful function in this landscape.

Farming in Norway

Huge resources are used on compensation for predation and measures to prevent livestock loss, although livestock production is a limited economic activity in the current wolf area. Norwegian regional policy underpins the centrality of the farming perspective. Maintaining rural settlement has been a stable political goal, and stimulating the agricultural sector has been a cornerstone of this policy (Almås, 1989). A high level of subsidies has maintained active agriculture across much of the country. However, in many areas livestock and grass production are the only viable activities, due to climatic factors. Because of this, shifting governments have stimulated sheep breeding. During the long period when large carnivore conflicts were almost absent, husbandry methods entailing free-ranging sheep with limited supervision were developed. When brown bears, lynx, and wolverines increased in numbers and expanded their ranges, effects were serious, and conflicts have flourished ever since. Thus, the livestock/farming focus was well established when the wolves returned later on.

Due to the active role of the state, a large agriculture bureaucracy exists, and it has its counterpart in large, strong farming organizations. The interaction between the state and the farmers is extremely well regulated. For example, extensive negotiations are held each year between farmers' organizations and the government over subsidies and other issues affecting the agricultural sector. Consequently, there are well-established systems for transferring economic support from the state to the agricultural sector.

Controversial Conflict Mitigation

I shall now describe some conflict mitigation measures that have been taken, and explain why they are controversial. I will focus on three preventive measures that are hotly contested: zoning, fencing, and hands-on management.

Zoning

In 2005, Norway was divided into eight regions for large carnivore management. Some authority was transferred to regional boards in an effort to introduce an element of "local democracy" to carnivore management. Yet, research indicates that many local people do not see the boards as being either sufficiently local or under any meaningful democratic control (Skogen, Krangle, & Figari, 2013). These regional bodies are responsible for managing brown bears, lynx, and wolverines within a national framework with fixed population goals. A separate management zone for wolves, however, has been established due to special management challenges. In particular, rough grazing of sheep within the home range of a wolf pack was seen as impossible. This zone partially covers two "ordinary" zones, involves four counties, and is managed by a special board. This is a complicated system, which is not likely to alleviate people's sense of alienation toward management institutions (Skogen et al., 2013). The boards cannot go outside their mandate. Even though they are often regarded as pre-dominantly "anti-carnivore" (there is no stakeholder representation, only regional political appointments), they have not really changed the management regime. This causes frustration for those who would like to see fewer large carnivores around (Skogen et al., 2013).

The wolf zone has been set up specifically to minimize livestock losses. However, this has only been possible because the wolves are already concentrated in areas with little grazing. The zone is widely ridiculed. People understand the zoning logic as an attempt to contain wolves in a specific area, which is seen as stupid. Authorities deny this is the

purpose, and claim that the zone is mainly an area where the wolves have stronger protection. However, this explanation does not seem to impress people who disagree with the zone (Figari & Skogen, 2011; Skogen et al., 2013). Those who are positive towards wolf presence tend to see it from the wolves' point of view. The zone is too small, and wolves should be able to wander wherever it is natural for them to go. Seen from the opposite perspective, the zone is also too small because the burden of having wolves is unevenly distributed. It seems that everybody who cares one way or the other is frustrated (Skogen et al., 2013).

Fences

Several varieties of electric fences are used against predation. One approach that has been tried in the wolf zone has been to fence large forest areas, so that the grazing within the enclosures would mimic traditional rough grazing. These fences were erected following a turbulent process; many landowners were skeptical, and rejected fences on their property. There was also disagreement among sheep owners, as some claimed that accepting fences would amount to a concession in the bigger battle. Eventually two fences were finished in 2007 and 2008, paid for in full with government funds.

These fences are formidable structures: 130 cm tall, with six electric wires transmitting 4,500 V. The enclosed areas cover 2,200 ha and 1,100 ha, and roads are needed all around them. Yet, neither fence was effective the first couple of years. Predators got in and killed more sheep than they would have managed outside. This caused enormous controversy and media buzz. However, after having solved some technical problems, both have worked reasonably well since the 2011 grazing season.

As the wolf zone is not really a sheep-producing region, few farmers have been involved in the fencing projects. Substantial government funding is directed toward the problems of a relatively small group, and the fences have been met with considerable resistance locally (Skogen et al., 2013).

The fences were seen by many as destroying pristine landscapes (Skogen et al., 2013). There was also concern about the effects on wildlife movement. Many were worried that the fences might impair the unrestricted access that Norwegians are entitled to by law. This would also be harmful to hunting, so local chapters of the Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers issued sharp statements and put considerable pressure on the municipal authorities to stop the fencing (Skogen et al., 2013).

The most vocal fence opponents were hunters. There was also criticism from non-hunting outdoors enthusiasts and people with conservationist leanings, but a more accepting attitude seemed to prevail; anything would be acceptable to dampen the heated conflict. However, hunters and their organization were extremely outspoken (Skogen et al., 2013). This is interesting, given that many hunters are at least as strongly opposed to current carnivore protection as are farmers (Krange & Skogen, 2011). The arrival of wolves has forged an alliance between livestock farmers, forest owners, and rural hunters that was not there before. This alliance bridges (or covers up) conflicts with deep roots. These have historically been related to land ownership versus hunting and grazing rights, friction between hunting and sheep herding, and class relations in rural areas (Skogen & Krange, 2003).

The fence issue seems to be driving a wedge in the alliance (Skogen & Krange, 2003). Hunters draw the same conclusions pertaining to the fence itself, as do the vocal pro-wolf groups. The same concerns were voiced in a more subdued way by local outdoors enthusiasts and moderate conservationists. They all observe the same negative effects and

emphasize them in similar ways, but conclude very differently concerning the wolves' role. From an anti-wolf perspective, the need for fences emphasizes that the wolves do not belong anymore.

Monitoring and Hands-On Management

The detailed goals that are set politically for population size and distribution of large carnivores demand knowledge that can only be obtained by extensive monitoring. This is achieved by means of several methods, most prominently snow tracking, DNA analysis, and global positioning system (GPS) collaring. Many who have strong opinions on large carnivore management see the extensive use of hands-on methods such as chasing, sedating, and capturing animals as problematic (Figari & Skogen, 2011).

Interestingly, wolf supporters and wolf skeptics speak about the wolf as a natural being—not to be confused with its presence in Norway today—in ways that are very similar to each other (Figari & Skogen, 2011). Wolves in their natural environment are seen as impressive, fascinating, intelligent, social, and *wild*. The core of their disagreement is whether wolves belong in Norway today, in a landscape that may look like a wilderness to some, but is valued as a managed production landscape by others (Skuland & Skogen, 2014).

Despite this discrepancy, there seems to be a shared concern that intensive monitoring threatens the very notion of a wild animal. But those who think there are already too many wolves will tend to see the need for extensive and invasive monitoring as a proof that Norway is not a wild place, and therefore has no room for wolves. Those who see the wolves in a positive light see the monitoring as destructive to a wildness they would like to see in Norwegian nature.

Many see the extensive monitoring as a tremendous waste of money, out of all proportion in relation to other needs in society. Interestingly, the opinion that large carnivore management is too expensive is spread across all positions in the controversy (Skogen et al., 2013).

Unintended Consequences

What we have seen in Norway is that no matter how much money has been poured into certain forms of mitigation over the last 15 years, significant conflict dimensions remain unaffected. Our case in point demonstrates how established structures influence the outcome of conflict mitigation, or indeed makes implementation of alternative strategies (e.g., those suggested by research) impossible. It is no coincidence that one small group receives so much of the attention and money.

Unintended consequences materialize when other groups are aggrieved by mitigation efforts directed at a particular sector. To the extent that these “other groups” advocate strong wolf protection, frustration on their part must be expected as part of a compromise. Conservationists are not happy with current management of large carnivores in Norway, and some conflict mitigation efforts have triggered reactions from that camp. But many people who do not have favorable views on large carnivores are also alienated by core elements in the current strategy. Although this may lead to some friction between groups that have been allies in the battle against wolf protection, such as hunters, landowners, and sheep farmers (Skogen & Krangle, 2003), it does not mean that the non-farmers are driven into the arms of the conservationists. They only become more frustrated with the

management system, the policy makers, and the social groups they associate with the increasingly powerful conservation paradigm (Skogen & Krange, 2003; Krange & Skogen, 2011).

In the Norwegian wolf example, it seems that farmers are simply not the most important group to reach out to if one wants to decrease the conflict level and/or to build sustainable alliances for the greater conservation good. Other social groups play more significant roles in the wolf controversy, and probably have a greater potential as conservation allies.

References

- Almås, R. (1989). Characteristics and conflicts in Norwegian agriculture. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 6, 127–136.
- Figari, H., & Skogen, K. (2011). Social representations of the wolf. *Acta Sociologica*, 54, 317–332.
- Gervasi, V., Nilsen, E. B., Sand, H., Panzacchi, M., Rauset, G., Pedersen, H., & Linnell, J. (2012). Predicting the potential demographic impact of predators on their prey: A comparative analysis of two carnivore-ungulate systems in Scandinavia. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 81, 443–454.
- Krange, O., & Skogen, K. (2011). When the lads go hunting: The “Hammertown mechanism” and the conflict over wolves in Norway. *Ethnography*, 12, 466–489.
- Skogen, K. (2001). Who’s afraid of the big, bad wolf? Young people’s responses to the conflicts over large carnivores in eastern Norway. *Rural Sociology*, 66, 203–226.
- Skogen, K., & Krange, O. (2003). A wolf at the gate: The anti-carnivore alliance and the symbolic construction of community. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 43, 309–325.
- Skogen, K., Mauz, I., & Krange, O. (2008) Cry wolf! Narratives of wolf recovery in France and Norway. *Rural Sociology*, 73, 105–133.
- Skogen, K., Krange, O., & Figari, H. (2013) *Ulvkonflikter. En sosiologisk studie* [Wolf conflicts. A sociological study]. Oslo, Norway: Akademika Forlag.
- Skuland, S. E., & Skogen, K. (2014). Rovdyr i menneskenes landskap [Carnivores in human landscapes]. *Tidsskriftet Utmark*. Retrieved from <http://www.utmarkg.org>