



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
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Constructing and Anticipating Conflict: How Madrid Prepares for Wolves

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Department of Urban and Rural Development
Master's Thesis • 30 HEC
Environmental Communication and Management - Master's Programme
Uppsala 2016

Constructing and Anticipating Conflict: How Madrid Prepares for Wolves

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Credits: 30 HEC

Level: Second cycle (A1E)

Course title: Independent Project in Environmental Science - Master's thesis

Course code: EX0431

Programme/Education: Environmental Communication and Management – Master's Programme

Place of publication: Uppsala

Year of publication: 2016

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Online publication: <http://stud.epsilon.slu.se>

Keywords: Iberian wolf, human–wildlife conflict, perspectives, deliberative democracy, agonistic pluralism, Spain

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Abstract

The return of the Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*) to the capital of Spain where the large carnivore was absent for decades opens up a plural landscape of opinions, attitudes and understandings. Using a phenomenological approach, actors involved were interviewed to assess perspectives, understandings and expectations regarding landscape, livelihood and wildlife conservation. The secrecy about the information, the underlying effects of wolves attacks on livestock and game, the fragmented legal landscape, the precarious system of the extensive farming and the absences of satisfactory democratic processes to air out these tensions are some of the factors that intricate and add confusion to the situation, turning the wolf into the main driver of disagreement energies. Using the presence of the wolf in Madrid as the framework, the study explores and ultimately challenges presumptions on human–wildlife label and conflict designation and presents the facets and vectors for conflict that define the case context. Finally, the theoretical debate on deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism participatory theories helped to unravel a widespread discontentment and distrust heading toward a crisis of legitimacy where environmental agencies are failing to accommodate all perspectives.

Keywords: Iberian wolf, human–wildlife conflict, perspectives, deliberative democracy, agonistic pluralism, Spain

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Erica von Essen for her support, trust and feedback, and the interesting discussions that help me to improve in my learning process. I wish to thank my interviewees and all those people who trusted me and offered their help and acknowledgement and were willing to share their perspectives and feelings. Last but not least, I want to thank the encouragement of my caring husband and parents during these two years.

Resumen

La vuelta del lobo ibérico (*Canis lupus signatus*) a la capital de España donde el gran carnívoro ha estado ausente durante décadas, deja al descubierto un paisaje plural de opiniones, actitudes e interpretaciones. Usando una aproximación fenomenológica, se entrevistó a los actores implicados con el objetivo de evaluar sus perspectivas, interpretaciones y expectativas en relación con el paisaje, modos de vida y conservación de la vida silvestre. El secretismo en relación con la información, los efectos subyacentes de los ataques de lobo al ganado y las piezas de caza, la fragmentación legal a nivel nacional, la precariedad del sistema extensivo de ganadería y la ausencia de procesos democráticos satisfactorios que permitan sacar a la luz las tensiones generadas son algunos de los factores que intrincan y añaden confusión a la situación, convirtiendo al lobo en un elemento conductor del desacuerdo. Usando la presencia del lobo en Madrid como contexto, este estudio explora y finalmente cuestiona las presunciones derivadas de la etiqueta de conflicto ser humano-vida silvestre y el uso del término conflicto así como presenta las facetas y vectores para el conflicto que se definen en el contexto de Madrid. Finalmente, el debate teórico entre las teorías de democracia deliberativa y el pluralismo agonístico ayuda a desentrañar el descontento y falta de confianza generalizados que conducen hacia una crisis de legitimidad en la cual las agencias ambientales están fracasando a la hora de integrar las diferentes perspectivas.

Palabras clave: Lobo ibérico, conflicto ser humano-vida silvestre, perspectivas, democracia deliberativa, pluralismo agonístico, España

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Abbreviations

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
NGO	Non Governmental Organization

1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM FORMULATION

After a general regression of the wolf during the last centuries the population started to recover since circa 1970, becoming relatively stable in Spain by 2002 (Kaczensky et al. 2013). As an endangered large carnivore, the wolf is protected by the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). According to the experts and environmental agencies in Spain it is expanding its territory to the south of Spain (Blanco 2011; Blanco & Cortés 2002; Kaczensky et al. 2013). The population tendency is increasing and, with it, the potential for uneasy co-existence. (Alcántara & Plana 1999; European Commission 2016; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Affairs of Spain 2016; Salvatori & Linnell 2005)

Under the environmental and social changes, where the clash between wildlife and human interest occurs is a need to understand and reconcile the social and ecological dimensions of human-wolf contexts (Jochum et al. 2014). According to Salvatori and Linnell (2005), it is remiss to underestimate this conflict as only triggered by material elements like livestock depredation. Guidelines to ensure viability of wolf populations or wildlife management worldwide also include actions to address social tensions (Bisi 2007; Blanco & Cortés 2009; Boitani 2000; Chavez et al. 2005; Eggermann 2011; Ghosal et al. 2015; Graham et al. 2005; Grilo 2002; Jochum et al. 2014; Kaczensky et al. 2013; Redpath et al. 2013; Skogen 2015) and thereby mitigate conflict. Indeed, they frame the enterprise in the dominant notion of ‘conflict’ (Trouwborst 2015). The competition for the resources (Graham et al. 2005), the economic lost in relation to livestock and game depredation and the legal protection of the wolf (Thirgood et al. 2000 in Graham et al. 2005) are vectors that constitute the conflict. In this vein, the different understandings, perspectives and attitudes in relation to wolf conservation and management, the cultural values, personal experiences and feelings that are deeply bonded with the acceptance of the wolf (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Blanco & Cortés 2009; Chavez et al. 2005; Salvatori & Linnell 2005). Finally, the media embellishment of the situation with this species is also one of the entwined factors that add to and constitute the conflict with the wolf.

Where the wolf is concerned, conflict may betray deeper tensions between people. The wolf as a large carnivore affects public animosity based on the material impact on human interest (mainly livestock and game) and the more immaterial beliefs (Grilo et al. 2002), from total aversion to idolization (Boitani, 2000). Studies reveal an urban-rural dichotomy (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Krange & Skogen 2007; Misch 2012) materialized in Madrid with socio-economic and cultural conflicts and competing interpretations (Ghosal et al., 2015) of the area, the uses, the wolf or the conflict (Brownlow 2000). Importantly, this attitude polarization between actors, classically neutral to positive attitudes from urban residents and general public, and negative attitudes from the so-called locals (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Boitani 2000; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003), is frequently lived out in messy confrontations typically fostered by media.

The absences of satisfactory democratic processes to air out these tensions, voice concerns over livelihoods, or simply discuss the wolf among citizens, limit these actions to

affinity groups in civil society. The competition with expanding social and economic aspirations of humans' and society's tolerance to the presence of the species are limiting factors, which have more influence on the regulation of the wolf, especially in the areas where it is re-colonizing after decades of absence (Blanco & Cortés 2009; Brownlow 2000; Salvatori & Linnell 2005).

1.1 The context of the study

In Spain as in many other countries, including the US and states in Europe, the conflict with the wolf manifests a clash of different perspectives, understandings and expectations regarding landscape, livelihood and wildlife conservation (Blanco & Cortés 2009; Brownlow 2000; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Skogen 2015). This clash brings to the forefront primary tensions proceeded the deep crack between the rural and the urban (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Krange & Skogen 2007; Mischi 2012), and pre-existing tensions such as “*livestock depredation, competition with hunters, predation on domestic dogs, fear and wider social conflicts for which wolves become symbols*” (Salvatori & Linnell 2005 p22).

Embodying this modern dilemma is the case in Madrid, Spain. The wolf is expanding towards rural areas of Madrid only 30 kilometers to one of the biggest cities in the European Union, causing amazement on the part of ecological experts, naturalists and conservationists as well as frustration and anxiety on the part of local stockbreeders, blending into the previous tensions related to Natural Resource Management. The public opinion has an important influence on wolf management (Blanco et al., 1992; Boitani 2000), and Madrid, as the biggest city and capital of the country, often becomes the loud majority voice for this opinion. The capital and the media thereby affect a massive scale entangling the national conflict in the regional situation.

As case context where modernity is recently bringing together wolves and humans, social conflicts have been anticipated in the area, where the large carnivore was absent for decades (Bisi et al. 2010; Cobo 2003). The characterization of human relations *to* wildlife or *over* wildlife with each other as inherently constitutive of conflict, however, may be an unhelpful interpretation. For one, the normative expectation of conflict whenever we have plural values might turn the context into an arena of adversaries to begin with, who then struggle to find common ground that might lie beneath surface tensions. Second, and perhaps oppositely, the characterization of human wildlife conflict is typically premised on a view of conflict as an inherently *destructive* force. Indeed, it is one that counteracts conservation goals and erodes communities and is thus in need of mitigation by wildlife managers.

1.2 Problem formulation and objectives

In this study, I explore and ultimately challenge presumptions on human – wildlife conflict in order to contribute to a better understanding of the dangers and utility of the ‘conflict’ concept as it is used in disagreements over natural resources in general and over large carnivore conservation in particular. I contend we must be critical toward the zealotry of policy-makers and scholars to apply the conflict label to the premises around human-wildlife relations.

The study explores the perception of constructive and destructive dimensions of conflict in early stages of conflict escalation through a dual theoretical framework of pluralistic agonism and deliberative democracy. Specifically, their competing conceptions about conflict. These perceptions are derived from inhabitants of the Madrid region with a stake in the return of the wolf, but also from observing the communication channels that allow the development of the situation, the degree of cooperation as well as the expectations of

intervention by the administration in order to avoid escalation. These factors might enlighten the status of the situation, and the opportunities for inclusive collaborative decision making processes that might legitimate administration's action.

Pluralistic agonism and deliberative democracy provide a theoretical nexus at conflict from which it is possible to investigate the balance of power among the actors constructed in the process of communication of the wolf protection. The communicative action analysis in this case would show the cooperation by the individuals, through dialogue, deliberation and argumentation free from coercion.

The study attempts to answer the research question "*How do we understand the facets of the emerging wolf situation in Madrid and which are the premises for cooperation and democratic processes in the area?*", considering the following research objectives:

1. Synthesise an overview of the emerging wolf conflict situation around Madrid
2. Explore attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders towards the possible expansion of wolf populations in the area, the effect of public opinion over environmental agencies in Madrid in relation to the issue as well as the effect of the media in the actors
3. To ascertain the potential for upcoming conflict using the expectations of the respondents against the background of ongoing conflicts in closer areas, as well as for opportunities of the situation and the degree of compromise that the attitudes of stakeholders show towards constructive communication and participatory processes
4. To analyze the utility of the conflict concept as a normative expectation, as something to be avoided or productive for wolf management and natural resource management generally.
5. To provide policy, procedural and theoretical recommendations or implications based on deliberative opportunities, potential for resolution in early stages, implication of trust and conflict terminology.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

The destructive and constructive shades assumed by the actors involved by the expansion of the wolf are explored in the terms of the situation, the communicative context, and the popularly employed, but ambiguous signifier of human-wildlife conflicts. To this end, the research is predicated on a critical investigation of the utility of this concept generally and in the context of the wolf situation around Madrid in particular. Is it an appropriate, constructive, or accurate designation of events?

Given this, the methodology employs a phenomenological point of departure whereby the subjectivities and perceptions of respondents and self-reflection help inform the questions addressed (Lindseth & Norberg 2004; Smith et al. 1997). Empirical material was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with open-ended discussions about previously selected topics and thoughts that arise during the process (Rapley 2001; Smith 2004). Paying special attention to the type and intensity of language and vocabulary as well as speculation, this qualitative approach allows for looking through pre-assigned attitudes seeking individuals' narratives, feelings and understandings (Smith 2004; Smith et al. 1997). A total of 30 interviews in the field, combined with participant observation (Strauss 1987 in Smith 2004), present the 'conflict' dimensions of the situation, but also allow for the more open-ended exploration of potential for reconciliation between interest groups, positive expectations for future co-existence, and willingness to engage with the 'other side' (Rapley 2001; Salmon & Buetow 2013; Willig & Stainton-Rogers 2007). A wide representation of actors was considered for the interviews, however generalization in one case with limited number of respondents was required.

The process of research for the case started with a literature review on the wolf issue in general and particularly in Spain and on-line articles from the mainstream media in Madrid and bordering areas, the design of the interview guide (see appendix), a brief research on the actors involved and interrelations and initial interviews with experts testing the interview guide. Phone contact was prioritized over email to set the meetings and their suggestions for further contacts were considered and fostered. The phenomenologically collected data is presented in an empirical results chapter under a first-level thematic analysis to distill patterns, then triangulated with the literature's received understandings on the dominant notion of human-wildlife conflicts in wildlife management, as well as what 'conflict' does more generally. In this way, the theoretical framework serves as a benchmark for what I present are two distinct conceptions of conflict, while findings from the empirical data both challenge and affirm dimensions of the theoretical debate over deliberative democracy and pluralistic agonism.

In what follows, the theoretical framework is first presented. Second, the details of the interview study and the participant observation are provided. Additionally a table with the information about the field interviews is displayed. A description of the situation in the national level and particularly in the study area follows in the next chapter.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Conflict, conservation conflict and human-wildlife conflict

Conflicts take place worldwide in different forms intrinsic to human society and, as so, emotionally charged (Redpath et al. 2013), as “*essentially differences in peoples’ views on the source and scale of the problem and possible management options*” (Young et al. 2010 p3986). The characteristics of the conflict and the context where it occurs define the evolution of the situation, affected by the constructive / destructive facet of the conflict. Conflicts can have a positive influence fostering dialogue and influencing governance. However, their negative aspects are normally highlighted due to the consequent limitation of social equality, sustainability and economic development in the community. For this reason, conflict management aims to prevent disagreements and / or limit, and reduce their negative influence, acting in its different dimensions. (Redpath et al. 2013; Young et al. 2010)

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is important to specify the meaning of the “human-wildlife conflict” term applied in this study. Following Redpath et al. (2013 p100), conservation conflicts are “*situations that occur when two or more parties with strongly held opinions clash over conservation objectives and when one party is perceived to assert its interests at the expense of another*”. In the intersection of human interests and the objectives of species conservation (Chavez et al. 2005; Salvatori & Linnell 2005; Young et al. 2010) conflicts take place, and have different dimensions to consider for the management system. On one hand the direct effect of the wildlife over the human activities as well as the perception of the risks towards human activities (Young et al. 2010). On the other hand the effect of the tensions that arise between different actors with divergent objectives in relation to wildlife (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Bisi 2007; Graham et al. 2005; Redpath et al. 2013). This last one is named as the “human-wildlife” dimension, which involves human-human encounters grounded on different values and priorities over human issues and wildlife conservation objectives (Ghosal et al. 2015; Peterson et al. 2010; Redpath et al. 2013). In turn, Peterson et al. (2010) caution about invoking the conflict label to human wildlife relations. The authors argue that when the term is invoked, it immediately suggests an adversarial situation. This may either distract attention away from the real human-human conflict, or pre-empt the reconciliation of views.

Nevertheless, environmental and social changes during the last decades have increased the range of conservation conflicts leading to a unique socio-economic context that will influence the conflict dynamic and its management (Young et al. 2010). Experts suggest taking interdisciplinary perspectives where the social and the ecological dimensions are brought together in order to achieve durable decisions (Bisi 2007; Blanco & Cortés 2009; Boitani 2000; Eggermann 2011; Grilo 2002; Graham et al. 2005; Llaneza et al. 2000; Jochum et al. 2014; Kaczensky et al. 2013). To this end, stakeholder dialogue “*can help improve relationship building between participants*”, bringing people together, fostering understanding of perspectives and enhancing trust among the actors (Young et al. 2010 p3984). Participatory and deliberative processes are proposed to achieve this aim in early stages (Redpath et al. 2013). Dialogue as one communicative ideal, might pull toward fruitful collaborative and emergent engagements as “*my understanding and knowledge of the other is enhanced*” (Stewart & Zediker 2000 p234). The authors discuss that when “*letting the other happen to me while holding my own ground*” (p234) is experienced tensionally the actors’ positions are influenced by those of the others and the claims and argumentations become vulnerable to the others’ criticism. In this vein, Krauss and Morsella (2006, p156) highlight the need of real desire to resolve the conflict from the actors in order to obtain positive outcomes from the use of dialogue. In turn they warn about the risk of escalation in case of ambivalence or hidden interests in perpetuating the conflict. However, the complexity of conflicts may limit the capacity of fully resolution of

conflicts (Redpath et al. 2013; Young et al. 2010) getting superficial agreement instead of engaged dialogue (Stewart & Zediker 2000).

2.2.2 Participatory theories

Theories of deliberative democracy and pluralistic agonism can be argued to be different approaches toward the human-wildlife conflicts, in which many authors suggest the affected actors to be included and participate throughout democratic processes. These theories reappear (Mouffe 2009) as a result of the perception of the decay of the public sphere, growing public dissatisfactions and loss of trust with the public institutions at all levels as the “*product of political neglect and exclusion by regimes purporting to be democratic*” in modernity (Kapoor 2002 p459). Habermas theory of deliberative democracy and Mouffe’s pluralism discuss in the vein of strengthen and extending democracy, although the authors differ on the processes and premises to achieve these objectives. Their consensus and conflict oriented approaches to democracy, respectively, has key implications for how we view the constructive or destructive potential in human-wildlife conflicts.

Deliberative Democracy

Habermas is concerned with legitimacy and justice, and develops the “public sphere” concept as an arena where anybody affected by the issue could get engaged in dialogue and debate. Within this notion the author grows the theory of deliberative democracy as a procedural model of democracy to encourage public participation (Kapoor 2002). The “deliberative democracy” normative approach focuses the creation of meaning through inclusiveness and unconstrained communicative acts. The language is central in this public deliberative process as a vehicle to reach rational consensus decisions and mitigate power imbalance (Bond 2011; Hallgreen & Westberg 2015; Kapoor 2002).

The deliberative approach to dialogue is rather process than solution-orientated in that it seeks to cultivate a mutual understanding and respect between participants through rational deliberation and debate, when moral agreement or consensus is not possible. Aware of the power imbalance and other obstacles that limit the practical implementation of the theory, Habermas sets the ideal speech. As a framework of reference the ideal speech provides a regulative context to assess inclusive legitimate democratic procedures and outcomes (Bond 2011) with the presumption that the decisions are taken with an impartial standpoint leaving aside personal interests in the interests of all.

Differing from the instrumental and technological rationality present within the society’s structures and institutions, Habermas’ ideal speech situation is grounded in a communicative rationality that “*is to be preferred in societal decision making, as such communication is supposed to be the vehicle generating deliberative democracy*” (Hallgreen & Westberg 2015 p166). This communicative rationality comes from the free communication among involved groups focused on consensus. The ideal speech follows three formal conditions: a) it is inclusive, any participant is allowed to engage in the process with claims on topics relevant to the participant; b) the process is free from coercion and arguments can be questioned by participants; and c) is open and symmetrical to all participants in relation to the scope, agenda and democratic process (Mouffe 2009). Following these conditions “*validity claims are excluded from discourse only if there is consensus among the participants about their invalidity*” (Hallgreen & Westberg 2015 p166) reaching democratic will-formation and legitimate long-term-respected common decisions from rational opponents.

In relation to legitimacy, deliberative democrats endorse on the role of communicative rationality. This is a vehicle to achieve consensual resolutions within the participatory process oriented toward a mutual understanding and the common. A communicative rationality “*not only helps coordinate information, plans, or actions but performs an important critical and adjudicative function*” (Kapoor 2002 p463). The inclusive, rational, free and symmetrical deliberative process fosters a fact- and claim- based argumentation

and counter argumentation leading to the better argument, to be ultimately adopted by participants as the legitimate rational outcome. In this way, deliberation focuses on the substance of argumentation, rather than the speaker's position, any preconceived tensions toward him or her, or how passionately he or she feels about the issue. During the deliberative process there is a scale of the personal reason that starts with the personal interests that through communicative rationality may transcend to achieve the level of the common ground to reach rational consensus. (Kapoor 2002)

Pluralistic Agonism

Pluralism agonistics level a postmodern critique toward the perceived failures of consensus-oriented approaches like deliberation. Agonists also see emancipation through democracy, but endorse a more conflict-oriented approach as means of getting there. To agonists, deliberative democracy fails in the representation of the social pluralisms and embraces a negative perception of complex situations with variety of opinions. Chantal Mouffe criticises the rational consensus pursued by deliberative democrats for the reason that “*entails the fantasy that we could escape from our human form of life*” (Mouffe 2009 p12). In addition according to the author it suppresses the important role of antagonism through power imbalances and rhetoric. She highlights the need of a democratic model that locates the question of power and antagonism in the very centre (Mouffe 2009) and assumes that Habermas' common understanding can only be reached “*at the expense and exclusion of other signifiers*” (Kapoor 2002 p464). It is in this way a misleading and naïve attempt to quell conflict in pluralistic societies.

According to Kapoor (2002 p465), acts of closure or the constitution of a totality are shaped by its limits, what define the antagonisms: “*for example, the formation of an identity—be it individual or collective—is an act of power requiring an I/you or us/them distinction, thereby setting up an adversarial relationship to the other*”. The agonistic character comes from the transformation of the antagonism present between enemies into agonistic relationship between adversaries who respect the right to defend all perspectives (Bond 2011; Mouffe 2009). In turn, society is seen as a domain where social identities are constantly reformulated in relation to each other, rather than in relation to a neutral ‘common good’. In this vein, agonists acknowledge difference by incorporating the diversity of values and identities that defines the pluralism where there is a constant struggle and renegotiation of social identity caused by the mutual contestation between social groups.

Language is understood as the tool that acknowledges social conflicts shaping a broad picture where the actors are aware of the situation. It is the vehicle to investigate and understand perspective differences. Through dialogue the actors shape the meaning of the disagreement considering all points of view and “*investigate their respective descriptions and claims of reality, and why they make different assumptions with regard to the validity of these claims*” (Hallgreen & Westberg 2015 p166).

Mouffe stands up for widening scope of application from the variety of facets at the individuals level, and see the challenge in the application of the theory for the democratic demands that are present within professional sectors and a wide diversity of groups, allowing the expression of social plurality.

The role of conflict

Because deliberative democrats and pluralistic agonists view the normative premises of dialogue differently, they may also be said to relate differently to the phenomenon of conflict between participants. Indeed, in Habermas for example, a conflict is typically the result of the part of participants failure to find mutual understanding, agreement or respect in reconciling their views. In this light, the hallmarks of human-wildlife conflicts, with deep breaks in understanding, intractable personal tensions and adversarial politics, may be seen non-ideal. They testify to a failure to find common ground, instead providing contexts that are dominated by exclusion, participation limited with high power imbalances. To this end,

deliberative democrats believe that differences – however intractable – can be set aside in public deliberation through the ideal speech. Early stages of conflictive situations may especially provide the conditions that attain the ideal speech condition and achieve agreement through deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democrats aim to reach shared agreement or consensus through argumentation of validity claims for co-operative search of a single truth (Bond 2011) in early stages of wildlife conflicts in order to avoid escalation. The conditions of ideal speech would bring all actors involved to the dialogue where communicative rationality would play the role to shift personal interests into common good for the human-human and the human-wildlife tensions. The failure in reducing personal differences would be led by the materialization of the conflict itself.

Differing from the deliberative democracy perception of conflict, agonistics pluralism locates the conflict in the center of politics. Agonists refuse the notion that conflict is incompatible with mutual respect, contending recognition of differences, power differentials and adversarial thinking what implies a total respect of the others. Pluralistic agonism perceives encounters of interests or opinion as a positive reflex of society diversity, and understands differences in order to be inclusive, constructive and democratic (Erman 2009; Hallgreen & Westberg 2015).

Following Bond (2011) agonistic perspective require “*think differently about the contexts in which decisions are made*” facing human- wildlife conflicts as an opportunity for alternative solutions, rethinking the structure of meetings, agendas and participants of the process of decision, perpetuating the process of community management recognizing and legitimating conflicts and exposing tensions and disagreements, accepting the antagonistic dimension of conflicts even when adversaries “*cease to disagree*” (Mouffe 2009 p15). The respect and pluralism acknowledged by agonistics leave space for questioning and arguing ideas and proposals and embrace different ways of argumentation than rational and “*provides opportunities to think innovatively and creatively about possible solutions and to use conflict and divergent views as a resource to inform a more radical praxis*” (Bond 2011 p169). In terms of power relations this process foster the critical reflexivity needed in complex conservational conflicts allowing actors rationalities to be considered in the decision making.

The analysis of the case at hand through these theories will reveal the status of democratic alternatives to incorporate social diversity in the area for wolf management. In addition it will assess the degree in which new inclusive and legitimate arenas are needed to mitigate the human dimension of the conflict, the obstacles in this particular case that the regional administration might face when addressing the social conflict through participatory methods and how each theory embrace the different characteristics of the situation to the application of participatory processes.

2.3 Collection of empirical data

The collection of data was carried out with semi-structured interviews and observation aimed at gathering information from selected respondents and capture feelings and emotions by observing gestures and body language. At the end of this process a participatory session was organized in cooperation with a municipality where a wide range of actors participated. Literatures and media articles were used as data sources setting a first approach, and gathering a partial perspective of the situation for the analysis.

Semi- structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as the main source of empirical data. Face-to-face interviews were preferable yet due to the time and location constraints some were conducted by phone or through Skype. The face-to-face interviews were conducted at respondents’ homes, coffee shops and offices, all places suggested by the respondents, and lasted in average 60 minutes. The respondents were selected considering the range of action

and relation to the issue, trying to have a broad representation of actors involved at local level. However professionals in the national and European level of action were included due to links with the case. Most of the interviews were addressed to one respondent yet three of the stockbreeders included along the way group or family members who were able to take part of the interview. During the first contact by phone (preferably) or email, short briefing of the study and the interviewer was performed as well as exploratory questions to confirm the relation to the topic. In most cases the meeting appointment was set in this first conversation. In few cases, due to time constraint or limitations in the communication of official perspectives about fragile data, the interview guideline was sent in advance.

The design of the interview guide was based on the first research approach of similar conservation conflicts and was tested in one interview with an expert and actor involved in a similar situation in Madrid. The guideline (see appendix) comprises questions to address during the meetings yet not all topics were relevant in all meetings, varying according to the respondents. Aiming to create an informal environment and relaxed mood, the meeting started with a personal introduction of the interviewer and framework of the study (master program and university), leaving room for questions to foster trust in the interviewer. The anonymity character of contributions was mentioned at this point. The icebreaking questions of the formal interview addressed respondents' personal and professional backgrounds, thereby functioning also to get a sense how they defined themselves. Following, the questions moved forward into five sub-themes: (1) perception of the wolf situation and role; (2) the social context and relations, previous tensions and participation actions; (3) understanding of conflict term in general or particularly in relation to the wolf; (4) events perceived as building bricks and timeline; (5) involved thoughts about the future progress of the situation.

The table 1 below compiles relevant information about the interviews. The differentiation of the level of action is a bit artificial because most of the respondents of the regional and national level represent actors involved in the situation in the local level. For information on the type of respondent see section 4.1 "Actors".

Table 1. Interviews: Level of action, type of respondent and number of interviews conducted in the study area.

Level	Type	Interviews	Total
Local	Forestry guard	1	17
	Researchers / Experts	1	
	Stockbreeder	5	
	Municipality	2	
	NGO / Foundation / Associations	2	
	Regional Administration	2	
	Politician	1	
	Hunting Association	1	
	Tourism sector	1	
	Forest user	1	
Madrid - regional	Forestry guard	3	8
	Tourism sector	1	
	Stockbreeder	2	
	Researchers / Experts	1	
	NGO / Foundation / Associations	1	
National	Researchers / Experts	2	5
	NGO / Foundation / Associations	3	
Total			30

All face-to-face, phone and Skype interviews were audio recorded (except in case of technological break down) after permission from the respondent. Careful notes were taken

during and after the meetings, the second in relation to impressions resulted from the observer role, feelings, attitudes, behaviors, body language etc. as well as the informal chats that normally took place after all interviews.

As an interviewer I tried to create an unconstrained and non-judgmental environment and build a space of trust in order to get to the emotions that underlie the tensions (Lindseth & Norberg 2004). It was important, in particular, to not approach them from a perspective of polemics, but to let all nuances manifest in an open-ended interview style. My professional background was intended to be left aside yet in some cases it emerged as a good tool to picture myself as a confidant creating shared positionality; in some interviews the adjustment of language or guidance was required to achieve this aim (Smith 2004). The phenomenological approach allowed a flexible line of questioning following up those thoughts and comments of the respondent considered pertinent for the research (Rapley 2001; Smith et al. 1997). The respondents were encouraged to express opinions based on their personal experience (Lindseth & Norberg 2004). During the interview, mirroring some contributions, the use of silence or empathy about feelings, obstacles or tensions resulted very helpful to built trust and foster the expression of feelings and emotions. Informal discussions about similar topics or the study case were restricted neither at the beginning nor after the interview.

Public participation session

At the end of the interviewing period, a public participation session was organized in cooperation with the municipality of El Boalo, Cerceda and Mataelpino, giving support mainly in the contact with actors and during the discussion when preliminary findings of the study were presented to the audience. This event was organized as a continuation of a first one that took place a year before in the same area. The event was structured in two main blocks. The first part was informative with contributions from the public administration (regional and local) and livestock sector (protection of endemic species). The second part of the session aimed for cultivating dialogue among participants.

Altogether, the workshop provided a valuable opportunity to observe relations among actors, group dynamics, communication engagement, power imbalances and limitations that were previously highlighted during the interviews (Smith 2004) as well as to corroborate findings with the participants. In addition, 7 informal conversations in relation to the study took place with associations of users, NGO's, regional administration, hunters, stockbreeders and users of natural areas.

2.4 Analysis of empirical material

The data collected required a first stage to organize in the different sub-groups defined for the interview guideline. The research data was compiled by going through all notes and audio recordings. In addition to functioning as a pilot interview for the research at large, the first expert interview used to test the interview guideline was used as a frame of reference to get a preliminary overview of the wolf situation. Once this was clear, a second stage was performed in order to identify patterns or categories in the answers. A total of six categories were identified in the second stage, which gather the results in the chapter "Empirical results".

3 THE CONTEXT

3.1 Status of Iberian wolf

The Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*) lived in a wide area of Spain until an intense persecution due to the clash with the human interest cornered it to the Northwest area of Iberian Peninsula. From having been absent in Madrid and bordering areas as a consequence of habitat loss and fragmentation, increase of human population density and hunting pressure, the strict EU protection sets a new different context where the populations are increasing (Blanco 2011; Blanco & Cortés 2009; Grilo et al. 2002). According to the recent census by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Affairs of Spain (March 2016), the population is increasing in bordering areas of Madrid and getting into central east territories and central west areas. The study points out an increase of wolf packs although highlights a change in the proceeded methodology. (European Commission 2016; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Affairs of Spain 2016)

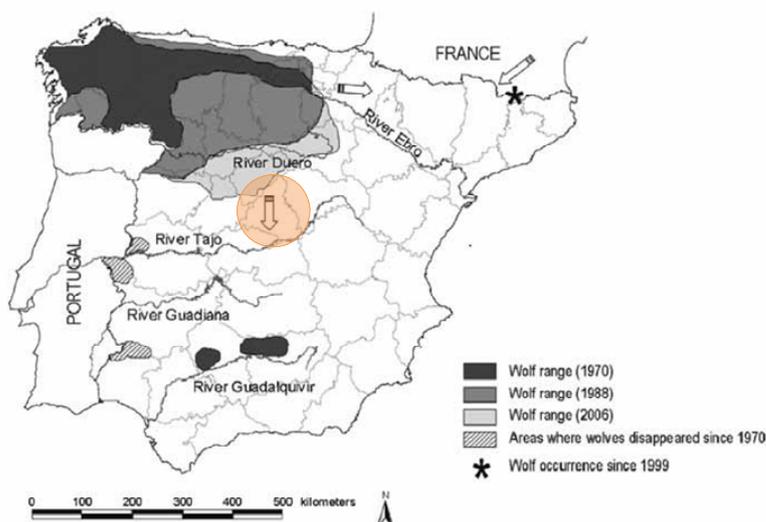


Figure 1. Evolution of Wolf distribution in Spain. Probable directions of expansion represented by the arrows. Madrid Autonomous Region highlighted with the orange circle. Modified from Blanco and Cortés (2009).

As a carnivore, the density of the population is vulnerable. The behavior of the wolf in humanized habitats highlights its opportunistic character due to the different dynamics established with the rural population, specifically with stockbreeders and hunters. The high capacity of adjustment to the territory makes wolves generalists on requirements. High rates of population dispersion generally lead to the expansion towards lower quality habitats and more humanized areas where frequently the social conflicts takes place. The predatory behavior of wolves is associated with social conflicts especially in relation to livestock damages all over its distribution range (Blanco et al. 1992; Blanco 2011; Boitani 2000; Kaczensky et al. 2013; Eggermann 2011). Attacks on livestock are more frequent in

areas where the wolf has been absent for many years and the keepers do not have the experience of cohabitation for undertaking preventive measures. The wolf-attributed livestock damage creates animosity turning the social tolerance to the species into the major limitation (Blanco 2011; Blanco & Cortés 2002; Llaneza et. al. 2000). According to Blanco and Cortés (2002), the level of compatibility with humans constitutes the main regulation factor and the mortality rates are frequently proportional to the level of escalation of conflicts in relation to livestock or game.

In some areas of Spain, collaboration between stockbreeders, ecologist groups, researchers and hunters has been fostered to reduce the agitation and tensions integrating actors for long term coexistence by administration, conservationist associations and stockbreeders' organizations. In areas where the success of these types of actions is limited or null, media shows a clash in the claims from the different actors. The polarization of discourses bring claims in favor of total eradication of wolves (for example in Avila – bordering province that share wolf packs with Madrid) to the table. This contrasts with moderate requests aiming national and international cooperation, prevention actions, increase of research, awareness campaigns and conferences, information sessions for media etc. Documents elaborated in cooperation among national and regional NGO's gather proposals addressed to public administration requesting broadening the legal protection of the species, regulation improvements, inclusion of actors in decision making, increase of political involvement or technical and financial support needed by stockbreeders to ensure the cohabitation among others. Indeed, the breadth of actors is petitioning the government for changes to handle the upcoming wolf situation, and not all of their suggestions are immediately compatible.

3.2 Changes: the new context

According to Blanco and Cortés (2002) during the last decades the country experienced financial, social, cultural and ecological changes that directly affect the expansion of wolves. The precariousness of rural interests led to mass rural exodus toward the cities and the consequent population ageing. The country experienced a decrease in the primary production sector changing from the 29.3% of the employment in 1970 to the 4.7% in 2013 (Source INE–National Statistics Institute). This caused a reduction of the financial and demographic weight of the primary sector in the total balance with the intensification of farming and the increase of industry and services sectors (Barrientos 2003; Blanco & Cortés 2002). Modernity also pushed forward to urbanization and spaces that were wolves' natural habitats are now occupied by residential areas that in addition fragment the landscape (Graham et al. 2005). However, the combined processes of capitalism, urbanization and modernity contributed to a loss of experience in the ways of coexisting with the wolf in certain areas (Tønnessen 2010b). Its long absence in other regions led to a different livestock labors culture that now requires readjustment due to the expansion of wolves. (Barrientos 2003; Boitani 2000; Skogen 2015)

As a result of these changes, modernity also brought the culture of leisure, changing the understanding of rural areas from a territory for primary production to a recreational area, turning the environment and its elements (i.e. the wolf) into a commodity for mainly urban consumers looking to get a dose of nature and an escape from the hectic Madrid life (Brownlow 2000; Ghosal et al. 2015, Jochum et al. 2014). In this sense the users of the natural areas changed their meaning of them towards a romantic concept of nature and its inhabitants. The disassociation of the individuals with the environment implies the loss of the utilitarian perspective (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Chavez et al. 2005), consequently increasing their tolerance towards the wolf and a kind of romantic spectator's view of the natural environment that perceive wolves as a lost 'good' that needed to be restored for the public' reconciliation with nature (Ghosal et al. 2015).

From 1953 to 1958, the government adopted a vermin extinction strategy (Paulos Rey 2000) through the payment of bounties as a result of “*a domesticated and pastoral characterization of the region*” (Brownlow 2000 p149). In this new understanding of the landscape, species such as lynx, wolf, bearded vulture, imperial eagle, etc. were “*constructed fundamentally as out of place*” (Brownlow 2000 p149). In this context in the 1960’s some Spanish naturalists and conservationists like Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente or organizations such as WWF who called for the end of the extinction initiating changes within the society imaginary causing and reflecting a transformation of the society and its values (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Brownlow 2000; Cobo 2003).

The romantic perception of the environment, as cultivated within the new ecologically aware culture, may be seen as a response to the previously exploitative practices that characterized wolf management in prior decades. It is precisely this change in the meaning of the species and landscape what might help to the reintroduction of the wolf (Brownlow 2000; Chavez 2005). Finally, the animal rights movements increased their influence followed by the creation of political parties and NGO’s where animal rights were central. Although ‘NGOs’ are often collapsed as one actor in relation to species conservation, environmental and animal rights streams (Bisi et al. 2007) often develop parallel to one another and do not agree on all management actions. Indeed, the latter is often criticized for taking more emotional or individualist view on animals than ecological (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Brownlow 2000; Campion-Vincent 1992 in Benavides 2013). Wolf conservation, on this view, may be said to have become a means of nature reconciliation for urban residents alienated from nature, and as a symbol in the fight for landscape meaning (Brownlow 2000, Tønnessen 2010b).

3.3 Legal framework

The regulation that provides wider legal protection to Iberian wolves is the EC Directive 92/43/EEC (Council of the European Commission 1992) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) yet it is also under protection of Spanish Law 42/2007 on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity (Cobo 2003; Trouwborst 2014). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals lists the obstacles for the population of Iberian wolf, including it in the category of “*Near Threatened*” (Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe 2007). According to the regulation, wolves in Madrid are fully protected. Nevertheless, the article 16 allows exceptions for certain cases (attacks on livestock) through derogation only if “*is not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favorable conservation status in their natural range*”. (Council of the European Commission 1992; Grupo de Trabajo del Lobo 2004; Kaczensky et al. 2013; Salvatori & Linnell 2005; Trouwborst 2014)

On the national level, the Law on Natural Heritage and Biodiversity 42/2007 through the Royal Decree 139/2011 establishes the List of Wild Species under a Special Protection Regimen. The List of Wild Species compiles species that require protection or those be considered for its singularity, value (scientific, ecological or cultural), rarity or threat level. From this list and considering scientific or technical recommendations of experts, the National Catalogue of Threatened Species classifies the species as “vulnerable” or “endangered”. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment is responsible for “*including, excluding or changing information on species categorization*” (Convention on Biological Diversity; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain). Specific regulation at the regional level is competence of the regional governments (in Spain the Autonomous Regions). The regional administration is required to develop recovery or conservation plans for species (vulnerable or threatened) that set the criteria for action plans. It is as well responsible of the update of the Regional Catalogues of Threatened Species. Some Regions have included wolves in such lists; in case of Madrid, the Catalogue does not include the species.

As Trouwborst (2015 p1568) puts it “*in many parts of the world, the large carnivore challenge is compounded by a fragmented legal landscape*”, and the above description of the legal framework shows that Spain is not an exception. The gaps and overlays contribute to a messy status in some areas leaving room for subjective decisions in management which actors interpret according to their interests. Moves of different actors like the request to the EC for a reduction of the protection level from the national government in two occasions, or the use of law derogation stated in article 16 of the Habitat Directive are causing wide disturbance.

3.4 Study area

The wolf is back living in the Madrid mountain range. Common sense dictates that it was a matter of time to cross the administrative lines that separate Madrid from its regional neighbours, where it was settle since the 90’s. Madrid is a triangle-shaped area located in the center of Spain with more than 6 million inhabitants (3.1 million in the city center, source: Madrid.org). It is limiting to 5 provinces, 3 of which also host wolf packs. The region has 9 Natural Protected Areas under different protection categories that imply the 15% of the regional territory and almost 40% of the protected territory by Natura Network (source Madrid.org) with wide range of ecosystems: from high quality meadows to broad diversity of foothills and evergreen to deciduous forests. This seems to reveal that in Madrid there is available room for more wolf packs.

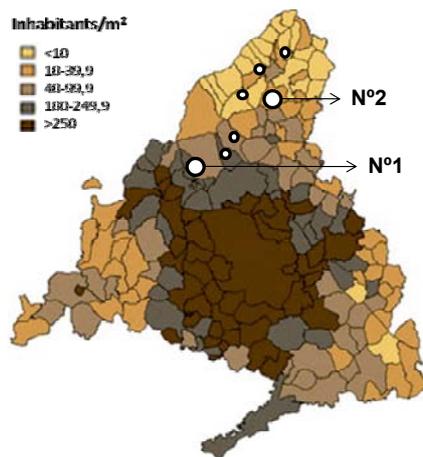


Figure 2. Study area location and inhabitants' density Madrid Autonomous Region. The big circles show the municipalities mentioned: N°1 corresponds to the municipality of Boalo, Cerceda and Mataelpino; N°2 corresponds to the municipality of Buitrago de Lozoya. The smaller dots indicate the origin of actors involved in the case and contributed to the study. Modified from Macías et al. (2008)

The rural areas of Madrid combine different uses of the territory ergo different attitudes toward them. On one hand, the growing recreational practices helped by the dense transport infrastructure and the proximity of the areas, bring high human pressure to the rural area, vacationers that according to Brownlow (2004) perceive a landscape of leisure and health. Consequently, these areas have become important residential areas combining rural values with Madrid city urban values. The forestry exploitation of the territory is low yet the rural areas have a deeply livestock culture.

The empirical data was collected during 30 days from a wide rural area of Madrid with the center located in the municipality of Boalo, Cerceda and Mataelpino, to the North-West of the capital. This area was chosen for the reason that it seems that the wolf is still not settled in this area but moves around and might use the territory frequently, hosting a high potential for conflicts. Other qualitative data was collected from municipalities to the North-East surrounding Buitrago de Lozoya where the wolf is settled.

Human-wildlife conflicts have a tendency to get caught up in intractable controversies over the ‘true’ account of events. This often fuels the conflict, insofar as competing versions of events are used strategically by different interest groups to tell their version of the story. For this reason, a rudimentary overview of the key events in Madrid is presented in the appendix to establish a timeline of wolf conservation controversies.

4 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The qualitative data collected in this chapter is organized under two sections: the first section compiles the description of the actors and general perspectives about the presence of the wolf in the study area. The second section organizes the data collected under six categories that represent patterns identified within the responds and mentioned by all the actors, directly or indirectly. Not all the actors agreed to be identified as respondents in this study. For this reason their names, positions or organizations are kept anonymous as far as it can serve the purpose of identify the person.

4.1 Actors

An analysis of the situation in Madrid and the conflict in other areas of Spain display the range of actors that are involved in this situation. The actors are to some extent the usual suspects in human-wildlife conflicts internationally (Bisi et al. 2007; Blanco & Cortés 2002; Brownlow 2000; Chavez 2005; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Graham et al. 2005; Sollund 2016): cattle breeders, owners of land, hunters, locals, urban inhabitants, scientists, conservationists, NGO's, national, regional and local administration. What can be noted for the purposes of this paper is that the fault lines that demarcate the groups are not always clear-cut or uncontested (Skogen et al. 2013 in Sollund 2016). They are also not always fruitful to work with. Indeed, it is difficult to separate pro-wolf and anti-wolf factions in any way that holds up. Each actor has multiple layers and ambivalences to them in relation to the wolf, which need to be unraveled (Sollund 2013). The identification of actors was performed through literature review, online media articles about previous events and a technical analysis of the expected effects of wolves' presence, subsequently tested during the experts' interviews. The following descriptions include literature review, technical analysis, common knowledge and impressions gathered during the interviews stage.

Public Administration: In accordance with the subsidiary principle of the EU, the wolf management in Spain is fully decentralized to autonomous regions and with no responsibility on the local administrations (municipalities). The regional agencies have a multidimensional role: regulate and take decisions related to wildlife protection, management, monitoring, research, prevention, compensation of attacks on livestock and communication actions (Blanco et. al. 1992; Blanco 2011; Council of the European Commission 1992; Kaczensky et al. 2013; Sollund 2016). Nevertheless, some guidelines are provided by the National Action Plan for Wolf Conservation and Management [In Spanish: *Estrategia para la conservación y la gestión del lobo (Canis lupus) en España*], that states a general framework approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Affairs in cooperation with the autonomous regions. In turn, the Wolf Coordinating Group [in Spanish: *Grupo de Trabajo del Lobo*] of the Ministry is integrated by technicians and researchers of each autonomous regions, the Ministry itself and independent experts (Blanco 2011; Grupo de Trabajo del Lobo 2004; Kaczensky et al. 2013). According to Kaczensky et al. the Ministry left the experts out of the group in 2011.

In the national level, some regional administrations implement the wolf management plans including regulated control strategies to prevent damages to the livestock according to the article 16 of the EU Directive (Kaczensky et al. 2011). Contrary to what happens in bordering territories, Madrid regional agency has not use this management system.

The forestry agents are the last step in the chain carrying out their professional responsibilities on the territory, engaged directly with the citizens. They play an important role in the prevention of infractions and environmental damages, in similar vein to game wardens, county administrative nature inspectors and wildlife park officers in conservation contexts globally.

Finally, the municipalities have no responsibility in wildlife conservation and protection in the local level. However, in the area of Madrid some municipalities are organizing actions to facilitate dialogue and foster trust among the rural groups, becoming a bridge or nexus between the locals and the regional agencies.

Stockbreeders: Stockbreeders are the social group that ostensibly shows the most hostility to the presence of the wolf. It is a very diverse group, however, where the greatest pressure from the wolf existence is felt by those who pursue extensive livestock as their livelihood (Bisi et al. 2007; Blanco & Cortés 2002; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003). The individuals in this group have high territorial demands for their grazing, which lead them to endorse a very specific perspective of nature and the role that natural/protected areas and wildlife should play (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Brownlow 2000; Chavez et al. 2005; Tønnessen 2010b). They have a strong feeling of belonging to the territory, which they see as a cultural landscape constituted from centuries' worth of landscape modelling by farmers (Goshal et al. 2015; Skogen 2015). They perceive the wolf as the old competitor (Lopez 1987 in Brownlow 2000) with its similarly high claims of territory, as a threat that infringes upon and limits their options of life in the countryside (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003). A preliminary analysis, including interview statements, reveals that they categorically do not want the wolf and perceive to be excluded and neglected under the national urban-based wolf policy (Bisi et al. 2007, Brownlow 2000; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Sjölander-Lindqvist 2009).

Hunters: According to Blanco and Cortés (2002), hunters are not clearly hostile to the wolf, unlike the case in the Nordic countries (for example in Bisi et al. 2007, Kränge & Skogen 2007, Sollund 2016 or Von Essen et al. 2015), yet it is important to clarify their acceptance or aversion to the wolf are contingent upon some key factors. In Madrid the group showed two main attitudes. First, the pro-wolf that consider the possibility of the wolf as game, who want to (legal) hunt the species, or just foreseen the profit that this option would bring to the area. In this subgroup can arguably be included those that undertake illegal hunting. Second the wolf-sceptic hunters who perceive it as a competitor of game by decreasing the density of game, causing its dispersion (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Boitani 2000) and as a threat to their hunting dogs (Karlsson & Sjöström 2007; Bisi & Kurki 2008). These groups in the study area are minor as the species is in the limit of the distribution range.

Overlaps between hunters and stockbreeders are common. These groups, as in other countries feel representing cultural values bonded to the traditional and rural lifestyle and hold rather negative attitudes toward the old intruders grounded on the effect to their sources of livelihood (Bisi et al. 2007; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Karlsson & Sjöström 2007; Sjölander-Lindqvist 2009).

Society: As mentioned in the introduction section modernity played an important role in the change of perspective of society in general, and particularly in the meaning of the territory during the last four decades (Brownlow 2000). Scholars have emphasise that the social changes and redistribution of employment within the different sectors gave room to new favourable conditions for the development of the wolf, and the culture of leisure

changed attitudes of the urban society about nature, its conservation and functionality. A romantic perception of the environment goes hand in hand with the development of the ecological culture, and had a deep effect on the society and future ecologist groups that would rise during the forthcoming years (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Cobo 2003; Macías et al. 2008; Menéndez de la Hoz et al. 2013).

The disassociation of the individuals with the environment implies the loss of “*the pragmatic and utilitarian perspective*” (Blanco & Cortés 2002 p10) resulting in a change in attitudes toward wolves. Karlsson & Sjöström (2007) study reveals that the distance to the wolf territories is proportional to the attitude toward the species. In turn, Heberlein and Ericsson (2005) conclude that multigenerational urbanites hold negative attitudes toward wolves; in contrast, urbanites that have rural birth parents and still have contact with rural areas have more positive attitudes. Considering this rural-urban dichotomy, this group has been assembled into two categories: the locals and the urbanites.

Inhabitants of rural areas – Locals: The location of the capital of Spain from 30 to 45 minutes by car of the rural areas in the region makes this group decidedly heterogeneous. I attribute the term “locals” in this study to those individuals whose roots are strongly linked to the area, either genealogically, traditionally, vocationally or emotionally. In this sense, this group generally displays sympathy towards the interests and plight of stockbreeders in relation to increasing wolf populations (Von Essen et al. 2015). In general they show attitude contradiction holding positive attitudes toward wolves yet experiencing a hostile shift due to interaction (Karlsson & Sjöström 2007) as part of stockbreeders’ affinity group, the feeling of urban society dominance and the neglect of rural minorities (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003). The locals are aware of the importance of stockbreeders’ activity to the landscape modelling, and highlight it in case of restaurants, accommodation or tourism business. In contrast, urbanites with bonds just to the rural areas (not to stockbreeders) show naturalist inclinations and positive attitudes toward wolves (e.g. Skogen 2015).

Residents of Madrid - Urbanites: The metropolitan region of Madrid has more than 6 million inhabitants. The physical and ideological pressure exerted by this group is determining a wide range of actions and situations that are causing tensions in the area (Heberlein & Ericsson 2005). All types of behaviours’ are expected to be presented in this group. Reflecting many other cases in Europe and Spain (Bisi et al. 2007; Blanco & Cortés 2002; Boitani 2000; Krange & Skogen 2007; Menéndez de la Hoz et al. 2013), the majority of this group has neutral to positive perspectives about the presence of the wolf in Madrid reflecting on the wolf as symbol of environmental improvement, which imparts value to the ecosystem (Benavides 2013; Brownlow 2000; Heberlein & Ericsson 2005; Skogen 2015). In turn, Heberlein and Ericsson (2005) stand that multigenerational urbanites unlinked to the rural sphere have negative attitudes and show indifference toward wildlife. The influence of this group is high in the rural areas regarding the use of the territory due to the leisure culture that embodies the wilderness in urbanites imaginary (Brownlow 2000). The affluence of Madrid citizens to the rural areas of the north of Madrid is massive and uncontrolled. The group is very heterogeneous although a wide part causes disturbance pouring into the locals’ routines during holidays and weekends as individuals or organized by associations.

Non Governmental Organizations (NGO’s): Madrid has long served as a hub for all type of environmental NGO’s. Here these organizations comprise a wide range of ‘green’ ideologies and interests combined with the power of the demographic density of the capital. For the purposes of this paper, there are broadly two distinct ideologies. The most common NGO’s and environmental, conservationists or naturalists associations strive for social and political change in relation to environment, advocate for the environment rights and pursue more sustainable behaviors. In a dialectic with this stream, there are more radical green ideologies mobilized on the basis of environmental rights and species egalitarianism and a

wilderness free from human agency (Fletcher 2009 in Tønnessen 2010a). According to Blanco and Cortés (2002) the radicalization of this movement follows the same pattern as their counterpart in USA. In Madrid this ideology follows the factors described for Spain and other countries (Mech 1995 in Blanco & Cortés 2002) gathering the “*admiration and fetish-like devotion*” (Brownlow 2000, p146) and violence that “*grabs media attention*” (Johansen & Martin 2008). This increases the hostility of stockbreeders, locals and hunters, arguably co-radicalizing them in a dialectic with the NGO. In turn, moderate groups in Madrid are taking on the role of the stockbreeders seeing the stockbreeder as an ally to ensure the survival of the wolf. These groups’ discourses demand protection and management to protect the wolf as try to lend stockbreeders a hand to foster prevention protocols to decrease the attacks, though most of them do not support hunting as an option for the wolf management, similar to what Bisi et al. (2007) describe for the conflict with wolves in Finland.

Other groups

Experts, scientists and technicians: The role of this group providing data is considered key for natural resource management and conflict management (Redpath et al. 2013) as well as an actor involved in the situation (Young et al. 2013). In turn, it seems that in Spain experts and scientists are more and more unlinked to the wolf management in the national level (Kaczensky et al. 2013). According to Blanco and Cortés (2002) the group comprises several ideologies from population management to radical protectionists, what is understood by most of the actors as a result of a politicization process. Scientific information will unlikely change actors’ attitudes (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003). Contrarily attitudes seem enforced by individuals’ interpretation according to their interests focusing on the source that supports their perspective (Blanco & Cortés 2002; Redpath et al. 2013).

Media: It is clear that the media act an important role as it usually plays into sensationalism, representing a picture that normally is not realistic but highly polarized (Menendez de la Hoz et al. 2013; Redpath et al. 2013). The social, economic and even political effects of wolves move on and blow up in the media sphere. However, studies reveal a disconnection between the media buzz and the wolf direct impacts on livestock (Naves et al. 2001 and Rivas et al 2011 in Menéndez de la Hoz et al. 2013) having a major impact on weak attitudes toward wolves (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003).

Tourism sector: Aiming an increase of the tolerance toward the species in the local level, the wolf presence is being pictured by experts and administration as a touristic-economic strategy that would bring tourists to the region (Boitani 2000; online media articles). In this vein the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment provides brochures with best practices for bear, wolf and lynx watching in Spain to adequate this recreational practices fostering awareness and respect for the species and reducing impacts. Other initiatives similar to wolf labels/logos for biological products have been proposed to locals as a “brand” of the territory. In Madrid this perspective is received with suspicious for the reason that there is no technical backup or guidelines that support these proposals.

4.2 Common patterns in respondents’ perspectives

In the section that follows, respondents’ reflections and quotes are relayed in 6 themes, defined throughout the analysis of interviews’ information. Common patterns identified in respondents’ answers compile the main categories that frame the situation in Madrid.

4.2.1 Relationships

The relations among actors are diverse, perceived by the respondents as *friendly*, *warm*, *professional*, *close* or *solid*. Although particularly rifts between some NGO’s, locals, stockbreeders, hunters, experts and conservationists and the most polarized group

(conservationist) were detected, often to the point where actors in these different camps avoided attending the same event for fear of an unproductive confrontation. A more modest, yet also important rift was found between NGO's and the administration. The administration classified their relation with all actors as cordial, "*we are making a big effort to avoid the social conflict*", show predisposition to participate yet recognize little involvement in dialogue. *Contradictory* relations take place between one expert with stockbreeders insofar as "*the breeders phone me to tell me about their concerns yet they are aware that I want to protect the wolf and we have opposite perspectives*". The locals purport to experience a lack of communication and cooperation among actors. They feel neglected and constrained by the decisions of the administration "*as if we were not part of the area, as if we were not affected by their decisions*". The NGO's approach that seeks for an alliance with stockbreeders is not perceived by this later group as an attempt of dialogue and agreement. In turn, their claims according the national situation are interpreted by the stockbreeders as an attack on a regional or local level.

4.2.2 Conception of conflict

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the objectives of this study was to research on the understanding/construction of meaning of conflict in this particular situation. To avoid 'begging the question', or otherwise steering respondents into such terminology from the outset of the interview, however, the "wolf conflict" was substituted by "presence of the wolf situation" (or similar formulations). Inasmuch as conflict as a concept was at all addressed, it was so either at the end of the interview or autonomously by respondents who brought it up. After the descriptions of their perspectives about the situation, even those actors that did not present it as conflict, most of the actors provided definitions that matched with their previous perspective description of the situation. Following, the most relevant thoughts provided:

Regional administration: "*Place where opposed interests meet. The resolution might be addressed to the restriction of consequences and decrease the seriousness, yet in the end is a conflict of interests. It could be constructive for the reason that it opens space for resolution and improvement*".

Regional administration: "*Conflicts provide the perfect scenario to change and overcome adversities. I would rather think that difficulties locate us in a handicapped position, for us to discover the opportunities that allow us to start over*".

Expert: "*Conflict is a confrontation, a fight. The word has negative connotation. The conflict itself is negative though the process, the development could be positive*". "*The conflict arises when there is an option to change things. The more difficult to change the situation the more escalated the conflict. It is a fight, yet at the same time we get to balance in democratic societies*".

Hunter: "*Conflict is a disagreement caused by different interests*".

Stockbreeder: "*A situation that creates problems. Escalation caused by inaction. It could be constructive*".

National conservationist organization: "*Conflict emerges from a disagreement and clash of perspectives when none of the parts want to concede. It probably hides interests. It does not reflex reality; it is a corrupted picture that spread that perception*". "*It is negative. It might be constructive when the realities are really opposing to each other and there is not disposition to find agreement, the conflict force a break in those perspectives*".

Local conservationist group: "*Confrontation within expectations / interests / wishes. Negative overtone. Suitable management changed it into constructive*".

Local administration: "*Clash of interests*".

Forestry agent: *“The term is used for its negative tone, although 2 perspectives can be perceived from the same situation. It can be constructive and destructive, as couple conflicts”.*

4.2.3 Role of the media

Actors in Madrid are concerned about the power endorsed by media. They confirmed the sensationalizing and polarizing rationale of news outlets of various kinds, suggesting the selection and presentation of wolf coverage magnifies the conflict (Menéndez de la Hoz et al. 2013). Actors perceive that *“the visible groups in media usually are polarized though represent the minority. In turn the balanced stances are less visible”*. The effect of the media and the management and/or manipulation of information from the actors cause confrontations and mistrust. According to a NGO, *“media is projecting unreal situations and stagnation that is not real”* and for a local conservationist association *“media is introducing a component of social alarm”*. In addition to sensationalism endorsed by wolf conflicts, both pro and anti-wolf factions make use of propaganda (Blanco & Cortés, 2002; Johansen & Martin 2008). As a respondent from the conservationist group pragmatically stated, *“all groups want to talk and be listened to ... and media is used to this end”*.

Stakeholders perceive a threat in the power balance due to the presence of the capital broad audience combined with the mediatization of events that take place in the capital. However, this corresponds to the national conflict not the local, such as the public demonstration that took place in Madrid on March 2016. Extreme examples such as the *“Avila free of wolves”* request by this bordering province, or violent actions taken by polarized conservationists have great media coverage (Johansen & Martin 2008). Local administrations perceive that *“the situation is being corrupted by what is happening in other regions”*. According to one respondent, *“the public demonstration in Madrid might have a direct effect, increase visibility; although there is a risk of simplification and extrapolation of messages”*. News on the national level or other regions conflicts with the wolf get into the capital and the region of Madrid. Although this does not seem to transcend into the stockbreeders as individuals yet polarizes stakeholders' discourses within the organizations and NGO's.

4.2.4 Role of administration

The administration is perceived by the other actors as a pillar for the wolf management and any action directed to the improvement of the livestock sector or the situation with the wolf *“requires the backup of the administration”*, as expressed by 28 respondents. However this actor is accused of failing to deliver in the following dimensions: laxness, omission, lack of recognition of breeders' contributions, complex bureaucracy and old resentments around other natural resource management performance. Administration holds that *“the increase of population and expansion that wolves are showing”* legitimates the loose management and lack of additional protection toward the species. However the lack of action in the social dimension is contrary to the arising social tensions, which require *“actions to foster the cohabitation”* as the local associations, municipalities, NGO's and rural groups stand for.

The administration stated that *“the financial viability of extensive livestock is close to the limit”*. They agreed with two NGO's, the rural municipalities, some experts, stockbreeders, hunters and locals on the need *“to protect extensive livestock and implement suitable techniques for the new context”*. Most respondents (26 over 30, included members of the administration) perceived that the regional and national administration should have taken action in order to prevent attacks and decrease the risk. Stockbreeders are concerned about the situation and reported experiencing frustration because of the precarious position of their way of life, neither valued by the administration nor by urbanite society. As one stockbreeder mentioned (and all rural groups supported), *“the administration should consider the value of our work. We are holding` population in these rural areas, we maintain the wildlings, avoiding forest fires, and the administration return it with*

indifference, taking action to protect the cattle in no way. It is necessary a proper management of the wild fauna of this region”.

The respondents contended critical attitudes toward this actor, criticized of failing to deliver according to its normative expectations primarily in 3 specific dimensions: (1) administrative, where bureaucracy was highlighted by respondents, (2) biodiversity conservation and management, which environmental agenda was discussed, and (3) regulative.

Administrator role: The bureaucracy and paper work required for the compensatory measures constitute an intractable obstacle for the livestock breeders interviewed in this study. The terms of the regulation in case of attack, the value of compensations and delay of the reception of the compensation are factors that discourage the group (as stated by Graham et al. 2005). However the stockbreeders are often perceived as a group that takes advantage of subsidies and grants accused of wiliness. In this vein half of the respondents saw that stockbreeders had little claim on, and little to expect from the administration in regards to wolves. These respondents agreed with the following statements, made by a local entrepreneur, a member of a local administration and a NGO: “*stockbreeders lived very comfortably during the last decades with nothing that disturb their cattle, working in other business*”, “*many of them do not really care about their cows and it is not their main source of income*” and “*they leave the cattle in the forest and [...] the lack of control ends with the drain of pastures*”. In the vein of competences, majority of actors highlighted the big obstacle that involves the existence of several departments with complementary competences for extensive stockbreeding (instead of one), failing in addition in the interdepartmental communication.

Environmental agenda: Tensions regarding the environmental agenda (management of vultures, white stork, Spanish ibex or the European policy according the refuse dumps and places where domestic animal carcasses are usually laid among others) revealed pre-existing resentment. This fosters the perception of the wolf as an “*imposition [...] from Madrid dwellers and administration technicians*”, according to all stockbreeders and locals. Mentioned by multiple respondents, legal directives and bio-conservation agendas are imposed indiscriminately and ‘appropriate’ land, while the civil servants in charge not know the reality of the area.

The administration was also blamed of presenting a distorted view of the region for tourist purposes. The so-termed “*irresponsible promotion*” (as at least 7 respondents suggested) for ‘green’ conservation ends, and for the leisure pursuits of urban tourists was based on the feeling of lack of infrastructure to control a massive influx to a certain area. To respondents this effects big tensions among the locals.

Legislator role: The legal classification of the Iberian wolf in Madrid is very specific, affecting the actors in the regional and local level. However the species has not been included in the National Catalogue of Threatened Species, neither in the regional counterpart. In turn the classification of the Iberian wolf in the European Union (EU) Directive and the twice requested change of legal protection by the national ministry are fostering extreme actions coming from the conservationism side.

The NGO’s role puts pressure on the administration claiming “*immediate regulative action in relation to preventive and compensatory actions*” as well as the “*increase of wolf legal protection*”. These legal issues are the top claims of conservationists and naturalists. They spread their message in the national level, getting into the local level through a trickle-down effect of media and administration, as suggested by a member of one local municipality. These messages induce frustration especially on the part of stockbreeders, who express that their tools for getting heard, for contesting legal directives, or for advocating for concessions, are extremely limited in relation to the elite legal maneuvering by the conservationists.

Other claims that are addressed to the regional and national administration focus on the real effect of wolves attack. Several groups (livestock breeders, local administration and associations) claim for a deep study of collateral effects in miscarriages, decrease of

production of milk etc, and future inclusion in the regulation of emotional damage caused by an attack, as one stockbreeder contends: “*the suffering is also personal; we are emotionally attached to our cattle*”. The behaviour of the species in Madrid is being unexpected and unpredictable, getting closer to humanized areas, not as distant and evasive as it is supposed to be. As contended by one stockbreeder “*the wolves attacked my sheep in a meadow that is inside the village!*”. In addition to concern over direct physical attacks, the presence of the wolf in the area imparts much unease in other dimensions, as scholars contend for similar cases (see for example Bisi 2005). The complaints also include “*the nervousness of the cattle*” that drifts into a more complex management, “*the decreased of production of milk, and an increase of miscarriages*” among others.

4.2.5 Role of dialogue

This section intends to reflect the respondents’ expectations and understandings of dialogue in relation to what dialogue (1) entails (information dissemination, inclusion of all voices, cooperation, or discourse) and (2) what dialogue is seen to bring to the table in the context of conflict.

In general positive attitudes toward dialogue dominated the situation. The livestock sector is seen as an essential ally by most of the actors, the key piece for the balance towards coexistence. All actors agreed on the need “*to promote dialogue among actors and social action*”, as mentioned by a member of a NGO, who also denounced that “*few have courage to lead these negotiations and to make reasonable proposals for all actors*”. Still the shadow of the capital so close to the area clouds the possibilities of effective participatory actions according to the rural groups and the regional administration. The pressure that might be exerted by political parties towards any action in relation to endangered species seems the dominant concern and limitation of the regional administration actions.

In relation to the real participation of groups, livestock breeders are limited by some factors. First the working schedule of these professionals extends all along the week, with no weekends and limited holidays; most of them have other sources of income reducing the available hours for possible meetings. Second some of them might face personal concerns about their ability to express their opinion as two respondents who “[did] *not know how to express correctly, to talk about our perception*”. In relation to participate in public sessions they said to “*prefer not to talk because it is hard to explain things in public*”. In turn they insisted to feel very well represented by certain associations, avoiding in this way to participate. In turn, hunters are becoming more cautious about talking and participating in public events for the reason that recently there has been an increase of pressure with the last political changes. In modernity, public scepticism of hunting as a ‘sport’ has also permeated some political parties. They seemed to be afraid to any misinterpretation that could damage their now somewhat precarious position in contemporary Spain.

Communication actions: There have been attempts in Madrid of gathering actors pursuing engagement and dialogue. The participation is high yet some actors are missing and the interest does not extend further from the event. Twin-track events have been organized mainly by the administration with stockbreeders. Respondents agreed that participatory actions have not influenced the administrative sphere, although there is not a high request of participation of administration members. The study reveals that all actors perceive essential its participation because “*the administration is the only source of solutions*” as a member of a rural organization stated, agreeing with local administration interest “*to foster its participation in these processes*”.

4.2.6 Secrecy and taboo: information management

This last dimension focuses on the secrecy noted by most actors, something which invests a halo of mystery and obscurity to the presence of the wolf in Madrid materialized in contested versions of events and the wolf data. This dimension arguably calls for strengthening dialogue precisely to expose secrets and to promote the circulation of claims

and facts. NGO's, forestry agents and rural associations stated that *“the flow of information does not come from the administration (what was expected) but from the media”*. Nevertheless, during the writing stage of this thesis, the regional administration made public the results of the national census of wolves (2012-2014).

During the interviews process, two of the three regional administration departments involved as actors showed their interests and availability for the interview. The third department after several phone calls and emails did not attend the request. In this vein multiple actors complained about this attitude and the lack of answers and information provided by this department, as if the wolf in Madrid was taboo. The silence played by the administration was discussed. Four respondents from different administration departments mentioned that *“the information about the species is very fragile, and it is important to be cautious in the way to proceed with it”* making reference to the social and political pressure that the capital entails. Similarly NGO's, experts and rural organizations showed apprehension because the presence of the city factor *“demands much more [...] courage”*. Hunters summed to this claim about the lack of information and awareness *“from the administration and forestry agents”* yet were apprehensive about the fragile data when poaching was addressed.

The participation of experts in conferences and events has been high. Nevertheless, the information that they provide seems to have little effect on the actors who decide which *“source of information to trust according to their needs”* and discredit the sources that oppose to their perspective as was inferred from the responses. In turn, respondents with technical knowledge about the species (at least half) suggested that sometimes the information is not adjusted to the audience.

Similar to other countries (Theodorakea & Von Essen 2016; Tønnessen 2010a), the feeling of uncertainty and the personal interpretation of information leaves room for the rumors and storytelling. These are nurtured by the public distrust of the wolf management, used as an attempt to undercut administrative legitimacy (Theodorakea & Von Essen 2016) in relation to the wolf protection. The most frequent rumor is related to the “breeding and release” of wolves by the regional administration, the environmental office of Madrid, the forestry agents and/or the NGO's. It is also frequent to hear about attacks to humans or sightings. The stockbreeders stated that there are more individuals than the “official number”, the NGO's the opposite, and the scientists accused the administration of cooking up the data depending on their interest.

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyzes the empirical results presented in chapter 4 aiming first to examine the concept of conflict and, second, the wildlife-human dimension of conflict, its implications and, respondents' perspectives about conflicts and indeed the consequences of invoking the term "conflict" in the study area. Following this, the next section presents the facets and vectors for conflict that define the case context. To finish the chapter, a discussion treats the main points of the theoretical framework by discussing how deliberative democracy and pluralistic agonism might approach the situation presented.

5.1 Use of "conflict"

This section intends to explore the human-wildlife label and conflict designation using the presence of the wolf in Madrid as the framework, digging into the interviewees' perceptions and impressions about conflict and its dimensions.

The research on the case study reveals the presence of the "differences in peoples' views" and the "emotionally charged" character that define a conflict (as mentioned by Redpath et al. 2013 or Young et al. 2010). The case at hand is a clear example of what has been labeled as the human-wildlife conflict by the scholars (Chaves et al. 2005; Salvatori & Linnell 2005; Young et al. 2010) which takes place in the intersection of the species conservation and various human interests. As the interviews revealed, Redpath et al. (2013) conservation conflict definition is clearly reflected for example in the scientific/experts sphere where the clash is located in the fight over protection vs. management objectives, fueled by the subjectivity of the interpretation of the wolf data. However, the situation in Madrid is approached through the classical "*single pairwise predator-prey interaction*" (Graham et al. 2005 p166), even though this is minor in the study area. In Madrid the real clash is located in the human-human encounters caused by the different values and priorities of the groups involved as scholars contend for similar cases (Ghosal et al. 2015; Peterson et al. 2010; Redpath et al. 2013). The wolf is used much as a strategic tool and symbol in a more complex situation that is fraught with underlying tensions between stakeholders.

But, what are the implications of the respondents applying any of this terminology to characterize their situation? What does the concept of 'conflict' imply, and what are the consequences of invoking it for the upcoming situation with wolves in Madrid? The perception of the conflict that interviewees provided could be grouped into three categories: as a negative situation with a difficult or impossible resolution; as a negative predicament but one that might bring opportunities of reconciliation; and conflict as providing the engine of improvement, indispensable for change. The general impression was that there was an attempt to avoid the use of the word "conflict". Actors seem to perceive this term problematic as it predisposes participants to become adversaries what precludes any future reconciliation, as suggested by Peterson et al. (2010). Only those that displayed a positive conception of conflicts and its dimensions as constructive opportunities and ways forward did not avoid the use of the term (in addition to stockbreeders). The interviews did not

reveal a clear demographic pattern in relation to those who tried to avoid the use of the conflict terminology. Most of the respondents understood conflict in terms of a human-human dimension or human-wildlife coexistence (as suggests by Marshall et al. 2007 and Madden 2004, in Peterson et al. 2010) rather than over the wolf per se. As mention by Peterson et al., in Madrid the human-wildlife terminology was probed to collapse individual ambivalence of respondents and relegates them to adversaries as members of their group.

Some of the interviewees may arguably be unconscious of the implications of using terminology in relation with conflict. The power that conflicts might vests lead stockbreeders and rural entrepreneurs (tourism sector) to jump directly into the terministic screen of conflict as initiating a spark of action (Peterson et al. 2010). In the use of the term these groups bring the wolf to the forefront of the clash; they perceive it as the enemy. This nourishes the confrontation with conservationists and pro-wolf actors, who in turn move the clash to the human dimension. The protection of the species is forcing stockbreeders and rural entrepreneurs to address the conflict management in similar way as the other groups that perceive it as human-human conflicts. However this protection does not limit, but probably enhances, the use of the species as a scapegoat of underlying human-human tensions helping to maintain the role of adversary (as Tønnessen 2010b states).

Following Peterson et al., the interviews revealed that the terminology of conflict brings to the forefront aggressiveness and imposes limits on the mitigating/resolution by decreasing the opportunity to understand each other and the willingness to take on others perspectives. Furthermore, by invoking the now often deployed label of human-wildlife conflict, the wolf automatically takes a central role as an enemy. This changes when the situation is addressed from the human-human dimension. In this way, the focus would be better served by being on the natural resource management as a whole (species, uses of the territory etc.) to seek improvement within the management.

5.2 Facets of the presence of the wolf in Madrid

As presented in the empirical results chapter, the role of the administration with its different dimensions, the role of dialogue and the role of the media are factors that can escalate conflict, if used in the wrong ways. They are simultaneously contributing to a conflict but could potentially lead to a way of reconciliation or fruitful productive collaboration within actors, if used wisely. In turn, the management of information at the level of administrative bodies was seen as a great challenge where secrecy stood firmly in the way of building trust.

5.2.1 *Administrative vectors for conflict*

The regional administration is the main pillar for natural resource and wildlife managements, inasmuch as it is the only actor that has the power to take action. It is where citizens in general and actors in this particular case put their trust and “*conflicting expectations*” (Bisi 2005) for the decision-making. Widespread discontentment and distrust is heading toward a crisis of legitimacy where environmental agencies are failing to accommodate all perspectives similar to other countries (Bisi et al. 2007; Von Essen & Hansen 2015), and therefore perceived as favoring the interest of other groups. Their perception of the territory and its uses define the return of wolves to Madrid as an imposition of the exclusionary environmental agenda, which according to them is clearly influenced by conservationist discourses and urbanites, as contends by Brownlow (2000).

Interviews showed that the administration is addressing the situation rather instrumentally targeting mitigation efforts from the perspective of impacts towards livestock, through regulation and compensation. The actions taken to achieve these objectives are perceived as incremental baby steps at best, and at worse insufficient and inadequate (Blanco & Cortés 2002) to deal with the conflict in its human dimension. However, Tønnessen (2010b) assimilate the lack of action as a lack of provocation toward rural groups and argues the

legitimizing effect over rural resistance that this might cause. In doing this, regional administration in Madrid is contradicting the conservation principles that are responsible to accomplish yet achieved some sort of reconciliation with stockbreeders.

The role of some civil servants was highlighted during the interviews for their implication and enthusiasm, in the personal level. Yet on the whole, as an agency, it receives critics regarding its laxness, inefficacy, omission of responsibilities, lack of interdepartmental cooperation, lack of recognition of breeders' contributions, complex bureaucracy and old resentments around other natural resource management performances, like national park creation. In this vein, the time-demanding bureaucratic system arguably constitutes a next-to unmanageable obstacle for stockbreeders. As such, it diminishes the efficacy of any action that intends to foster coexistence with and acceptance of wolves on their part.

5.2.2 *Legal vector for conflict*

The case at hand has a vector for conflict rooted in legal tools as mentioned by Young et al. (2005 in Young et al. 2010). The gaps and overlays of the Spanish fragmented legal landscape is mentioned as a particular source of disruption in this case by Trouwborst (2014). The relative independence of autonomous regions and lack of national or supra-regional coordination originates wide imbalances in the wolf conservation and management.

The national moves to change the protection and the inaction of regional agencies proved unacceptable to conservationists groups. In turn, the use of the derogation option allowed by the Habitat Directive, to legally cull wolves and foster tolerance toward the species as suggested by the World Conservation Union—IUCN, raises contentious issues. This much has been recently affirmed by Chapron and Treves (2016), though still represents a somewhat controversial back-tracking on a popular credo that legalizing the wolf hunts will foster acceptance of the wolf among rural communities. Sollund (2016) discusses the level of protection that this regulation implies when they can be killed for predated the wrong prey and reproducing in the wrong area, highlighting this derogation option as reproducing the perception of the wolf as the old enemy. In turn, Tønnessen (2010b) argues that hunting management by the administration would rather legitimize the wolf hunting. The cull of wolves or any action that contradicts the Habitats Directive is becoming a source of social discord in Spanish national level and foster conservationists' resistance that challenges the legitimacy of politics and environmental agencies. In turn the prevalence of national and international policies is perceived as an appropriation of the territory and as an attack to the rural minorities and the traditional values, which also characterizes rural resistance in Europe (Bisi et al. 2007; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Mischi 2012; Von Essen & Hansen 2015).

5.2.3 *Urban vs. rural vector. Spatial scale and feeling of imposition*

Other vector that took relevance during the interviews pertains to the spatial scale of conflict. The international level has an effect on the already precarious position of stockbreeders as structural issues in relation to extensive farming conditions come from the global market, European policies, food regulation or veterinarian issues (as described by Chaves et al. 2005). Local actors are partially aware of the European governance framework (most stockbreeders interviewed knew the Common Agricultural Policy but not the Habitats Directive). Conservationists and NGO's actively use the European governance to challenge the opponent actors turning this conservation tool into a "*local-level issue for a territorially situated social group*" (Mischi 2012). However, differing to the Euroscepticism that distills from the case in France (Mischi 2012), stockbreeders and affine groups in Madrid contested the regional and national agencies of Spain for the imposition of a legally protected wolf, feeling neglected as a rural minority (Von Essen & Hansen 2015). In this vein, underlying tensions identified in Madrid (related to vultures, white stork

or Spanish ibex among others) are rooted in resentment over restrictive protected status enacted by the same forces in recent decades.

It was clear that the rural actors manifest high hostility towards remote desk/office-management (suggested also by Kellert 1991 in Blanco & Cortés 2002). They accuse the agencies of taking decisions unilaterally without considering the local community (similar to the wolf case in Finland, see Bisi 2005 or Bisi et al. 2007) and influenced by a majority of urbanites and conservationist. As scholars contend for similar cases, this reflects on the increasing distance between the rural and the urban (Brownlow 2000; Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Sjölander-Lindqvist 2009; Tønnessen 2010a), fosters the class struggles (Bisi et al. 2007; Krange & Skogen 2007; Von Essen & Hansen 2015) and the alienation from the management agencies (Skogen 2015). The respondents allocated the enthusiasm of the capital inhabitants over the “not in my backyard” effect. This was highlighted by Broberg and Brännlund (2008), whose analysis of the Swedish case showed that the majority of supporters of the conservation policies were urban residents, identified as “*naïve wolf lovers [...] ignorant of the reality of the countryside*” by stockbreeders. In addition, Madrid has suffered a transformation to meet newfound leisure objectives for the benefit of these environmentally-conscious mid class urbanites (Von Essen & Hansen 2015) in a way that obstructs the traditional rural way of life (Misch 2012; Skogen 2015) in relation to hunting, stockbreeding or even in the way to enjoy nature. Mindful of this, Ericsson and Heberlein (2003) suggest that the symbolic role of the wolf reflects the dominance over rural values, rather than the negative experience of the interaction with the species.

5.2.4 *Media vector and sensationalism*

News sensationalizing and polarizing was presented as a concern in different ways by all actors. Local, regional administration and NGO's all have an ostensibly negative perception of the media. In addition, most of stockbreeders show fear of misinterpretation or the use of their words out of the proper context, and hence avoid contact with the media sphere. Actors are aware and warn about media manipulation and misrepresentation of reality. However, bits of the effect remain and still soak through the social fabric (as described by Johansen & Martin 2008) influencing weak (according to Ericsson & Heberlein 2003) and indifferent (as suggested by Broberg & Brännlund 2008) attitudes in a way that fosters confrontations, suspicion and mistrust. Interviews revealed that media shows a fragmented landscape showing polarization yet lacks neutral articles that report equally both sides as Karlsson & Sjöström put it (2007). Representing an important tool in the balance of power of the debate, it has been used by actors to spread biased propaganda, and actors try to put it on their side to get a good coverage, contributing to the conflict.

To this extent, the media is not the only actor using sensationalism. Protest actions might integrate this character. In this vein, the pro-wolf public demonstration in Madrid was denounced by respondents (members of moderate groups dissociated from the event) for the radicalization of messages that help neither dialogue nor cooperation. In turn, the moderate conservationists are accused by the more radical protesters for ‘playing politics’, being co-opted by the institutional regime, or otherwise being too soft. However Johansen & Martin (2008) suggest that these sensationalist protest actions might help the conservationist cause of more moderate groups by making them look reasonable by comparison.

5.2.5 *Information and knowledge facet: complexity, secrecy and rumours*

Experts agree about the difficulties and costs associated with the wolf data collection and the transference of information in a way that all actors would perceive as legitimate (Young et al. 2010), and this case is not an exception. The fragility of data leads to a limited spread of the information from the environmental agencies, which fosters suspicion. Different sources of information with opposing or divergent data and debates about methodology or subjective variables (as to estimate the number of individuals of the wolf population)

undermine the trustworthiness of experts and may provide another vector for conflict. Events that might have a simple biological explanation such as the number of dead individuals in new territories or the rumour about breeding and release of individuals are interpreted to feed rampant storytelling. As mentioned by Woodroffe & Redpath (2005), actors use scientific sources selectively when social conflict takes place and the personal interpretation of sources (Blanco & Cortés 2002) attending to self-interests is feeding opponents discourses and rumours to undermine administrative legitimacy (as Theodorakea & Von Essen conclude, 2016).

Karlsson and Sjöström (2007) suggest that indirect experience with wolves result in lower attitudes. If so, second hand information of actors' affinity groups turns into an important source of information by sharing communication arenas and identifying themselves with those that had a direct experience with wolves. This might affect their attitudes and dispositions (Van Zomeren et al. 2004). This effect was perceived in the study area where at least 4 stockbreeders made reference to vicarious grievances of their peers from remote areas.

5.2.6 *Trust, feelings and emotions*

The lack of trust among actors is one of the more important factors that nurtures the social conflict (Bisi et al. 2007) and helps radicalization (Von Essen et al. 2015). In Madrid this issue clouds all relations yet it is not too notable. Most of these gaps can be distilled from the above descriptions; however interviews demonstrated that in Madrid there still remains some trust in researchers, experts, local authorities, some members of regional agencies and forestry agents. Openness, transparency and objectivity appeared in the interviews as important factors towards building trust.

In this section I want to highlight the vector of trust in its dimension toward stockbreeders. This group has always been accused of promoting a sense of victimization as an emotional tool in Spain (see for example Blanco & Cortés 2002) and wiliness in relation to subsidies and grants. In this vein, legitimate claims from stockbreeders (such as the decrease of milk production, miscarriages or emotional damage caused by wolf attack) are undermined. However, these subsidies have been internationally used to support administration goals for the maintenance of rural settlements as Skogen (2015) points out.

All negative emotions such as frustration, anger, weakness, nervousness, weariness and uncertainty were the most used by respondents. Following Linnell et al. (2015), the effect of actions over the territory that conform the locals' identity and the limitation of human agency from the nature (which value has its origin exactly in that relation), exacerbate these emotions among the locals and the sense of suffering an indiscriminate imposition from outside spheres (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003).

5.3 Participatory theories

As explicated in the theoretical framework, deliberative democracy and pluralistic agonism hold two rather different approaches toward dialogue, conflict and divergence in opinions. These differences might bring some light to the application of participatory processes for conflict management in similar situations to the case context studied here.

To sum up the previous chapters, the policy of exclusion and neglect that some departments in the regional level are portraying perpetuate the authoritarian order, taking decisions that according to the scholars (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003; Mouffe 2009; Sjölander- Lindqvist 2009), lack of legitimacy. The respondents of the study revealed a growing public dissatisfaction and loss of trust toward the regional administration in relation to management (as highlighted by Mouffe, 2009). Stakeholders' demands were not recognized by the authorities and disappointment and frustration invaded the interviews environment (Kapoor 2002). At times, this forced them to act in alternative communicative arenas. They challenged the management institutions discussing the validity of the

agencies' approaches, and recently in the pro-wolf public demonstration in the capital (Von Essen et al. 2015).

5.3.1 *Rationality and emotions*

The divergent understandings of values and objectives of the wolf management constitute the obstacle to reach rational consensus. According to Bond (2011) Mouffe's approach seems "*closer to real life experience*" (p172) because it embraces pluralism and foster exploration of disagreement to construct understanding of this plurality. However, deliberative democrats believe that even ostensibly intractable differences can be set aside in public deliberation that follows the conditions of the ideal speech (Kapoor 2002). Indeed, the relatively early stages of conflict examined here – in that they have not yet materialized into full polemics – might match the conditions to argumentation of validity claims and prevalence of rationality according to Bond (2011).

The risk inherent to both theories may pertain to the emotions of human beings. In the case at hand, communicative rationality can be achieved and actors are aware of the need for this, yet here the question is if individual rationality is such that really could leave aside the personal interests to achieve common ground. In turn, mishandling disagreements on the open, exposing tensions could result in passionate confrontation at the personal level, escalating to a non-communicating stage. Passion and emotions can trigger hot and hard discussion; they can shut people's predispositions to discuss down, and polarization of emotions can also block rationality. Following Hallgreen & Westberg (2015), a less emotion-based and more deliberative reasonable rationality by which to measure arguments needs to prevail to lead the argumentation and keep open the discourse to investigate their perspectives.

5.3.2 *Language and knowledge*

Language is essential for both theories as the vehicle that allows sharing and investigating perceptions and understandings (Bond 2011; Young 2000). However, the lack of information and of suitable channels to inform and the differences among participants in both language and knowledge, formulate limitations (Hallgreen & Westberg 2015) not only for understanding but for power balance. The power struggle seems to be brought forth through certain individuals' use of rhetoric and their deploying of technical language that other members might not understand (Young 2000). Some stockbreeders felt intimidated, lacking of authority or academic sense, which positioned them at a disadvantage. The difficulty of making the language neutral and dispassionate argumentations is a limitation for communicative rationality, yet pluralistic agonistics might hold that all languages and styles of speech, even the more emotional, should be included in remit of the dialogue allowed on the wolf politics and management (Young 2000). There is no such thing as inappropriate, out-of-place forms of expressions. In turn, deliberative democracy is optimistic about sourcing validity from multiple domains of knowledge, or across rationalities, but to this end, it might filter all of these through an elitist, calm requirement for speech.

In relation to knowledge, the imbalance of it is also a limitation for rational argumentation. Following Blanco and Cortés (2002), the more specialized and complex the research, the deeper the gap is to bridge between experts and laymen. According to Redpath et al. (2013), the role of science in these participatory processes is essential. In turn, Von Essen (2015) recently discuss how science, in the current hegemonic frame of knowledge, is marginalizing lifeworld knowledge, fostering power asymmetries and alienating citizens from the spaces of dialogue (Von Essen & Hansen 2015). In this vein, attempts of disqualification, denying expertise capacity with the objective of excluding actors as well as blocking access to participate in public events were played by some actors (Young 2000). For this reason it is key to balance power, to provide equality of conditions to all actors avoiding that none of the actors could get over the others with "*balanced representation of*

all stakeholders to avoid the overcoming of the boards by the most organized and voiced groups” as Boitani states (2000 p38).

6 Conclusions

It is observable from the previous sections that the interviewees have a first thought tendency to perceive conflict in its negative and destructive character, a non-ideal situation. It seems that the regional administration's take on conflict is somewhat closer to deliberative democrats' non-ideal situation, inasmuch as it endorses common ground and may be said to shy away from impassioned pleas and conflict. Sectoral attempts to influence in power imbalance through communication and participatory actions have been identified in the area, where participants had the opportunity to submit their claims to rational deliberation. Attempts for constructivity were found in discourse openings and inclusion of plurality of perspectives.

Participatory sessions fostered inclusiveness, construction of common ground and promotion of change. However, the actors kept the predetermined attitude of their group during the public sessions (as Von Essen and Hansen 2015 highlight) what limited their capacity for self-reflection. The public participation sessions organized were oriented by strategic rationality toward reaching solutions that each stakeholder wants to attain. When actors share communication arenas, they show predisposition to see the rest of groups as enemies more than as legitimate adversaries and deep exploration of opinions (that Mouffe highlights, 2009) are missing. The main obstacle here seems to be that the actors do not know the basis of their perspectives' disagreement because they had not the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with each other to explore this dimension and legitimate the right of other participants to defend their own perspective and try to make it prevail. There is no current communication arenas where participants could get to an understanding and recognition of diverse perspectives, turning instead this lack of knowledge into an obstacle between conservationists and rural actors.

Following Bond (2011), I believe that rationality should play a central role in collaborative decision making processes because communicative rationality could result in a deliberation where personal interests and previous tensions were set aside by force of the better argument in the room. Within the current system, formalized decisions are required by institutions in order to face the situation and take action, and both theories might serve to achieve consensus if only a conflictual one (Bond 2011; Mouffe 2009). The conflict in relation to the wolf and the pluralism of values that are included lead me to believe (as Redpath et al. 2013 suggest) that we cannot easily escape from conservation conflicts. It is naïve to presume this conflict can ever be dissolved. The (still little) struggle among actors can provide opportunities for innovative processes that allow balancing power and provide inclusive arenas (Bond 2011) in this context, however communicative rationality and the conditions for the ideal speech respect difference at a fundamental level and provide a the normative frame to achieve decisions for these actors that, currently, are willing to compromise to achieve rational consensus.

In many ways, considering the two disparate approaches to conflict in public dialogue over wolves, I believe that pluralistic agonism better accommodates the needs of the study area for first stages, where participants keep their identities but could reformulate them in relation to each other, once the actors achieve the mutual respect and the right to defend all

perspectives. In my opinion the wolf conflict requires recognition of differences and not shying away from conflict and confrontation at an early stage. Once the actors perceive the conflict as a common one, indeed as a common ground that they can all relate to and hopefully transcend in the future, the cooperation can potentially lead to the ideal speech context where rationality comes to characterize the decision making. At this point deliberative democrats would promote these actions seeking for the validity claims that lead to common ground within the interaction with each other, the different understandings and perceptions would dismiss discordant claims contrary to those lifted to build agreement. Here, the role of fixed positions and emotions are gradually dissolved in communicative rationality, but the dialogue still accommodates open confrontation of differences. In doing this, power would be balanced among participants and the collective process itself ensures legitimacy of the agreement.

The study showed that the traditional regime continues to supply inadequate involvement in decision making with regard to the wolf. The regional administration might not want to support deliberative decision making binding to natural resource management because participatory methods seem costly and complex to implement, require long time efforts and “*plural and flexible institutions that can represent changing and diverse audiences*” (Kapoor 2002 p472). However, the recognition of plurality and the common ground that deliberative processes foster could provide a solid ground for legitimate decision making on the future wolf management in Madrid.

6.1 Final reflections

The integration of the social aspect in the analysis of the highly human influenced study area provided a different perspective of the situation for the complex task of achieving the wolf – human coexistence. Based on the assumption that the conflict in relation with the wolf was rooted inhuman-human dimensions, the study explored the main vectors behind the conflict, based on the exploration of respondents’ perspectives. Wolves of course cause tensions themselves, by embodying certain essentialist characteristics and having particular inter-specific interactions that fundamentally challenge human livelihoods on a material level (Mykrä & Pohja-Mykrä 2005). However the interviews demonstrated that these actors locate the wolf issue behind previous ones that really entangle and undergird the human conflict. Scholars agree on the emblematic role of wolves, representing obstacles and limitations as a symbol of urban dominance (Ericsson & Heberlein 2003) typically used as pressure tool to soften obstacles and reduce the pressure that rural minorities suffer in other dimensions (Theodorakea & von Essen 2016).

The secrecy about the information, the complaints of the effects of the wolves attack on the livestock from the keepers, the differences in the regulations of bordering regions, and the EC Directive, the lack of action, communication and respect, the confusion due to the possibility of attacks from stray or domestic dogs, and the precarious system of the extensive farming conditions are some of the factors that intricate and add confusion to the situation. These turn the wolf into the main driver of disagreement energies.

The study explored the conflict designation as a normative expectation. Analyzing the perceptions of the respondents the study revealed that the use of the human–wildlife conflict terminology predispose the actors to antagonism and belligerent contexts. In addition the analysis highlights the risk of facing the enterprise in the wildlife context as this brings the wolf to the forefront as a central enemy.

The return of the wolf to the area opens up a plural landscape of opinions, attitudes and understandings. Tired of feeling ignored and facing an increase in the complexity of their day to day life, most of these groups embraced with enthusiasm the collaborative events that other organizations and municipalities organized recently. Actors showed good predisposition to talk, to engage with each other, because they recognized the high stakes of

the potential conflict and the future situation with wolves. The description above of the vectors for conflict might foretell an early stage of the human conflict where a change in the management approach seems to be ideal.

The theoretical debate on deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism participatory theories was employed in order to get the best understanding of the situation created by the presence of wolves in the study area as understood from a normative perspective of the role of conflict and antagonism in public dialogue. These approaches helped to unravel the facets that define the conditions for legitimate and meaningful participatory methods.

Absolute agreement in policies regarding the wolf management seems impossible to achieve in Madrid, even if this is not always a goal even of ideal speech. The particular interests of each actor are currently dominating, and the historical conflicts and tensions regarding natural resource management deeply root mistrust in their attitudes. According to Bisi (2007), the situation requires dialogue yet its unsolvable nature keeps agreement away from path of reconciliation. In turn, this character emphasizes the need for embracing pluralism turning conflict and adversity between actors into the ground for dialogue, where alternative solutions can be founded through communicative rationality. I believe that using the pluralistic perspective enhancing participation in the wolf management and embracing diversity of values, the pressure would decrease as the legitimacy of the actions would be unquestionable, yet the prevalence of rationality is required for agreement in the conditions of the ideal speech, to understand and respect each other perspectives and find alternative solutions.

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APENDIX

Appendix I – Interview guideline

PRESENTATION: Introduce myself, what I am doing and why, explain how I will use the information, recording? Ask if OK to record. Explain interview process

BACKGROUND/ STARTING POINTS - PERSPECTIVES:

- Tell us more about yourself. Do you live in the area? How long have you been living here?
- Background: in case of experts ask directly about studies. For others: broaden question about their professional background. What do you do for a living?

THE SITUATION - the relation with the wolf:

- Tell us about the wolf? Ask them to put in their context and the context of the conflict in the north: What do you know about the situation of the wolf in the area? How are you affected? How are you involved?
- What were your views/attitudes/associations of the wolf before? Have they changed?
- What is the current ‘talk’ around the wolf situation? (Rumours, conspiracy theories, doomsday scenarios, or hopeful accounts?) What are people saying?
- Who else is affected by this situation?
- How do you feel about it? Did you have to change any behaviour? Or process or activity?
- Ask them to put in the context of the conflict in the north: Why has it gotten so bad up there? How do we prevent it from getting this way? What’s unique to this region that makes you think you’ll be able to co-exist with the wolf better or worse than in the north?

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

- Once they have mentioned the actors: How is your relation with other actors in relation to the wolf? Authorities, agencies, locals, hunters, stockbreeders...
- Do you recognize any tension or disagreements since the wolf is around the area? ‘
- Have there been any tensions or conflicts in this area BEFORE the wolf? [i.e. on different unrelated issues]
- How do you think these tensions are likely to be lived out in this area? [Personal, political lobbying, sabotage, threats, strikes, neighbour disputes etc?]
- Have you participate or heard about any participation to improve the situation? if so, who could participate? Who was addressed to?
- In case any action has been taken, do you have any support in your actions? Are you disappointed with s.th/s.o?
- What do you think about actors’ reactions?

UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONFLICT Actual conflict human - wildlife situation

- What is a conflict in the general sense? Or particularly in the case of the wolf? How do you understand conflicts? What are the values or features that define a conflict?

- Do you believe that a conflict is constructive or destructive? why?
- What do you expect from a disagreement about the wolf issue?

EVENTS

- When did you first notice the situation / social tensions / feeling worry about the presence of the species in the area?
- When did you get involved?
- Is there any specific event that you could recognize as the start up of the situation? Any midterm events? If it is possible, do a TIMELINE (suggest to make a timeline with them? Would it be ok to put in on a timeline? Where would you put A or B facts?)

FUTURE

- How do you see this developing into the future?
- What is the optimal (ideal?) situation?
- How do you think this could be achieved? What would be required?
- What role do you have/would you have? Where do you see yourself in this situation?
- What would be necessary to foster cooperation among the actors involved?
- If you could decide what to do/how to act, what would you do?

Appendix II – Timeline: key events in Madrid

There are a wide range of events to consider in the evolution of the situation and the effect of them is increased due to the close location of the capital. One of the milestones happened on the 21st of January of 2016 when a dead female was found around 16 km through natural paths to one of the most important natural areas (“El Pardo”) that are almost embedded into the city. This review seems to reveal that the number and frequency of events is increasing lately around the situation.

Table 2. Timeline. Key events in relation to the wolf case in Madrid.

Year	Events
~1990?	*Wolf death by car accident close to the area of study (north face of the mountain range), but other Autonomous Region.
2011	*Local association recorded a video of a wolf pack with young individuals *October- regional administration passed a regulation for stockbreeders’ compensations in case of attacks
2012	*March: request of national government to change wolf protection stated by Habitats Directive.
~2013?	*Foundation of Lobo Marley (platform of citizens that defends the Iberian Wolf and the rural world) – seen as a polarized group by the other actors.
2013	*National newspaper published a video and status of wolf packs. Very controversial. Different actors, different opinions about the source: local administration? NGO’s? Local groups? *Meeting
2014	*Wolf sessions – Madarcos Municipality (highly aggressive according to some attendants) *Pictures in the national and regional media of the wolf in Madrid
2015	*February – Wolf attack in the north of Madrid, close area to the area of study. High media power and very dramatic for the stockbreeders (around 80 goats died or suffered damage). *March - Public participation session in the area of study – hosted by local administration (in respond to the wolf attack in February). * Death of wolf by car accident – area of study
2016	*January – 2 deaths of wolf by 2 car accidents (one female one male)– area of study *February - Wolf attacks to cattle in the area of study. Controversial fact: there is no evidence that shows that the author of the attack was wolf or stray dogs. *February - Conference about the wolf status – hosted by NGO’s *March - Public participation session in the area of study– hosted by local administration *March - Public demonstration pro wolf – hosted by 150 to 220 NGO’s and associations. *April –2 days of conference sessions.