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Title	The Place of Hunting in Rural Ireland
Author(s)	Scallan, David
Publication Date	2012-03-20
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/3521

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The Place of Hunting in Rural Ireland

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Ph.D.

2012

ABSTRACT

Recreational hunting activities occupy an uneasy position in contemporary rural space. Framed by global developments and changes in the sociocultural, political and economic fabric of rural societies, we are also witnessing, however, a growth and interest in non-agricultural activities in the countryside, particularly those associated with recreation and leisure, including that of hunting. Contextualised within this broader discourse, this research seeks to explore how hunting is positioned by those within and outside by drawing on critiques of how nature is socially constructed; work in animal geography, which highlights the changing character of human-animal relationships, and rural studies which illustrate not only how representations of rurality are seen as socio-cultural constructions, but can also be specific to particular social groups and individuals.

To unpack this complex and nuanced relationship and explore the place of recreational hunting in rural Ireland, this research utilises a national questionnaire-based survey of hunters and hunting organisers, an examination of rural policy documents, in-depth interviews with rural policy decision-makers, and focus group discussions with farmers. This approach not only registers the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and between hunting and the ecological management of rural space, it also highlights hunting and its portrayal as exclusionary, selective and divisive within Irish rural policy.

Overall, this research provides a comprehensive study on the place of hunting in rural Ireland. It offers new understandings into how hunting activities potentially challenge contemporary rural policy objectives and provides complex insights into nature-society-rurality connections, within a broad discourse of rural change and restructuring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank Dr. John McDonagh and Dr. Anna Stanley for their supervision and for creating an environment in which it was possible to talk about a diversity of topics, and for offering guidance to keep me on track and regulate occasional excesses.

Thank you to all the people who gave up their time to talk to me. The enthusiasm and unfaltering generosity with which I have been given knowledge by people from all walks of life has made the past few years a personally enriching experience.

The many friends in the department, who have supplied words of advice, good conversation, inspiration, amusement and sporting camaraderie, have helped make the research process enjoyable.

Thank you to all the hunters, farmers, interviewees and secretaries of hunting clubs. This research would not have been possible without your time and patience.

Thank you to my parents for supporting this research every step of the way and to my friends for their understanding over the last few years, and particularly, thank you to Kath, who has been exceptionally considerate and patient throughout the completion of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the financial grant provided by the Federation of Field Sports of Ireland (FACE Ireland), Countryside Ireland, the Hunting Association of Ireland Ltd. (HAI) and the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) towards a component of the fieldwork associated with this study.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Rationale

Recreational hunting, as Franklin (1999: 105) suggests, has “enjoyed sustained popularity and growth during the twentieth century”. However, recreational hunting is also the subject of considerable debate (Leader Williams, 2009). Numerous animal protection organisations (e.g. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the Humane Society of the United States, the League Against Cruel Sports and the Irish Council Against Blood Sports) have stated long-term goals of abolishing hunting. Their campaigns are aimed at influencing governments and public opinion through moral arguments about animal rights and the infliction of suffering upon animals (McLeod, 2004). Conflicts around hunting have mainly developed as Western governments have attempted to introduce laws and regulatory frameworks based on globalised, environmental thinking that has blurred the distinction between humans and animals and introduced new standards for environmental protection which promote the idea of animal rights (Woods, 2005).

The contested nature of hunting is particularly visible in the tensions and disagreements between different pro- and anti-hunting groups in Western societies. In the USA and Australia, for example, where hunting activities have historically gone uncontested, there are now extremely hostile protests, which in some places have led to a variety of hunting activities being banned (see Munro, 1997; Franklin, 1999; Dizard, 1999). Recent years have also witnessed the emergence of new conflicts around hunting led by organisations such as the *Chasse, Pêche, Nature et Tradition* (Hunting, Fishing, Nature and Tradition) political party (CPNT) in France. These conflicts have led to a concurrent shift in the discursive terrain of debate to emphasise the perceived threat to rural identity (Woods, 2003). In the UK, for example, the practice of hunting with hounds has emerged as one of the key issues in rural politics (Cloke *et al.*, 1996; Woods, 1998a; 2005) and has sparked some of the most passionate and high-profile rural protests of recent years (see Woods, 1998b). Concerns about the place of hunting in rural Ireland have recently been prompted by a political decision to ban stag

hunting with dogs in June 2010 (Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2010). This process prompted the formation of RISE (Rural Ireland Says Enough!), a pro-hunting political campaign which, according to its website “is supported by people throughout Ireland who value our distinctive and traditional way of life” (RISE, 2012).

Figure 1.1 Rural Ireland Says Enough! (RISE) protest outside the Green Party Convention, Waterford City in March, 2010. Source: personal photograph.

This thesis aims to explore the place of recreational hunting activities, namely, hunting with hounds, game shooting, coursing and falconry in rural Ireland (specifically in the Republic of Ireland)¹. In doing so, it examines the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and between hunting and the

management of ecology in contemporary Irish rural space. It also explores the ways in which hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy and within the Irish farming community. The conceptual framework used in this study considers the ways in which ‘nature’, ‘animals’ and ‘rurality’ are enrolled within understandings of hunting and hunting practices in rural Ireland.

1.2 Rural Areas in Transition

In order to gain an understanding of the place of hunting in rural Ireland, it is necessary to contextualise the various changes which have taken place in rural areas in recent decades. In the post Second World War period, the relationships between the rural setting and the recreation activities engaged therein have changed significantly (Cloke, 1993; Butler *et al.*, 1998). This was primarily due to the introduction of rural policies that aimed to increase production and productivity in European agriculture. The intensification and modernisation of agriculture was seen, at the time, as serving a number of objectives simultaneously: enhancing food security, increasing rural employment and protecting amenity through the maintenance of a ‘well-tended’ countryside, in contrast to the pre-war agricultural dereliction (Latacz-Lohmann and Hodge, 2003).

Wilson (2001) argues that moves to increase production were closely linked to strong national and European support through farm subsidies, price guarantees and protectionist policies that kept prices for agricultural products artificially inflated and gave farmers a strong sense of financial security (see also Ritson and Harvey, 1997). Chief amongst the European policies was the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was established primarily to increase agricultural productivity. This period of production-driven policy support for agriculture is frequently termed the ‘productivist agricultural regime’ (Ward, 1993; Ilbery and Bowler, 1998; Wilson, 2007). The transition towards production-orientated policy changed European rural areas in a number of ways. The regime successfully solved the problem of food supply to the population of Western Europe; however, other rural amenities began to decline (Wilson, 2001). For example, the productivist agricultural regime resulted in significant biodiversity losses in farming districts throughout Europe (Baldock, 1990; Swift

and Anderson, 1993; Fuller *et al.*, 1995; Andreasen *et al.*, 1996; Pain *et al.*, 1997).

This resulted in major environmental problems in recent decades, most notably declines in bird populations and their associated habitats (Donald *et al.*, 2001; Benton *et al.*, 2002; Robinson and Sutherland, 2002). In Ireland, the loss of biodiversity through agricultural production has been discussed in the works of Gillmor (1992), Feehan (1992), Maloney (1994), Quigley (1994) and Lee (1996). Consequently, there is official policy recognition of the “polluting and unsustainable nature of industrial agriculture” (Kearney *et al.*, 1995: 34) and of the ‘disrupting’ effect of production-driven policies implemented through the CAP (Mattison and Norris, 2005).

Solutions to the environmental problems of habitat loss have, in general, involved the agricultural landscape being targeted for remedial work and the motivation of landowners by policy-makers to change farm practices that are detrimental to the rural environment (Hynes and Garvey, 2009). Incentives have been provided through a range of policy measures including agri-environmental and wildlife management schemes. European Union (EU) funded agri-environmental schemes have been introduced in most EU countries since the 1990s with the aim of directly improving on-farm biodiversity (EEC Regulation 2078/92). The majority of these agri-environmental schemes aim to compensate farmers financially for any loss of income associated with measures that aim to benefit the environment or biodiversity. In this sense, farmers are invited to become custodians of the landscape, responsible for the maintenance of its appearance and environmental quality (Selman, 1998). In 1994, the Irish Government introduced the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) to:

1. Establish farming practices and production methods that reflect the increasing concern for conservation, landscape protection and wider environmental problems;
2. Protect wildlife habitats and endangered species of flora and fauna²;

² The conservation of Ireland’s habitats and species is also formulated through the Wildlife Act of 1976 and 2010 (Amended) and European Union Directives such as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

3. Produce quality food in an extensive and environmentally friendly manner (Emerson and Gillmor, 1999).

Aside from environmental concerns, by the mid-1980s, the logic, rationale and morality of the productivist agricultural regime were increasingly questioned by various state and non-state actors on the basis of ideological, economic and structural problems (Whitby and Lowe, 1994), leading some to argue that the productivist ideology was “in disarray” (Marsden *et al.*, 1993: 68). Consequently, policy makers in the EU reformed the CAP with the intention of reducing agricultural production and budgetary costs associated with intensified agriculture (Walford 2003; Bjørkhaug and Richards, 2008).

In this sense, European rural development policies moved away from production-driven agricultural policies to create more diverse economic development approaches in rural areas. Some commentators suggested that rural areas experienced a shift from a ‘productivist’ to a ‘post-productivist’ era in the countryside (see Halfacree, 1997; Hadjimichalis, 2003; Wilson, 2007). Post-productivism implies that agricultural policies have moved beyond a principal emphasis upon sustaining and increasing levels of production. In this context, farmers can no longer expect either to be handsomely paid for all the food they produce or permitted maximum freedom in the use of rural space for commodity production irrespective of other demands (Evans *et al.*, 2002). In the post-productivist agricultural regime, the main threats to the countryside are perceived to be agriculture itself, and less ‘other’ non-agricultural activities.

This has been closely linked to changing public attitudes portraying agriculture as a ‘villain’ (mainly in environmental and health terms), accompanied by changing media representations of the ‘rural’ (McHenry, 1996; Holmes, 2002), and fundamental changes to the notion of the countryside ‘idyll’ through new ‘contested countrysides’ (Marsden *et al.*, 1993; Cloke, 2006a). Indeed, the term post-productivism seems to have been successfully deployed within discourses on wider rural change which recognise the declining significance of agriculture in the social and economic fabric of rural space (Evans *et al.*, 2002).

In recent years, however, there has been growing debate about the post-productivist ideology. A number of commentators have argued that the post-productivist agricultural regime fails to take into consideration the considerable diversity and spatial heterogeneity across agricultural regions. For example, Wilson (2001) argues, there is a flaw in thinking of 'post'-productivism as something that has occurred after productivism as there is evidence that both models exist side by side. As Marsden (2003: 11) emphasises, there is an embodiment of conflict when these models are being played out amongst the farming and rural population.

In recognition of this dilemma of terminology, the phrase 'multifunctional agriculture' has been used to acknowledge the complexity of agricultural modes of production that may be occurring at different spatial and temporal localities (Wilson, 2001). Multifunctional agriculture has been summarised by Potter and Burney (2002: 35) as a method of "producing not only food but also sustaining rural landscapes, protecting biodiversity, generating employment and contributing to the viability of rural areas". Used in this way, Wilson (2001) argues that post-productivism is useful in describing the 'transition' from one mode to the other, whereas the notion of a multifunctional agricultural regime allows for multidimensional co-existence of productivist and post-productivist action and thought and may, therefore, be a more accurate depiction of the multi-layered nature of rural and agricultural change.

Broadly speaking, the multifunctional agricultural regime refers to the fact that agricultural activity, beyond its role of producing food and fibre, may also have several other functions. These include renewable natural resource management, landscape and biodiversity conservation and a contribution to the socio-economic viability of rural areas (Renting *et al.*, 2009). The result has been that conceptualisations of the 'rural' and the 'countryside' are becoming increasingly separated from conceptualisations of 'agriculture' and 'farming' (Hoggart, 1990; Murdoch and Pratt, 1993; Pratt, 1996; Wilson, 2001). The EU has also adopted the concept of multifunctional land use to conceptualise the wider external effects of the agricultural sector on society and, in recent decades, has begun to mark out terms to support programmes to uphold a multifunctional 'European

Model of Agriculture' (Commission of the European Communities, 1997; 1999; 2001).

Within the literature, the processes underpinning the change from productivism to post-productivism are collectively referred to as 'rural restructuring' (Marsden *et al.*, 1990; Ilbery, 1998; Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001; McDonagh, 2001; Woods, 2005). This term elucidates fundamental changes to rural social life and rural social institutions as new organisational forms, ownership regimes and technologies accompany altered patterns of capital accumulation (Marsden *et al.*, 1990). Though much used, and some would say abused, the term rural restructuring conveys the impact of contemporary drivers of change resulting in the permanent transformation of rural areas (Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001).

From a policy perspective, the restructuring process has encouraged interest in the notion of a more diversified countryside in farming, conservation and rural development circles (Marsden *et al.*, 1993; Lowe and Ward, 1998; Macken-Walsh, 2009). The idea that rural landscapes typically produce a range of commodity and non-commodity use values has been recognised in Ireland's Rural Development National Strategy (2007-2013) (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 2007). In this context, one of the main pillars of contemporary Irish rural development policy aims to diversify the rural economy by providing grants, incentives, subsidies and support funding. As a consequence, the rural non-farm economy is gaining increased prominence in debates on rural development.

The various economic and environmental changes that have taken place in rural areas in recent decades have led to the formation of a new set of rural social geographies (Woods, 2005; Smith, 2007; Marsden, 2009; Brereton *et al.*, 2011). The focus has gradually shifted in emphasis from 'landscapes of production' to 'landscapes of consumption' (Marsden 1999; Cloke, 2006a) and rural policies are more and more targeted to serve society as a whole. Actors have stressed, amongst other things, that new consumption-oriented roles of the countryside are operating at various scales (e.g. recreation, leisure, environmental conservation, etc.) (Marsden *et al.*, 1993; Marsden, 1999). In this sense, Halfacree (1997: 72)

suggests that “the countryside has become a space in which the imagination is opening, whereby non-agricultural interests and actors are given an opening to strive to create a rurality in their image”. The importance of the ‘consumption’ role of the countryside by non-rural and non-agricultural stakeholder groups for recreation and leisure purposes has also taken prominence in debates about rural land use (Marsden, 2003). Consequently, recreation activities are no longer regarded as simply passive, minor elements in the rural landscape but as important agents of change that affect landscapes and their associated rural communities (Butler *et al.*, 1998; Pigram and Jenkins, 2006).

1.3 Rural Recreation in a Changing Countryside

For many centuries, the traditional image of recreation activities in the countryside was bipolar; the bulk of the population had little leisure time and was too busy with survival and production to place great demands for recreation on the rural environment (Butler *et al.*, 1998). Hunting and fishing were some of the earliest recreation activities in rural areas, along with walking, horse riding and lawn sports (Franklin, 1999). However, over the years, specific forms of these activities developed, and with them, unique landscapes. For example, deer hunting in Medieval England saw the establishment of deer parks on many estates, while fox hunting, perhaps the quintessential recreation activity of the rural landed elite, depended on suitable agricultural and forested land to which there was unlimited access, as well as a supply of foxes (Butler *et al.*, 1998). The demands of specific forms of shooting, for example, of red deer and red grouse saw the development of land management techniques which have not changed much in two centuries (Orr, 1982), while in other parts of the world, for example, New Zealand, species such as rabbit and deer were imported to provide similar opportunities for recreation (Crosby, 1986; Butler *et al.*, 1998).

In recent years, there has been an increase in participation in rural recreation (Butler *et al.*, 1998) with a wider range of activities being pursued (Hynes *et al.*, 2007a). Land use for recreation has been growing significantly and participation in special activities such as hiking, fishing and hunting are becoming increasingly popular (Cregan and Murphy, 2006). Recreation activities are also widely recognised as important elements in peoples’ lives, and are receiving

increasing academic attention and respectability (see Patmore, 1983; Van Lier and Taylor, 1993; Lynch and Veal, 1996; Hall and Page, 2006).

From this perspective, rural recreation has increasingly become recognised as an important land use activity with the potential to contribute to the economic, environmental and social qualities of rural areas (Roberts and Hall, 2001). A number of geographers (e.g. Butler *et al.*, 1998; Roberts and Hall, 2001; Hynes *et al.*, 2007b; Cawley, 2010) agree that there is an underlying logic in promoting recreation activities, either alone or in combination with other on- and off-farm activities, as alternative sources of income. This is supported by the increased demand for physical remoteness, open landscapes and traditional ways of life and culture among recreationists searching for increased communication with nature, authenticity and an escape from contemporary urban life (Urry, 2002).

Currently, there are several debates concerning the potential role of recreation and leisure activities in rural areas throughout Ireland and Europe (Roberts and Hall, 2001; Torkildsen, 2005; Hanley *et al.*, 2007a). A number of authors (e.g. Butler *et al.*, 1998; Roberts and Hall, 2001; Fitzpatrick and Associates, 2005; Hynes and Hanley, 2006; Cregan and Murphy, 2006; Hynes *et al.*, 2007b) suggest that countryside recreation is a means of stimulating the rural economy and environment through support for land management. For example, it is estimated that walking tourism attracted 90,000 visitors to the Irish uplands during 1997 (Bergin and O'Rathaille, 1999). According to Fáilte Ireland (2004), the number of visitors who took part in outdoor walking activities in Ireland is estimated to have increased to 259,000 by 2004, bringing tourism revenue of €170 million. In total, 93 percent of this figure was spent outside the greater Dublin area, thus having a substantial impact on the Irish rural economy. Fáilte Ireland's data also shows that cycling tourism contributes approximately €80 million annually to the Irish economy (Hynes *et al.*, 2007a).

In recent years, a range of government-supported initiatives have attempted to promote recreation in the Irish countryside. Examples include the Irish Sports Council's 'National Waymarked Ways', the *Slí na Sláinte* walking routes under the Irish Heart Foundation, and forest walks run by Coillte (the state owned

forestry company) (Hynes *et al.*, 2007a). With a view to maximising the benefit of recreation activities to rural communities, the Department for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht (Irish Speaking) Affairs established a countryside council named ‘*Comhairle na Thuaithe*’ – (CnaT) to develop a National Countryside Recreation Strategy in January 2004 (CnaT, 2006). This strategy encourages rural recreation activities to deliver social, economic and health benefits whilst protecting the countryside, its environment and wildlife habitats.

Despite the increasing emphasis on promoting recreation activities in rural areas, hunting activities have not experienced the same level of public and policy attention as other recreation activities. Cox *et al.* (1996) state that there appears to be a reluctance amongst commentators on rural recreation to bring hunting activities within their ambit. For example, they argue that some recreation texts have ignored the issue altogether (e.g. Harrison, 1991) whilst others (e.g. Curry, 1994), refer to hunting activities as a front for the opposition of landowners to wider rural recreation interests (Cox *et al.*, 1996).

In recent years, however, a number of studies (e.g. Norton, 1999; Ward, 1999; Woods, 1998a; 1998b; 2000; 2004; Milbourne 2003a; 2003b) have been undertaken on fox hunting with hounds in the UK as the politics of it has become increasingly contested and high on the political agenda (Jones, 2006). Despite this research, hunting activities have seldom been mentioned in policy debates on the leading issues of rural development, environmental protection or recreation (Cox *et al.*, 1996). From this perspective, Cox *et al.* (1996: 1) note that “it is tempting to detect the dead hand of political correctness in the absence of a sustained discussion of country sports in the academic literature”.

The lack of academic attention may be because hunting, in industrialised societies, is frequently perceived as being a marginal recreational activity practised by only a small proportion of the population and therefore of little significance in terms of wider social, economic and environmental trends (Hillyard, 2007). On the other hand, Marvin (2002: 139) suggests that hunting’s lack of attention from academia is a consequence of the activities being regarded as “morally unacceptable” in the Western world. The following section describes

the ways in which hunting is positioned as a moral issue by exploring how ‘nature’, ‘animals’ and ‘rurality’ are enrolled in debates about hunting.

1.4 Hunting Controversies: A Conceptual Framework

Academic interest in conceptualising ‘nature’ and ‘rurality’ follows a broader shift in the social sciences, which can be described as the ‘cultural turn’.

According to Cloke (1997), the ‘cultural turn’ supported a resurgence of rural studies, lending to both respectability and excitement to engagements with rurality. Barnett (1998: 380) characterises the cultural turn “by a heightened reflexivity toward the role of language, meaning and representation in the constitution of reality and knowledge of reality”. This has led social scientists to try to seek insights into cultural aspects of phenomena via “detailed investigations into the shadowy processes of human perception, cognition, interpretation, emotion, meaning and values” (Philo, 2000a: 32). Rural geographers, for example, draw upon ideas of identity and representation to explore the ways in which rurality is discursively constructed. This prompts a new understanding of culture as the product of discourses through which people signify their identity and experiences and which are constantly contested and re-negotiated³ (Woods, 2005).

The cultural turn was also accompanied by wide interest in, and debate about, the culturally-mediated character of ‘nature’. Nature, it is argued, needs to be conceptualised as ‘social nature’ (Fitzsimmons, 1989) which is bound up with broader sets of social, economic, cultural and political relations (Milbourne 2003a). As Castree and Braun (2001: 5) argue, when taken from this perspective, social nature “becomes, quite simply, a focal point for a nexus of political-economic, social identities, cultural orderings, and political aspirations of all kind” (see also Soper, 1995; Harvey, 1996; Milbourne 2003a). This implies that ‘nature’ is politically and socially constituted and contested through a variety of socio-cultural processes (Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Castree, 2001; Milbourne, 2003b).

³ A discourse is a specific series of representations, practices and performances through which meanings are produced, connected into networks and legitimised (Johnston *et al.*, 2000)

There are a number of ways in which nature has been enrolled in debates about hunting. For example, hunters frequently claim that they have a ‘closeness to nature’ and a more ‘realistic’ comprehension of how the ecological system operates (McLeod, 2004). For some hunters, killing is seen as ‘natural’; one of the necessary activities within the food chain (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992). In contrast, some animal rights activists view these claims as dishonest and immoral, and construct hunting activities as harming ‘nature’ (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992; Woods, 1998a). According to Dizard (1999), this perception of hunters as people who practice ‘immoral’ acts and who are ‘persecutors of nature’ is becoming more widely accepted in Western societies. From these perspectives, hunting presents a useful area for research to explore the ways in which nature is constructed by various groups in order to serve specific political interests (Castree, 2001). One of the areas where this contestation is most obvious relates to different understandings of what constitutes an ethical relationship between humans and animals, particularly in connection to understandings of nature.

Work in animal geography illustrates the ways in which animals and animal practices can be thought of differently between, and excluded from, particular places (Wolch *et al.*, 1995; Elder *et al.*, 1998; Wolch and Emel, 1998; Jones, 2006). In the contemporary Western world, animals are constituted by a multitude of different and often conflicting meanings. For example, as ‘pets’ they can be understood as both commodities and family members, as ‘livestock’ they are a source of economic value, as ‘pests’ they are vilified as destructive beings and as ‘endangered species’ they are precious and warrant preservation (Anderson, 1998; Norton, 1999). Increasingly in Western societies, however, there is an understanding that it is the human ‘invasion’ of ‘nature’ that has brought this about (McLeod, 2004).

Recent academic work has addressed social concerns about the treatment of animals and the growth of new political movements around animal liberation (Tovey, 2003), welfare and protection (Whatmore and Thorne, 1998) and the perceived ethical appropriateness of hunting (Milbourne, 2003a; McLeod, 2004). Franklin (2002: 2) argues that, over the past few decades, “we have seen startling transformations in the relations between humanity and the natural world”. This

‘greening’ of society imposes expectations that to be a good world citizen one must express a sensitive, concerned attitude towards ‘nature’ and a human and caring consideration of animals (McLeod, 2007). Arguably these debates also represent the contestation of some of the social constructions that connect to ‘the rural’, particularly those relating to notions of what constitutes an ethical relationship between humans and animals in rural space.

In this context, the cultural turn has highlighted that ‘the rural’ is not a clearly identifiable space, but, like nature, it is a concept with a set of meanings that are discursively constructed, understood and related to in different ways by diverse social groups (Halfacree, 1995; Jones, 2006; Cloke, 2006a; 2006b). Rather than there being a single rural space which people relate to within which things happen, it has become more common to refer to a multitude of ruralities, as understood and experienced by different groups (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2004). Hence, rurality is increasingly understood as a social construction, made up of a collection of different political, social and cultural meanings (Woods, 2005).

Furthermore, rural space is frequently constructed both as a significant imaginative space, connected with all kinds of cultural meanings ranging from the ‘idyllic’ to the ‘oppressive’, and as a material object of lifestyle desire for some people – a place to move to, farm in, visit for a vacation, encounter different forms of nature and generally practice alternatives to the city (Cloke, 2006a). The countryside has also increasingly come to be considered as a recreational space with more calls for it to function as an area for rest and relaxation, a respite from the city, associated with work and stress (Short, 1991). This representation views the ‘ideal countryside’ as contributing to ‘quality of life’ with its beauty and attractiveness providing a contrast to the crowded and busy cities: a view in which the countryside becomes the city’s playground (Frouws, 1998). These debates raise interesting questions regarding the ways in which rural areas should be consumed. For example, whether rural areas should be consumed passively, to see but not disturb their inhabitants, or actively, through a series of traditional practices, such as recreational hunting.

As such, questions concerning whether the countryside should be managed for economic regeneration or for conservation and whether hunting activities should be considered legitimate countryside pursuits all depend on assumptions and commitments concerning just what sort of space the countryside is. According to Macnaghten and Urry (1998) these issues need to be recognised as cultural dilemmas requiring political responses before they can be adequately addressed by management or a planning system primarily concerned with competing land uses and the negotiation of physical pressures. The contours of such debates point to an interesting avenue of investigation regarding the place of recreational hunting in rural Ireland.

1.5 Research Questions

It has now been 20 years since Philo (1992) suggested stirring additional 'ingredients into the mix of rural studies', notable by listening to 'other voices' and embracing the wider 'cultural turn' then influencing geography. Considering Philo's (1992) call, and the many changes taking place in the countryside, this study aims to explore the place of recreational hunting in rural Ireland. The corresponding research questions set out to examine:

1. How is hunting present in contemporary Irish rural space?
2. How is hunting constructed within Irish rural policy?
3. How is hunting constructed within the Irish farming community?

In order to examine how hunting is present in contemporary Irish rural space, the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and between hunting and the management of ecology in rural space are assessed. These two approaches were chosen because they are directly relevant to the main pillars of current Irish rural development policy, which aims to protect the rural environment and promote economic diversification in rural areas.

In order to address how hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy, the second research question explores how hunting is positioned in existing Irish rural policy documents and by rural policy decision-makers, from the principal rural policy agencies in Ireland. This objective pays attention to the various ways

in which nature, rurality and animals are constructed in debates about hunting within Irish rural policy.

In order to explore how hunting is constructed in Irish rural life, the perceptions of the Irish farming community are explored. Farmers were considered to be a key rural group as they provide access to hunters to use their land and constitute a still substantial and influential, component of the Irish rural population.

1.6 Thesis Organisation

This chapter has outlined the shifting profile of recreational hunting in Western societies and the terms in which the debate about the place of hunting in rural Ireland has been framed. It has discussed the main economic and environmental changes affecting rural areas in order to contextualise the wider policy changes taking place in rural Ireland. Although outdoor recreation activities are increasingly promoted as a tool to ameliorate the effects of rural restructuring, it is perceptible that hunting activities are absent from research and policy debates about rural development. The chapter also interrogated binary thinking through which ‘nature’, ‘rurality’ and ‘animals’ are enrolled in understandings of hunting.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical underpinning for the thesis by assessing post-structural literature which challenges us to think critically about the ways in which nature, animals and rurality are constructed in debates about hunting. The work on nature, in particular, encourages us to ask fundamental questions such as who constructs what kind of natures, to what ends, and with what social and ecological effects. Recent literature in animal geography is discussed to highlight the various social forces that have brought about a wide range of industrial, ethical, conceptual and emotional changes in human-animal relationships. In this regard, various ‘sites of contestation’ are highlighted which connect to both broad, structural and historical changes regarding urbanisation and industrialisation, and the new ‘sensibilities’ established by the end of the nineteenth century making it ‘offensive’ to see animals being killed. The chapter then considers a range of ways in which rurality is conceptualised and looks at how ‘idyllised’ meanings of rurality are constructed, negotiated and experienced. In this context, the ‘rural idyll’, which emphasises the virtues and romance of life

in the countryside and the increasing dominance of the 'romantic gaze', which leads to very specific notions of how the countryside should be 'consumed,' is discussed. The final part of the chapter explores work in political ecology to problematise the environment-society distinction and to critically look at the ways in which economy and ecology are promoted through mainstream policies. From this perspective, it illustrates that people living with wildlife, and directly benefiting from it through recreation or sustainable use activities, are frequently given an incentive to conserve ecological habitats and contribute to local economies.

The third chapter describes the methodological framework used in this study. It begins by contextualising the aims and objectives of the research in line with the methodological approach used. Here, it describes how the research questions challenge many of the notions critiqued in Chapter 2 and explains the rationale for the approach taken in this study. The second part of the chapter discusses my positionality as a researcher and outlines the challenges of studying a geographically 'unbounded' and sensitive group such as hunters. The chapter then goes on to discuss the application of the fieldwork issues and methods. Here, it explains the justification for the methods used, while the various challenges involved in conducting research on hunting activities in Ireland are explained. The fieldwork strategies, which include the collection of primary data in the form of questionnaire surveys with hunters and hunting organisers, analysis of rural policy documents, interviews with policy-makers and focus group discussions with farmers, are described in detail. The final part of the chapter discusses the methodology used to analyse the data.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the examination into the ways in which recreational hunting is present in contemporary rural Ireland. More specifically, it presents data from questionnaire surveys with hunters and hunting organisers to illustrate the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and between hunting and the management of ecology in Irish rural space. The various expenditure categories by hunters and data from the focus group discussions with farmers indicate that recreational hunting contributes to the Irish rural economy. The data from the hunting organiser survey also suggest that hunting contributes

to the improvement and management of ecological features in Irish rural space. Specific themes that emerged during the focus group discussions with farmers are also described. These construct hunting as a tool for maintaining a healthy ecological balance in Irish rural space. In this context, hunting is positioned as a type of 'rural service' whereby hunters play a role in controlling certain 'pest' species and maintaining ecological features in the Irish countryside. The chapter then discusses the implications of the hunter expenditure estimates and synthesises the ecological results in line with the available literature in the field. It concludes by discussing the ramifications of the findings in a wider rural policy context.

Chapter 5 describes the results of the analysis of the ways in which hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy and within the farming community in rural Ireland. In the interviews conducted with rural policy decision-makers and in the analysis of rural policy documents, the data suggest that although rural policy adopts a wide conception of the leisure function of the countryside and of peoples' countryside needs, there is a narrow perception of hunting in the Irish countryside. A range of factors that prevented a closer relationship between hunting and rural policy emerged. These included concerns about ethics, ecological sustainability and constructions of rurality dominated by a 'closeness to nature' in which hunting is cast as being 'out of place'. However, analysis of the focus group discussions with farmers highlighted the embeddedness of hunting within social, political, economic and ecological discourses of rural space. Farmers, for instance, drew on a range of nationalistic and masculinist narratives and imagery to position hunting as a natural part of Irish rural space. Furthermore, evidence emerged from the focus group discussions which suggest that some hunters do not adhere to acceptable codes of practice in the Irish countryside. Some of the issues highlighted involve hunters trespassing on land, damaging farm property, hunting without public liability insurance and unsustainable tourist hunting.

Chapter 6 engages further with the broader themes raised in the study. In doing so, it revisits the theoretical and substantive aims of the thesis and discusses the major contributions in order to improve our understanding of the place of hunting

in rural Ireland. More specifically, this chapter mixes the primary fieldwork analysis with key theoretical concerns from the literature and draws on broad socio-spatial dialectics about rural space to discuss the evidence that emerged in this study (e.g. the various economic, ecological, political, social and cultural dimensions of hunting). Through drawing on work proposed by the major authors in the field, the chapter disseminates some of the key themes relating to: 1) the presence of hunting in Irish rural space; 2) the place of hunting within Irish rural policy and 3) the place of hunting within Irish rural life. In general, the chapter illustrates that hunting activities must be conceptualised in relation to broader political, policy, cultural and historical circumstances in particular regions.

Chapter 7 brings together the main insights which emerged and assesses their wider implications for policy. The first part of the chapter positions hunting as a potential tool for rural development in Ireland. It considers how the economic and ecological evidence presented in Chapter 4 complements contemporary rural policy objectives which seek to diversify the rural economy and conserve the rural landscape. However, in doing so, it takes account of the various conceptual and practical issues associated with hunting which may inhibit any meaningful integration of hunting into Irish rural policy. The second part of this chapter draws on Ingold's (1993; 1995) notion of the taskscape in an attempt to encapsulate the various 'ensembles' of complex and divergent meanings associated with hunting in Irish rural space. It argues that hunting must be conceptualised as an activity that encompasses a range of 'ensembles' of natures, ruralities and human-animal relationships. The final part of the chapter highlights some useful avenues for future research on hunting.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated that as a result of changes in the sociocultural, political and economic fabric of societies, there has essentially been a change in the image of rural areas: they are no longer seen solely as sites of primary production but also as settings for a range of non-agricultural activities such as leisure and recreation. This chapter elaborates on the conceptual framework used in this study. In doing so, it draws on post-structural theory⁴ and, more specifically, social constructivism to conceptualise the ways in which nature, animals and rurality are drawn into debates about hunting. Recent literature in animal geography is discussed to highlight the various social forces that have brought about a wide range of industrial, ethical, conceptual and emotional changes in human-animal relationships. The chapter also considers the ways in which rurality is socially constructed and elaborates upon research that examines the wider implications of recreational hunting in rural space. Drawing on recent work in political ecology, the final part of this chapter considers the wider socio-economic and ecological implications of recreational hunting in rural space.

This chapter demonstrates that not only is there a significant lack of research on hunting, but that geographical research on hunting is a good site for investigating a wide range of related cultural phenomena, particularly in regard to highlighting divergent understandings of how nature, rurality and animals are conceptualised in debates about hunting. In general, this type of approach to conceptualising nature, animals and rurality provides an in-depth understanding of the wider political and policy debates surrounding recreational hunting and allows the research questions to be framed in theoretically defensible terms.

⁴ Post-structuralism is a modern philosophical school of thought. It grew out of, and in response to, the philosophy 'structuralism'. Many of the pivotal thinkers of post-structuralism were extremely critical of structuralism, which argued that human culture may be understood by means of structure – modelled on language (i.e. structural linguistics) – that is distinct both from the organisations of reality and the organisation of ideas and imagination. Post-structuralism tends to draw on the work of Foucault and Derrida, and shares the need to problematise systems of thought and organisation (Usher and Edwards, 1994) and fixed notions of identity or social relations. Post-structuralism is one of the major driving forces in philosophy today, and is intricately connected with post-modernist thought.

2.2 The Conceptual Terrain: Post-Structuralism and Social Constructions

Post-structural inquiry has opened up ways of thinking and looking differently at concepts such as nature, rurality and the human/animal distinction, and challenges us to rethink the Western enlightenment dichotomy between nature and society. This critique is now a hallmark of human geography and widely accepted by Marxist, post-structuralist, post-modern and feminist geographers (Castree, 2001). This study draws on post-structural theory in order to provide an understanding of the ways in which nature, animals and rurality are produced, established, circulated and positioned in debates about hunting.

While any definition of post-structuralism is controversial, in general, post-structuralists favour the idea that meanings and intellectual categories are shifting and unstable. From this perspective, meaning has come to be understood not as fixed, but as historically and culturally specific. Hence, post-structuralism provides a medium for challenging what is self-evident or taken-for-granted so that the ideologies and representative practices that constitute such experiences can be foregrounded as a site for possible change (Crowe, 1998). This type of approach enables recognition of the wider socio-political and historical context in which issues relating to hunting can be explored.

Social constructivism is one of the many ideas that emerged from post-structural thinking. The term social constructivism is used to describe a number of relatively distinct approaches within the social sciences towards the analysis of how reality is socially produced (Burningham and Cooper, 1999). The roots of social constructionism are diverse and derive from multidisciplinary sources (Velody and Williams, 1998). However different these constructs are, they are united in the claim that science and nature are no longer the final arbiter of what constitutes the 'real'; instead, what is 'real' is given "by historical and social accounts of knowledge" (Gergen, 2001: preface). In this context, social constructionism takes the view that knowledge is the product of our social and political practices as well as the interactions and negotiations between relevant social groups (Gasper, 1999). Constructivists argue that definitions of reality are produced from a particular standpoint, relying on particular traditions of sense-making (Gergen, 2001). For example, social constructivists claim that identities

such as ‘nature’ and ‘reality’ are not natural or given, even if they appear that way and that the histories of these categories can be traced through analysis (Hacking, 1998).

Importantly, social constructionism does more than say that something is socially constructed; it points to the political, historical and cultural location of that construction. From this perspective, social constructionism covers a range of views from acknowledging how social factors shape interpretations to how the social world is constructed by social processes and relational practices. Hence, the domain of politics is no longer understood as limited to political institutions – parliament, law, etc. – but enlarged to include the concepts and knowledge that inform debates within these arenas. Perhaps more than anything else, post-structuralist thought alerts scholars and activists to the instability of the categories and identities that undergird our politics and practices (Braun and Wainwright, 2001).

2.3 Conceptualising Nature

In recent years, the idea that nature is culturally and socially constructed has become increasingly popular in the social sciences (Brid, 1987; Fitzsimmons, 1989; Cronon, 1995; Gerber, 1997; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Proctor, 1998; Whatmore, 1999; Castree and Braun, 2001; Demeritt, 2001; 2002; Castree, 2001; 2005). By socially defined (or socially constructed), nature is considered to be a concept or category made meaningful through social and political processes. Whatmore (1999: 23) argues that geographical research now seeks to denaturalise nature and thereby “challenge...the categorical cordon that has marked off the non-human world and the grounds for understanding it”. This way of thinking challenges us to conceptualise how entrenched the dichotomy is between nature and society. From this perspective, the social and the natural are seen to intertwine in ways that make their separation – in either thought or practice – impossible. Hence, it has become common today to argue that there is no “unsocialised” nature (Tovey, 2003: 196).

The constructivist way of thinking about nature suggests that nature, is, in fact, both a ‘mutable social construct’ (Castree, 2001) and the product of a complex

process of interaction between the material and conceptual (in the sense of the material objects, trees, plants, etc. that ‘nature’ is used to describe). In trying to make sense of the social construction of nature, it is useful to look closely at the ways in which nature is conventionally defined. Demeritt (2001) argues that the need for clarity is particularly important because the very word nature, as Williams (1983: 219) has famously observed, “is perhaps the most complex in the [English] language”. In a similar context, Smith (1984) contended that, much as a tree in growth adds a new ring each year, the concept of nature has accumulated innumerable layers of meaning during the course of history. Williams (1983 cited in Demeritt, 2001: 29) distinguishes three specific but closely intertwined meanings of the word:

- i. The ontologically essential or necessary quality of something.
- ii. The inherent force that directs either the world or human beings or both.
Insofar as these natural laws, in the sense of (ii), determine the quality and nature, in the sense of (i), of something, there is some overlap between the nature of (i) and (ii).
- iii. The external, material world itself (e.g. the natural world).

Although overlapping and different, these three conventional meanings of nature have been – and continue to be – commonplace in both geography and the wider world. Furthermore, these meanings of nature have been variously deployed to establish a foundation for distinguishing scientific knowledge from other kinds of belief. In each of these meanings, there is a presumption that the ‘facts’ of nature can ‘speak for themselves’ once geographers have adopted the correct perspective (Demeritt, 2001). In this context, relatively unproblematised truth-claims are frequently made about how nature ‘really works’ with the end goal of making value judgements about what is deemed ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘better’ or ‘worse’ – either socially or economically. These meanings of nature imply that it offers societies a set of possibilities and constraints that are more or less unchangeable. However, Castree (2001) suggests that in each of the meanings of nature described above, it is possible to: (i) identify supposedly objective facts about nature and the environment, leading to (ii) explanations of how far and in what ways societies are affecting nature, or being affected by them, in turn generating (iii) an evaluation of society-nature relations on scientific moral

grounds, leading to policy formulations or some shift in society-nature relations at one or more spatial scales (Demeritt, 2001).

Post-structuralists argue that there are a number of profound disadvantages to conceptualising nature in the conventional manner (e.g. Castree and Braun, 2001; Demeritt, 2002). First, the facts about nature never speak for themselves. In reality, what counts as the truth about nature varies depending on the perspective of the analyst. As Williams (1980: 70) put it, “What is usually apparent [when reference is made to nature] is that it is selective, according to the speaker’s general purpose”. Second, it follows that statements about nature say as much about who is doing the talking and what their individual interests are as they say about nature. In this context, Demeritt (2001) argues that all three of these interrelated meanings of ‘nature’ depend upon linguistic oppositions to that which is said to be cultural, artificial, or otherwise human in origin. This constitutive opposition of meanings of the natural to the cultural is particularly significant for (ii) and (iii), but it also applies to many senses of (i). Since the cultural references by which what is not nature and the natural are defined change over space and time, so too must ideas of what nature is. Third, it is often the case that claims about nature – and actions based upon those claims – can serve as instruments of power and domination (Castree, 2001).

If we summarise these problems, we might say that in each of the conventional meanings of nature presented above, the social dimensions are ignored, denied or effaced (Demeritt, 2001). This alerts us to the ways in which constructions of nature are frequently entrenched in political commitments (Braun and Wainwright, 2001). Furthermore, this work highlights the instability of the categories and identities that underline our politics and practices. This critical understanding of ‘nature’ is important for this study in terms of challenging the apparent self-evidence of nature as a pre-given concept with certain fixed physical properties that exist independently of, and apart from, social practices. Hence, the approach used in this study works with the assumption that there are always given sets of understandings, metaphors, expressions, statements, and gestures that govern what can be said about entities in the world at any given time and place (Castree, 2001). Consequently, it is important to understand that

knowledge is socially and historically produced rather than found (see also Haraway, 1991; Demeritt, 2001).

Many critics find these realisations politically progressive. For example, Cronon (1995) has shown that ‘wilderness’ is not a thing, so much as an idea, and a socially constructed one at that. Cronon (1995: 80) criticises the ‘wilderness idea’ as “a fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living – urban folk for whom food comes in a supermarket”. The trouble with this wilderness, he explains, is that it contributes to an all or nothing attitude towards the environment. By longing for the pure and untouched wilderness spaces where they do not live, people tend to disavow any responsibility for the heavily-urbanised environments in which they actually live (Cronon, 1995; Demeritt, 2001).

Willems-Braun (1997) raises a similar point about the effects of wilderness discourse in British Columbia, though from a somewhat different theoretical perspective. His work points to the “representational practices through which ‘nature’ is made to appear as an empty space” (Willems-Braun, 1997: 7) in which the native peoples of Canada’s West Coast have no place or voice. Claims about the social construction of nature might therefore be understood as claims about the social construction of knowledge and concepts of nature. Considering this approach to understanding nature, Demeritt (2001; 2002) suggests that there is never any easy way to access, evaluate and affect nature that does not involve socially specific knowledges and practices. In other words, we must live with this inability to know nature as it really is, while still remaining committed to the idea that some knowledges of, and practices on, nature are better or worse than others (Castree, 2001; Demeritt, 2001).

Responding to criticisms of social constructionism, Haraway (1991) and Soper (1995) sought to integrate the insight that nature can only be understood through social eyes with an understanding that the world consists of more than just ‘social’ manifestations. Franklin (2002: 38) also argues that “nature is socially embedded in the vectors of space and time, while being at once a physical reality, amenable to the senses and discursively ordered”. Similarly, McLeod (2004)

argues that social constructivist views clearly have the advantage over naïve realist positions of nature for at some level nature is constructed discursively and materially and is undoubtedly implicated in the exercise of social power.

In relation to the debate over the conceptualisation of the 'social' and the 'natural', McLeod (2004) drew on Ingold's (1993; 1995) notion of dwelling to theoretically underpin understandings of nature in relation to the practice of duck hunting in New Zealand. Ingold (1993; 1995) puts forward 'dwelling' (following Heidegger, 1977) as an innovative way to look at the relationship between humans, animals, and the landscape (or 'nature'). To 'dwell' in a landscape is to be enmeshed within it; to inscribe upon it layers of history that incorporate both technologies and manipulations of 'natural' phenomenon. By arguing for this perspective, Ingold (1993; 1995) rejects the nature/culture binary which depicts a real/natural landscape in opposition to the idea of landscape as a social construction (McLeod, 2004).

Crucial to Ingold's (1993, 1995) argument is the temporal nature of dwelling both in the way that landscape is formed and in the way we are formed by it. Landscape is "neither 'built' nor 'unbuilt', it is perpetually under construction" (Ingold, 1993: 162). The link between humans and their landscape manifests itself in what Ingold (1993) terms the 'taskscape', which he explains as an embodied and active relationship between the 'social' and the 'natural'. Ingold (1995) does not separate technologies from the taskscape but rather underlines the importance of these in formulating the landscape around us. McLeod (2004) incorporates Ingold's concept of the taskscape into her research to emphasise the embodied and sensual experience of 'dwelling'. This illustrates that humans are active participants in 'nature', not outside observers, and that the embodied experience of the landscape and the taskscape incorporates a variety of senses.

Ingold's (1993; 1995) and Castree and Braun's (2001) approach to conceptualising nature has permitted geographers to move away from asking limited, if worthy, questions about what society does to nature (and vice versa), towards more fundamental questions such as who constructs what kind of natures, to what ends, and with what social and ecological effects. Thus, this

approach to conceptualising nature highlights that ‘taken-for-granted’ conceptions of nature among geographers and actors in the wider world – policy-makers, businesses, and ordinary people – are seen as part of the problem, not the solution, if societies are to build survivable futures (Castree, 2001).

Two studies (Castree, 1997; Woods, 2000) highlight the way in which various groups have attempted to define and physically reconstitute nature in order to serve specific social interests. The first, by Castree (1997) offers a critique of an ecocentric⁵ response to an important international resource problem: the over-exploitation of the north Pacific fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*) in the years between 1870 and 1911. The study focused on the constructions of nature preferred by radical American environmentalists and argues that, at the time, ecocentric representations of nature were vital to protecting the fur seal population. Castree (1997) discusses the attempts to represent the conception of nature as ‘wild nature’ and as a ‘raw nature’ antithetical to, and emptied of, human presence, which arguably betrays its origin in the metropolitan cultures of turn of the century America:

“Playing on deeply held distinctions between nature and society, country and city, wilderness and urbanism, the seals were constructed in a way that satisfied the emergent desire of the monied and political classes of the eastern seaboard to save and protect a vulnerable natural world” (Castree, 1997: 15).

Companies and sealers were repeatedly told that they were ‘human butchers’ of ‘fur seal life,’ the latter phrase intended to hammer home the unspeakable cruelty of slaughtering sentient beings. Using the fur seal example, Castree’s (1997) work highlights the way in which specific constructions of nature resulted in the framing of an important environmental resource problem. In particular, Castree’s (1997) research illustrates that, the ways in which animals are constructed by various groups to mediate the boundary of nature/culture, can serve specific

⁵ Ecocentrism is a term used in to denote a ‘nature-centred’ or ‘nature-first’ approach to conceptualising nature, as opposed to a human-centred system of values towards nature. According to Castree (2001), this approach urges a fundamental concept for, and a need to get back to, nature which is to be achieved through a profound critique and dismantling of existing systems of production and consumption.

political goals. More generally, Castree's (1997; 2001) work recognises that we have to live with the fact that different individuals and groups use different constructions to make sense of the same nature(s). This type of occurrence can be seen daily in a multitude of situations. For example, where an anti-hunting activist might construct a fox as a victim of hunting, with rights to life, a hunter might construct a fox as an agricultural pest that needs to be controlled.

The second study by Woods (2000) illustrates that diverse constructions of nature and animals are mobilised in hunting debates in the UK in order to serve a variety of political ends. The anti-hunting lobby, for example, constructed fox hunting as 'a violation of nature' by utilising advertisements that clearly represented the fox as a victim, combining photographs of the corpses of foxes killed by hunts with headlines such as "How much longer can foxes tolerate this kind of pain?" (Woods, 2000: 192). Throughout the debate about hunting, Woods (2000) argued that animals became enrolled into political participation in a manner that is not wholly fixed in human hands. Similar to Castree's (1997) work, Woods's (2000) research illustrates the way in which nature was constructed by anti-hunting campaigners in order to reach a specific political purpose, i.e. to ban hunting with hounds in the UK. This work highlights that animals are an important symbolic resource in the always political construction of nature.

2.4 'Nature' and Human-Animal Relations

Despite the topicality of animal welfare and the level of public concern for wild and domestic animals, animals have not featured greatly in the social sciences (Anderson, 1998). Looking at the direction of human-animal studies almost three decades ago, Shanklin (1985) pointed out that the meaning of animals was a relatively unexplored field in the social sciences. In this context, Wolch and Emel (1998) argue that geographers have tended to deal with nature in a black box manner and that when reading most geographical texts one might never know that nature was populated by animals. Philo and Wilbert (2000) argue that historical engagement between geography and the subject matter of animals, often cast as 'zoogeography', had been preoccupied with mapping the distributions of animals – describing and sometimes striving to explain their

spatial patterns and place associations – and in doing so, had tended to regard non-human animals as ‘natural’ objects to be studied in isolation from their neighbours. As Tovey (2003) argues, animals have tended to feature in geographical scholarship primarily in the form of ‘species’ or ‘biodiversity’, or as part of the ecological systems that integrate organisms and habitats.

Indeed, as a consequence of this neglect, animals have been described by Philo (1998: 53) as a “marginal social group discursively constituted”, by Wolch and Emel (1995: 632) as “the ultimate other”, and by Woods (1998a) as ‘the ultimate neglected rural other’. Many academics (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Philo, 1998; Wolch and Emel, 1998; Tovey, 2003) have since criticised geographical literature for overlooking animals as distinctive objects of study, often subsuming them within broader discussions of nature and environment, making animals to be a relatively powerless and a marginalised ‘other’ partner in human-animal relations.

In general, animal geography recognises that the divide between humans and animals – a fundamental distinction that has become a largely unquestioned presumption of modern Western thought (Thomas, 1983) – is flexible, permeable and culturally variable (Ingold, 1988; Tapper, 1988; Norton, 1999). In recent years, however, this field of work, which has built on a long tradition of enquiry in geography concerning the relations between nature and society, has been reinvigorated by work that has addressed the social construction of nature. This work has provided solid ground upon which new thinking about human-animal relations had been based (Wolch and Emel, 1998). Consequently, the field of human-animal relations has become one of the ‘hot areas’ of debate in the social sciences and is beginning to occupy the centre stage once held by ‘the environment’ (Franklin, 1999).

Anderson (1998: 136) has referred to this change in the social sciences as the “animal turn”, which has unsettled the antimony of nature and culture, focusing attention on the human/non-human boundary. This work has focused on the construction of animal nature (Baker, 1993; Anderson, 1998; Emel 1998), the social networks that affect particular animals (Whatmore, 1997; Whatmore and

Thorne, 1998), and how particular practices are involved in the construction of the boundary between nature and culture, and conceptions of human nature (Anderson, 1998; Elder *et al.*, 1998). Amongst other things, this work has recognised that animals do not have a knowable essence or reality but are sites of multiple and unstable meanings that are naturalised through every day practices and thinking (Norton, 1999). These practices affect the spaces in which animals are included and excluded (Wolch *et al.*, 1995; Emel, 1998). From a post-structural perspective, animal nature is seen as the product of discourse and animals are constructed as *inter alia* ‘wild’, ‘tame’, ‘noble’, ‘good’, ‘sentient’ or ‘rights-bearing’ (Anderson, 1998; Baker 1993; Norton, 1999). Rather than reflections of some natural essence, animals, Tester (1992: 47) insists, are “social objects”, “a blank paper...nothing other than what we make of them”.

The idea that animal nature is the product of inscription is not new. Henry Salt recognised that animal rights conflicts are conflicts over the definition of animals. In 1892, Salt noted that, “the controversy over ‘rights’ is little else than an academic battle over words” (1900: 2). Other authors have argued that animals are not simply ‘a blank paper’ but are living agents that have some power to define themselves. From this perspective, nature exists, and is independent of, human understandings of it (Demeritt, 1994; Soper, 1995). Hence, conceptualisation of the culturally mediated character of nature and culture points to the importance of practices involving animals and discourse for the configuring of particular subject positions.

How nature is conceptualised in debates about animals is connected to the moral or ethical rules that are associated with them. From this perspective, Leach (1982: 116) argues:

“What we need to know about ‘the other’, whether animal or human, is where he, she or it fits in... Of animals, are they close or far, food or not food, pets or pests, domesticated slaves or savage monsters? Can we kill them with impunity, or only on set occasions in a special manner, or are they sacred and untouchable?”

In his discussion, Leach (1982) illustrates how ‘moral rules’ are linked with categories that are unfixed and thus vary between different societies, and even between one situation and another within the same society. Critical scrutiny of the construction of human-animal relations illustrates how moveable the line is between different categories – particularly between ‘human’ and ‘animal’. In Western societies, relationships with animals are increasingly instilled with very specific notions of what constitutes a ‘moral’ relationship (Franklin, 1999). More specifically, (Franklin, 1999: 196) argues that:

“In our reflections about animals in late modernity, we reflect on ourselves; the issue is not the ethical consideration of the ‘other’ but the moral consideration of ‘ourselves’. That reflection is increasingly couched in misanthropic terms: humans have become a sick and deranged species, destructive, out of control and a danger to themselves and others”.

From these perspectives, the ways in which different groups (e.g. rural policy decision-makers and farmers) construct their relationship with animals relate to constructions of broader social discourses about ‘nature’. The following section provides an overview of the changing attitudes towards animals and the killing of animals over the main period of modernity up until the twenty-first century. In doing so, it looks at a number of social forces that have brought about a wide range of industrial, ethical, conceptual and emotional changes in our dealing with animals (Franklin, 1999; 2001).

2.5 Overview of Changing Human-Animal Relations

In his detailed historical account of changing attitudes towards the natural world in Britain, Thomas (1983) argues that between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries dramatic changes occurred in the way that animals were categorised and conceptualised. Thomas (1983) suggests that key changes in human-animal relations in Britain can be traced to a set of intellectual transformations relating to the scientific revolution, the urbanisation of British culture and pet keeping during the period of 1500-1800. In this context, Thomas (1983) states that attitudes to animals changed with the onset of the processes of economic, social and political modernisation in England in the seventeenth century. As society became less dependant on animal power with the advent of mechanisation, and

the differences between humans and animals increased with the spread of urbanisation, people increasingly sentimentalised animals as they decreased in utilitarian significance (Thomas, 1983). This intense and rapid process of urbanisation and industrialisation has been linked to an increasingly 'romanticised' notion of nature and a change in attitudes towards animals. As Lowe (1989: 113) suggests, "towns created a longing for the countryside; cultivation for unsubdued nature; [and] new-found security from wild animals, for species protection".

This sentimentalisation, Thomas (1983) believes, encouraged the notion that animals were individuals with personalities, and connected to the formation of urban-based movements for animal welfare and debates about animal rights at the turn of the century. Thomas (1983) also suggested that, as a society becomes more urban and humans more physically and economically distanced from animals, the need to maintain the categorical distance was often substantially revised. Hence, this relationship led to symbolic relations between humans and animals based on separation and difference. It then became possible to draw animals more closely into the human socialised world. As a result, pets began to take on prominence and provide opportunities to observe further similarities between humans and animals. Literature relating to animals attributed them as moral and social characters and animals came to be seen like humans, deserving of rights (Singer, 1977; Regan, 2004). Within this discursive framing, 'wild' animals under environmental threat also became a source of regret within a general discourse of discontent at modernity (Franklin, 1999).

Changing animal-human relations have also been linked to transformations in Western manners and taste over time. Elias (1994) offers the possibility of making a tangible link between the treatment of animals by humans and the gradual containment and control of violence among citizens of the modern state. This work provides a framework for a sociological account of the changes in human-animal relations in at least two ways. First, deriving from his theory of manners, state formation and civilisation, Elias (1994) traces an extension of human civilities towards interactions with animals. During this time, codes of behaviour outlawing violence became more common and were exercised over

increasing areas of inter-personal contact. For example, Elias (1994) and Franklin (1999) state that, over the past 400 years, human executions have been removed from public spectacles or banned altogether. Elias (1994) also suggests that changing sensibilities in society towards animals resulted from the growth of the state, the state monopoly of legitimate uses of violence, increased levels of self-control and restraint resulting from increased levels of social dependency and a diffusion of dislike towards violence of all kinds. For example, referring to hunting (with hounds) in the UK, Elias (1994) synthesises that modern English fox hunting emerged as a revised form of hunting where the hunters were no longer directly implicated in the act of killing.

Although fox hunting may seem to be a violent activity, Elias (1994) argued that it was considerably less violent than previous hunting forms, and can therefore be seen as an instance of the 'sportisation' process. The sportisation process, Elias (1994) suggests, refers to the process of civilising former games and sporting activities and reorganising them into the bureaucratised, standardised and globalised modern sports with which we are familiar today (Franklin, 1999; 2001). Hence, this reorganisation of hunting during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a recognisably 'modern sport' fostered the view that hunting was a more orderly and bureaucratic form of non-violent human-animal contest in comparison to a range of other more violent activities.

In a different context, Tester (1992) suggests that changing attitudes to animals in the nineteenth century reflected moral and political trends in society. The rise of a scientific natural history, which introduced new modes of classifying the natural world, was also a factor. The previous classificatory framework provided an understanding of the world through human analogy and symbolic meaning. In contrast, the new scientific naturalists saw the world as a natural scene to be viewed and studied as an observer from the 'outside' – a scene not automatically assumed to have human meaning or significance (see Thomas, 1983). This newly-recognised similarity to humans created a new moral status for animals and sympathies widened so that animals in the wild were also considered 'fellow creatures' (Tester, 1992). From these perspectives, Tester (1992) argues that attitudes towards animals expressed new values.

Tester (1992) also suggests that the anti-cruelty movement that protected a range of animals in England emerged when a similar set of reforms was underway to provide state protection for children, the poor and the sick. Furthermore, anti-cruelty legislation was explicitly linked to the belief that cruelty to animals encouraged cruelty to people. Hence, Tester's approach to human-animal relations suggests that 'animal rights' is simply the extension of human rights discourse onto the natural world. In this construction, humans must end all exploitation of animals, including those activities that are widely perceived as benign (such as pet keeping). Similarly, Jasper and Nelkin (1992) connect the growth of the 'Animal Rights Movement' to the 'rhetoric of rights' discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, which presented a dramatic new aspect to human-animal relations when arguments about 'human rights' were considered in association with animals. The aim of this viewpoint is to "liberate animals from their human exploiters so that they can live their lives separately – free from human intervention" (Franklin, 1999: 27).

In conjunction with the anti-hunting 'animal rights' position, there was also an opposing and contrasting pro-hunting standpoint, which was frequently articulated in the 'romantic' literature from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Cartmill (1993: 120) argues that the members of this movement often celebrated the hunter as "a noble half-savage" who "roamed the forest communing with nature and brimming over with bitter-sweet longings". In this sense, constructions of nature romanticised the idea of re-connecting to a 'natural' lifestyle (including our 'animal passions') and favoured provisioning from the wild "as a therapeutic palliative to the pathologies associated with modern urban living" (Franklin, 1999: 27).

Interactions with animals (including hunting them) were constructed as being not only permissible but also necessary for those people who want to really 'understand nature'. Franklin (1999: 27) sees this construction pointing to "a sociology of 'humans-animals' in modernity that centres on a new consumption of animals and the natural world". Franklin (1999) also points to the importance of the 'romantic gaze' and states that hunting activities were difficult to condemn at the time because they were hugely popular and gained the somewhat generous

reputation of being democratic. The romantic gaze conveyed in this literature connects to idealised notions of national beauty which is “usually unpeopled, majestic and awe-inspiring” (Macnaghten and Urry 1998: 187).

A key concern for animal geography, and for this study, is the geographical conception of space in relation to animals (see Philo and Wolch, 1998). For example, one major presence of animals in rural space is represented by the idea of ‘nature’ and ‘wildlife’ (Jones, 2006). In relation to the UK, Shoard (1980: 183) states that “for many people...the creatures and plants of our countryside have provided the key to its charm”. The efforts to conserve and even enhance animals are seen to be central to the idea of the rural as a space of nature and, even in certain areas, as a space of wilderness (Jones, 2006). The following section considers the ways in which rurality is socially constructed and looks at how ‘idyllised’ meanings of rurality are constructed, negotiated and experienced. In this context, it considers the ‘rural idyll’, which emphasises the virtues and romance of life in the countryside and the increasing dominance of the ‘romantic gaze’, which leads to very specific notions of how the countryside should be ‘consumed’. The section also explores a range of ways in which rurality is constructed in Ireland.

2.6 Conceptualising Rurality

Since the 1990s, there has been significant and illuminating debate within rural studies about the meaning of ‘the rural’. Instead of doing away with rurality as a concept (Hoggart, 1990), or utilising other descriptive, spatially deterministic, or locally-oriented approaches (critiqued by Halfacree, 1994), a socially constructed view of rurality is emerging. According to Cloke and Milbourne (1992: 360), “there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area”. This type of approach to ‘the rural’ invites study of how practice, behaviour, decision-making and performance are contextualised and influenced by the social and cultural meanings attached to rural space (McDonagh, 2001; Cloke, 2006a). From this perspective, ‘rurality’ becomes a social construct and ‘rural’ a ‘world of social, moral and cultural values’ as defined and understood by different groups (Philo,

1993; Murdoch and Pratt, 1994; Halfacree, 1995; Jones, 1995; Pratt, 1996; Cloke and Little, 1997; Cloke, 2006a; Mahon, 2007).

However, despite our ever more nuanced understanding of the different happenings in rural spaces, there is considerable scope for socially constructed significations of rurality to dominate both the territory of ideas and meanings about the rural, and the attitudes and practices that are played out in and from that territory (Halfacree, 1995; Cloke, 2006a). One of the most important outcomes of the debate regarding the social construction of rurality has been a deep concern about the cultural and political domination afforded by hegemonic ideas about rurality and rural people. Philo's (1992) intervention to highlight the neglected rural geographies hidden away by such hegemonic social constructions was seminal in the search for ways to give voice to rural 'others' (see also Cloke, 2006b). Making direct reference to the UK, Philo (1992) emphasised the idea that social constructions of rural life are dominated by white, male, middle-class narratives. In addition, Philo (1992) pointed to the discursive power through which the all-embracing commonalities suggested by social constructions of 'the rural idyll' serve in practice to exclude individuals and activities from a sense of belonging to, and in, 'the rural' on the grounds of their race, ethnicity, gender, class and so on.

In recent years, there has been significant interest in how 'idyllised' meanings of rurality are constructed, negotiated and experienced (Bunce, 2003). Various writers have pointed to a range of historical processes that have led to such dominant understandings of 'rural' and 'countryside'. In the context of Britain, Williams (1973) argues that the construction of the term countryside was formed through contrasts with 'the town', and especially with the previous horrors of the English industrial town. Macnaghten and Urry (1998) also refer to the emergence of the term countryside in eighteenth-century England with the growth of the industrialisation period, along with an extensive depopulation of landless labourers, which resulted in the creation of urban nineteenth-century England. As a result, there was an increasing power of the landowning class to shape the countryside, along with the emergence of new forms of leisure activity, especially hunting, shooting and fishing, with an increasing number of spaces for

leisure, amenity value and aesthetic quality. In this context, the countryside became increasingly to be desired because of its visual qualities (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Hence, the notion of the ‘rural idyll’ emerged, which emphasised the virtues and romance of life in the countryside.

Despite its wide use in the past, the ‘rural idyll’ as a concept, or set of concepts, has never been adequately unpacked (Cloke, 2006b). However, the term has been used to describe the positive images surrounding many aspects of the rural lifestyle, community and landscape, reinforcing, at its simplest, healthy, peaceful secure and prosperous representations of rurality. Many have referred to the qualities or attributes felt to be important in constructions of the rural idyll (e.g. see Williams, 1973; Short, 1991; Bell, 2006). Referring to the rural idyll, Cloke (2006b: 380), for instance, suggests that:

“Somewhere deep down in our cultural psyche there appear to be longstanding handed-down precepts about what rurality represents, emphasising the enabling power of nature to offer opportunities for lifestyle enhancement through the production and consumption of socially cohesive, happy and healthy living at a pace and quality that differs markedly from that of the city”.

From Cloke’s (2006b) perspective, the rural idyll can be seen as an urban construction – a product of bourgeois imaginary – which developed as a reaction to urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation (see also Bell, 2006). These contrasts also raise many recognisable binary opposites, such as rural/urban, peaceful/noisy, slow/fast and clean/dirty (Tuan, 1974; Short, 1991; Cloke, 2003; Bell, 2006). In this context, people have been culturally attuned from childhood to make the link between the rural and the ‘good’ (Short, 2006). Van Koppen (2000) argues that, since the nineteenth century, paintings of romantic landscapes became popular among the general public, which also contributed to the creation of an idyllic rural image. The countryside is often constructed to offer a refuge from modernity and is idealised as an intermediate landscape between the rough wilderness of nature and the artificiality of the town (Short, 2006).

Bell (2006) considers three ideal-type rural idylls: the pastoral (‘farmscapes’), the natural (‘wildscapes’) and the sporting (‘adventurescapes’). The farmscape

refers to the agricultural landscape (but artisanal rather than agri-business). The wildscape refers to pre-cultural, pre-human, untamed nature – wilderness. The adventurescape constructs the rural as an adventure playground, drawing on some wilderness motifs but adding a focus on physical endurance and ‘limit experiences’ (Cloke and Perkins, 1998). For Bell (2006), these three forms of rural idyll comprise a mobile combination of the following elements: nature (natural wonders, closeness to nature, etc.), romanticism and authenticity as well as nostalgia (for simpler ways of life) all stamped onto the land and its inhabitants (plants, animals and people).

Encompassing this work on the rural idyll, the notion of ‘romantic gaze’ has received a great deal of academic attention in recent years. Implicit in the romantic gaze is the celebration of an idealised countryside that is timeless and ‘unspoilt’ (McLeod, 2004). For example, Macnaghten and Urry (1998) argue that the romantic gaze has come to dominate popular conceptions of how nature (and the countryside) should be experienced. This construction of rurality connects to idealised notions of national beauty (the ‘true’ essence of the nation), “usually unpeopled, majestic and awe-inspiring” (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998: 187). The pragmatic and obvious human manipulations of the land (such as farming) tend to be overlooked, although, as Macnaghten and Urry (1998: 187) point out, sometimes farmers can become symbolically constructed as integral to the romantic gaze as “makers of the land”.

Referring to discourses of rurality in Ireland, McDonagh (2001) suggests that while the English rural idyll depicts a kind of romantic beauty, pervaded by nostalgic traces of a rustic past, images of tranquillity and rose-covered cottages, the Irish depiction is often much harsher. Here too, there are images of thatched cottages, green fields, scenic beauty, friendliness and harmony, but there are also images of uncompromising and unfertile lands, wave-lashed coastlines, remote expanses of bog and signs of struggle, famine and poverty. Drawing on examples from Irish literature, Gibbons (1996) argues that the idealisation of the West of Ireland and the equation of rurality with true Irishness has been a dominant theme in twentieth century Irish art. From this perspective, rural Ireland was portrayed by most artists in terms of wild, romantic, picturesque landscapes with

little reference to the reality of social and economic conditions of the time (Brett, 1994; Duffy, 1994). Gaffey (2004) highlights the presence of a type of Irish ‘romantic rural idyll’ where traditions of true Ireland persist with farmers playing a major role in the moral and economic backbone of the country.

However, many Irish writers have provided less than idyllic interpretations of rural life in Ireland. Authors such as Frank Ó’Connor, Sean Ó’Faoláin, Patrick Kavanagh and Sam Hanna Bell are among those who have written about the contested nature of rural society in which ownership and possession of land were the dominant themes. The land legislation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had conferred ownership on the occupiers of the farms and, consequently, Irish rural life is considered to be shaped by the dictates and hardship of farming the land (Duffy, 1997). In one strand of Irish nationalism, a utopian vision of a rural, Gaelic Ireland, in which sturdy individuals tilled the soil on small holdings, was pursued as a political objective after independence (Greer, 2005). Echoes of this were clearly heard in *Fianna Fáil*’s ideology of family farming from the 1920s to the 1950s. This was epitomised in Éamon De Valera’s (3rd President of Ireland) romantic vision of an Ireland of small family farms, frugal living, self sufficiency and national independence (Brown, 1985). For example, in the 1930s, *Fianna Fáil* governments under de Valera introduced protectionist measures, such as quotas and export bounties, and reoriented policy towards land redistribution and the encouragement of intensive tillage. Greer (2005) argues that this protectionist turn was grounded in ideas of national self-sufficiency, underpinned by the core political imperative that reliance on Britain had to be reduced. Consequently, Irish farmers are traditionally portrayed as guardians of the land and property rights which are deeply embedded in Irish culture, given the central role of the land struggle in the independence movement.

These representations of rurality in Ireland suggest that the early decades of the Irish State saw the development of a powerful agrarian ideology, which had its roots in nineteenth century Irish nationalism. These include the notion of agricultural life as ‘good’ and ‘natural’, that farmers should be economically independent, that farmers must work hard to demonstrate their virtue and the idea

that family farms are inextricably linked to democracy. Consequently, land issues in Ireland have a strong association with the long struggle for political independence. As Hannan and Commins (1992) note, having battled so long for their land, Irish farmers have been very reluctant to give it up. Support for this position can be traced to the Irish Constitution of 1937 which commits the State to directing its policy 'towards [establishing] on the land in economic security as many families as in the circumstances shall be practicable' (Department of the Taoiseach, 2002). Such expressions of support are inextricably bound up with the conduct of Irish political culture (O'Connor and Dunne, 2009).

In comparison to the popular conception of the English rural idyll, McDonagh (2001) suggests that there is no Irish rural idyll. His argument is that the Irish rural idyll is largely an English construct and its Irish counterpart, with its unique cultural background, shares only superficial traits. These differing cultural experiences give rise to contrasting outlooks on rurality and rural life in general. Rather than using an Irish rural idyll, McDonagh (2001) considers a type of Irish 'rural heritage' as it best covers the range of interpretations of rurality which exist at international, national, regional and local levels. For McDonagh (2001), the Irishness of today is largely fashioned by experiences over the last seventy or so years of independence and, hence, much of its identity and its heritage has been moulded by British influence. In this context, issues of nationalism, language and religion form the nucleus of most aspects of Irish life. A popular representation of nationalism can be seen through Irish iconography and symbolism (such as shamrocks, harps and Celtic crosses) which have become associated with patriotic feelings and sentiments (McDonagh, 2001).

This preoccupation with rural imagery and symbolism can also be observed in work by Quinn (1994) through an analysis of verbal and visual presentations in brochures produced to promote Ireland as a tourist destination in continental Europe. In this context, Quinn (1994) identified a number of broad concepts: a world apart from modern society; an attractive, unspoiled environment; friendly people; a relaxed pace of life; a vast cultural heritage; and a large selection of sporting opportunities. The images incorporating these themes included: mostly rural landscapes; vernacular (thatched cottages, stone walls) and spectacular

(castles, mansions) architecture; people in traditional attire carrying out traditional activities (bringing home the hay); aspects of historical legacy (Celtic crosses); and the natural environment as a location for sporting activities (golf, angling, etc.).

The significance of rural imagery and nature is also confirmed through recommendations that were made in 1928 regarding the design of Irish coinage with images of Irish animals and wildlife replacing the old traditional symbols of round towers and shamrocks. The images selected drew intimately on aspects of rurality and nature in Irish life (Browne, 1985: 75 cited in McDonagh, 2001). For example, Irish coinage issued in 1928 depicted symbols of Irish agriculture, rural and sporting life with images of a woodcock, a chicken, a pig with piglets, a hare, a wolfhound, a bull, a hunter, and a salmon.

However, when considering the various representations of rurality in Ireland, it is important to consider that this preoccupation with both positive and negative renditions of rurality reflects the simple point that, until the 1960s, much of Ireland was predominantly a rural society. Many of the influential writers were from the countryside and, therefore, rural imagery may have coloured their writing. Furthermore, it is also important to question the extent to which representations of rurality relate to current rural policy discourses in a given space. For Greer (2005), contemporary rural policy development is intimately influenced by the relationship between policy histories, economic structures and socio-cultural values. In this context, different conditions create different national policy priorities that embody constructions of the economic and social significance of agriculture, rural life and of long-term national policy styles and understandings (Greer, 2005).

These insights raise important questions about the consideration of the place of hunting in Ireland. If the construction of nature and rurality in industrialised societies has become dominated by, for example, the 'rural idyll', then are interactions with nature becoming increasingly contested? From the English perspective, the literature illustrates that the image of the rural idyll and romantic gaze – where people live in harmony with nature and animals – is greatly valued

by the public. However, from the Irish perspective, representations of nationalism, independence, nature and farming are more dominant. In this context, some hunting activities in Ireland, such as mounted fox hunting⁶ with hounds may be constructed as being ‘English’ or in some cases ‘anti-Irish’. Other hunting activities, such as rough shooting may hold a somewhat safer place in Irish rurality based on representations of nature and sporting symbolism that were popular on Irish coinage.

Considering the wider socio-cultural and political parameters relating to conceptualisation of Irish rurality, it is useful to briefly examine the place of hunting throughout Ireland’s recent history. Much of the literature suggests that hunting activities, specifically hunting with hounds, have a long history in Ireland (Lewis, 1975; Lewis, 1979; Corballis, 1999; Costecalde and Gallagher, 2004). However, it appears that the plantations of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marked an important influence on the development of some hunting activities. Referring to mounted hunting with hounds, Lewis (1975: 39) stated that “there can be little doubt that many of the planters were hunting men and it is likely that hunting increased during this period”. Butler’s (2006) commentary on game shooting in Ireland makes a similar connection to the English landlord’s interest in game shooting (and fishing). He states that “as well as embracing a more than adequate acreage of prime agricultural land, each estate was so ordered that, where possible, there was a river well-stocked with trout and salmon and, equally important, a large tract of scrub, forest and mountain” (pg. 1).

Outside of private estates, it appears that mounted fox hunting with hounds became a popular activity by the mid-eighteenth century and reports suggest that private hunts had been formed in most counties in Ireland⁷. After the mid-

⁶ Fox hunting is generally seen as a traditional English country pursuit. Many of the current fox hunts in Ireland operate in a similar style to English fox hunts and were established during the plantations of Ireland when fox hunting was very popular in the UK. In addition, there has been increasing academic attention towards hunting and its connection to class issues in the UK, particularly in regard to hunting with hounds (e.g. see Thomas, 1983; Bell, 1994; Woods, 2000; Milbourne, 2003a).

⁷ Most of the hunts concentrated on hunting the hare, however, there were at least nineteen packs of fox hounds (Lewis, 1975).

eighteenth century, however, private hunts began to decline and the number of subscription hunts increased (Lewis, 1975). The switch from private hunts to subscription hunts may have resulted from an increase in participation from a broader segment of the population. Although fox hunting with hounds was closely linked to English landlord families, some reports suggest that there was a wide range of participants involved. The writings of Anglo-Irish novelists Edith Somerville and Martin Ross suggest, for example, that fox hunting fostered class solidarity within the Ascendancy, but was one of the more important means through which a particular relationship between the upper class, the poorer rural dwellers and the land could be both defined and maintained (Chen, 1997; Laird, 2004; 2005). On the other hand, Curtis (1987: 351) claims that the pursuit of preserved game across fields and over ditches provided an “adventure with an aristocratic flavour”⁸.

By the mid-nineteenth century, there was a great deal of agrarian unrest in Ireland and, in many cases, this was directed at mounted hunting with hounds. Curtis (1987) and Taatgen (1992) presented detailed accounts of very serious attempts to disrupt Irish hunts in 1881, when mounting anger over government repression, and resentment of landlords who were pressing their tenants for rent, spilled over into the hunting field. The act of fox hunting with hounds was seen as a symbolic assertion of ‘ownership’ over the fields that were trampled by the horses and followers (Curtis, 1987). Laird (2005) stated that denying hunts access to land occupied by the tenant-farmers was only one facet of the anti-hunting agitation, the protesters were not merely preventing hunt members from entering their farms, they were challenging a social order that often gave landlords sole rights to the animals that roamed these properties. From this perspective, the mounted hunts were seen by many as the embodiment of landlordism and, in some areas, poison was laid for the hounds and followers were insulted and even attacked (see Lewis, 1975; Curtis, 1987; Taatgen, 1992).

⁸ Outside of the formal activity of fox hunting with hounds, Lewis (1975) stated that it is likely many major landlords looked with disfavour on other hunting activities (e.g. foot hunting with hounds and game shooting) carried out by their tenants.

Although the anti-hunting movement may have done no damage to field sports in Ireland (Lewis, 1975), it deepened the divisions in Irish society and the existing anti-landlord sentiment, which was already exposed to boycotting and ambush (Curtis, 1987). The hunt protests showed that Irish militants would stop at nothing – not even poisoning of hounds – in their campaign to drive the gentry out of the country and expropriate their land (Curtis, 1987; Taatgen, 1992). In recent decades, however, it is evident that there is a noticeable gap in the Irish rural literature regarding the place of hunting or any other recreation activities within socio-cultural constructions of rurality in Ireland.

Referring to contemporary discourses of rurality in the UK, Macnaghten and Urry (1998) have shown just how symbolically important the rural idyll and romantic gaze is through a study of leisure and recreation policies in the UK. They found that public agencies adopt a narrow conception both of the leisure function of the countryside and of the boundaries of peoples' countryside needs. Rural policy, for example, conceived of the countryside as a space which is vulnerable to threats associated from inappropriate tourism and leisure uses. The documents promote 'quiet and non-intrusive countryside activities (such as picnicking and walking)' and which clearly privilege a visual, passive, and romantic construction of the countryside (and nature). Hence, for Macnaghten and Urry (1998), the Countryside Commission appeared to be primarily concerned with the diverse processes that currently threaten the beauty of the English countryside (such as farming, forestry, rural development, tourism and leisure interests). On the other hand, Macnaghten and Urry (1998) argue that there are some new opportunities proposed for the increased economic exploitation of leisure which arise from the popular romantic gaze. They argue that the application of such policies may lead to the marketing and further economic exploitation of a wide range of rural activities such as fishing, golf and some hunting activities.

However, according to McDonagh (2001), it is important to question the concept of the rural idyll, largely because its ambiguity allows the space for interpretations to be applied as required. For example, Bunce (1994: 15) suggests that "the countryside ideal exists in our minds, cooked up for us as a dream of

popular culture...manifest in diverse cultural forms and practices". We can therefore find the idyll on television, in novels and poems, in shops, even on our plates (Bunce, 1994). From these perspectives, it appears that the concept of the idyll has an insecure place among definite literacy forms. Its character is vague, often referring to the purely sentimental, and our conception of it is further obscured by the fact the adjective 'idyllic' has become synonymous with pastoral and the rustic (Bell, 2006). Hence, rural idylls should not be seen in a static, natural or sanitised way, which recreates past landscapes and objects rather than social relations (Cloke, 1995).

This work on socio-cultural constructions of rurality has also opened up considerations of 'otherness' in the rural academic gaze (Cloke, 1997), which has attempted to elucidate the diversity of rural lifestyles and experiences (see Cloke and Little, 1997). This follows Philo's (1992) call for greater recognition of those groups excluded as the subjects of conventional research. In relation to work on animals, Jones (2006) stresses the importance of taking into account the more-than-social world by arguing that the rural is co-constituted by a wide range of actors (including animals) which work in some form of hybrid, relational arrangement. This way of conceptualising rurality has made the idea of studying activities such as hunting more pertinent and possible. Unfortunately, Jones (2006) argues that hunting culture was initially excluded from analysis of 'rural others' owing to the social and moral distance between academic and hunting culture. In recent years, however, there has been an increase in the number of social science studies on hunting, particularly in the UK, which question the variability of hunting in the countryside. The following section draws on a number of international studies that attempt to position hunting within broader nature-society-rurality connections.

2.7 The Place of Hunting in the Countryside

In the UK, there has been a flurry of studies on hunting as its politics has become highly contested and is high on the political agenda. For example, a study of rural lifestyles in England in the early 1990s by Cloke *et al.* (1996) reported that the most frequently cited conflicts between new and established rural residents were those focused on agriculture, hunting and animal welfare. Milbourne (2003b)

argues that 'the rural' has emerged as a new moral battleground, characterised by a series of high profile nature-based conflicts. These conflicts have developed as governments and agencies have attempted to introduce new laws and regulatory frameworks that relate to traditional rural activities (Milbourne, 2003b).

Woods (2000) has shown that although animals are barred from physical participation in the political process, they are frequently represented and evoked in political discourse. He argues that the hunting debate cannot be separated from the construction of rurality, with representations of animals featuring prominently in many constructions of the rural (see also Woods, 1998b). From this perspective, Woods (2005) suggests that the late twentieth century witnessed the global spread and popularisation of new thinking concerning human interactions with nature, which introduced new standards for environmental protection. These values are founded on a mixture of environmental philosophy, green ideology, scientific representation and lay discourses of benign nature.

The growing influence of this new thinking, Woods (2005) argues, has led to the adoption of new laws and measures aimed at regulating or prohibiting hunting in a number of countries including Belgium and, most controversially, the UK. In the UK, many debates have emerged that involve conflict between new and traditional values and which challenge the *status quo* of rural society (see Woods, 2004). In this context, hunting is frequently constructed as being part of the quintessential iconography of the 'traditional' countryside. For example, those sections of the rural population directly connected to traditional rural pursuits like hunting, whose interests had been closely served by established discourses of rurality, came to feel they were under attack on multiple fronts. Woods (2004) states that a sense of beleaguerment and isolation has thus been generated in which a so-called 'indigenous' rural culture and 'way of life' is perceived to be under threat (see also Cox and Winter, 1997). This perception allows issues such as hunting to be linked to a single political struggle and positions the urban or 'urban values' as the enemy.

Milbourne (2003a; 2003b) examined questions revolving round the hunting debate in the UK, which have centred on the possibility of anti-hunting with

hounds legislation (eventually enacted in 2005). Milbourne (2003a) showed that the issue of hunting with dogs in Britain is very much entangled with broader sets of natural, socio-cultural and political processes operating within and beyond rural spaces. At a national scale, he identified important connections between nature, rurality and hunting; dominant discourses of nature exhibit strong references to rurality and located within these natural discourses of rurality are powerful images of hunting. At the local level, Milbourne's (2003a) findings highlight the important 'local cultures' of hunting in the four study sites that were examined. Similarly, the findings reveal that not only does hunting with hounds represent a highly visible component of local rural life, but there exists a widespread knowledge of local hunting practice which extends to most residents.

Milbourne's (2003a) findings also highlight that higher proportions of incomer groups to rural areas express support for hunting with dogs. This, Milbourne (2003a) argues, provides clear evidence of the ways in which new middle-class groups are conforming to existing dominant local cultures of hunting within these areas. However, this finding also complicates dominant understandings (within rural studies) of middle-class incomer groups imposing new moral environments on to rural spaces (see Halfacree, 1997). In this context, naturalistic discourses of rurality, bound up with hunting, are being reproduced within the social spaces of some communities in the UK. As such, Milbourne (2003a) concludes that hunting needs to be seen very much as an embedded social practice which is accommodated – both by established and by newly settled groups – within everyday life, and helps to shape 'the social construction of local reality'.

Research undertaken by Bell (1994) in Hampshire and Norton (1999) in Devon paints a more complex picture of the social and cultural place of hunting in rural areas. In his study of Childerley, Bell (1994) identifies three main groupings based on attitudes towards local fox hunting – the conservative moneyed residents who support hunting, and moneyed villagers with left wing sympathies along with working-class residents who generally oppose it. Drawing on an ethnographic account of hunting on Exmoor, Norton (1999) discusses the polarising effect of hunting on his study community. He claims that most

residents hold ‘non-attitudes’ towards hunting and remain distant from the practice, while, for a minority, hunting provides the central thread of their social lives (Milbourne, 2003a).

Outside of the UK, Franklin (1996) states that what most people in contemporary Western societies find so puzzling is the apparent pleasure taken from killing animals at a time when food has never been more plentiful and varied. According to Franklin (1996) this puzzlement derives from a complex history of social change in human-animal relations, the end result being the establishment of a mass sentimentalisation of a widening range of animal categories. In this context, hunters are likely to be seen as cruel and barbaric by urbanities. It is not surprising, therefore, that hunters find themselves increasingly in conflict with middle-class urbanities over their continued rights to hunt (Franklin, 1996).

Franklin (1999) also argues that contemporary opinions on hunting largely depend on the political economy of particular countries. For example, in the USA and Australia, hunting has a nostalgic quality relating to ‘nation formation’ and often difficult circumstances (Grandy *et al.*, 2003). In these regions, hunting is seen as a type of nationalistic self-provisioning practice. Whereas in France, Britain and the Netherlands, hunting is largely associated with historic traditional social elites and, if anything, is resented as a symbol of domination and oppression. However, when considering hunting in Britain, it is important to understand that it carries with it strong associations with class. As Howe (1981: 278), an American anthropologist, has commented, “English fox-hunting can be seen as a ritual of social class...dramatising themes and images about the gentry and aristocracy, and about rural society as a whole”. In a similar context, Bell (1994: 185 cited in Milbourne, 2003a) states:

“Some rural images are well settled in the global imagination...Throughout the Anglo-American world one encounters prints of English hunting scenes on the walls of libraries, private homes and corporate conference rooms. A red jacketed huntsman on horseback leaping a hedge, the hounds and field of riders thundering away in ‘full cry’; a fox poised in the foreground deciding on an escape route, the hunters and horses in the distance”.

In the USA, Duda (1993) and Kellert (1996) illustrate that public acceptance of hunting hinges on considerations such as fair chase, the perceived humaneness of the hunting method, whether hunting is conducted for sport/recreation, the extent to which hunting is viewed as necessary (e.g. to resolve a human-wildlife conflict or to provide food), and whether hunters respect laws and regulations (Grandy *et al.*, 2003). Kellert (1996) found that more than 80 percent of the general public approves of Native American subsistence hunting as well as any hunting done exclusively to obtain meat. Hunting for sport or recreation is acceptable to most Americans (64 percent) only if the meat is used. However, 60 percent of those surveyed indicated an opposition to hunting done solely for recreation or sport, and 80 percent were opposed to trophy hunting (Grandy *et al.*, 2003).

Kellert (1996) also discovered that relatively ‘urban-orientated’ people in the U.S. tend to express a greater concern for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat. Similarly, Heberlein and Ericsson (2005) state that the majority of studies have shown that urban people have more negative attitudes towards hunting (e.g. Dahlgren *et al.*, 1977; Shaw, 1977; Kellert, 1978; Mankin *et al.*, 1999; Teel *et al.*, 2002). Grandy *et al.* (2003: 64) suggest that an increasingly urbanised and suburbanised America constructs nature through “idealised notions of wildlife populations that can exist free of human intervention”. Kellert (1996: 45) suggests that, by contrast, rural residents “are more likely to value wildlife and the land primarily because of their usefulness to humans, rather than through an appreciation of their role in natural ecosystems”. In a similar context, Heberlein and Ericsson (2005) have demonstrated that, in Sweden, multi-generational urbanities, those who were born in cities to parents who lived in cities, have negative attitudes towards hunting and feel that wildlife is less important in comparison to those with rural experience. On the other hand, urban residents who had more contact with the countryside had positive attitudes towards hunting.

2.8 Economic and Ecological Implications of Hunting: A Political Ecology Perspective

Political ecology is a diverse and transdisciplinary field. The roots of political ecology in ecological and social science are described by Paulson *et al.* (2003)

and Peet and Watts (1996). According to Blaikie and Brookfield (1987: 17), the phrase ‘political ecology’ combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together these encompass the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within society itself. Zimmerer (2000: 153) defines political ecology as the study of the “fusing of biogeophysical processes with broadly social ones”. According to Robbins (2004), political ecology is devised as a radical critique against the apolitical perspective and depoliticising effects of mainstream environmental and developmental research and practice. As an interdisciplinary field, political ecology has been at the forefront of attempts to integrate the advances in post-structural social theory into nature-society research, especially those addressing the social construction of nature (Robbins, 2004; Neumann, 2009).

In this regard, political ecology explicitly addresses the relations between the social and the natural, arguing that social and environmental conditions are deeply and inextricably linked. Moreover, it emphasises not only that the actual state of nature needs to be understood materially as the outcome of political processes, but also that the way nature itself is understood is also political. Ideas about nature, even those that result from formal scientific experimentation, are formed, shared and applied in ways that are inherently political (Escobar, 1999). Thus, political ecology attempts to link an understanding of the logics, dynamics and patterns of economic change to the politics of environmental action and ecological outcomes (Peet and Watts, 2004; Hutton and Adams, 2007).

Political ecology in geography has increasingly sought the incorporation of social and ecological analysis. In this context, ecosystems and social systems are regarded as mutually constituted. Escobar (1999: 7) pushed this approach to its limit by identifying a group of societies which he refers to as “organic nature”, thus blurring distinctions between humans, society and nature. While he does not deny nature, he suggests that it can only be known through culture, and thus proposes to categorise cultures by the ways in which they know nature. For Escobar (1999), the resource systems under analysis are typically viewed as utilised ecosystems that are, by nature, in ever-changing interaction with human

activities (e.g. people-vegetation, people-wildlife) that are typically differentiated by power relations associated with gender, ethnicity, class or wealth (see also Zimmerer and Basset, 2003).

Recent work in political ecology offers an interesting way to conceptualise and challenge many widely accepted ideas about conservation. Similar to the way in which post-structuralists approach the concept 'nature', political ecologists argue that the way conservation is understood has profound political significance (Neumann, 2004; Peet and Watts, 2004) particularly where the state or other actors seek to make rules about who can use nature and where, when and how they can do so. Mascia *et al.* (2003) argue coherently that conservation must reach out beyond its traditional base in the natural science and generate conservations with all kinds of other disciplines and actors. Notwithstanding the proliferation of often-incompatible proposals for conservation action (Brooks *et al.*, 2006), natural science analysis is still almost universally accepted with conservation as the starting point for the analysis of conservation need and for the prescription of priorities for action.

One of political ecology's approaches to nature-society relations critiques the current twenty-first century biodiversity conservation strategy. The prominence of spatially-defined conservation units (national parks, World Heritage Sites, wildlife corridors, biosphere reserves) has drawn geographers to examine the effects of these scaled spaces on access to and control of resources (Neumann, 1998; Zimmerer, 2000). With the creation of these conservation units, Hanna *et al.* (2007: 203) argue that "political ecologists have devoted some energy to the study of protected areas, which is unsurprising given political ecology's overall interest in forms of access to, and control over, resources".

The current approach to biodiversity conservation is structured around the idea that the establishment of national parks and protected areas is the best and indeed the only way to ensure the survival of wild species. The attempt to regulate resource use through controlling access is typically undertaken by delimiting conservation spaces and limiting use of heretofore common property resources. Political ecologists reveal how these spaces of conservation become arenas of

conflict that result in distinctive patterns of resource management (Zimmerer and Bassett, 2003).

This notion builds on the idea of nature as ‘pristine’, with complexes of species existing in a natural state, matched with a view of humanity as a destructive force analytically external to the natural world. The idea of wilderness as a positive statement of the value of lands free from human presence and un-transformed by human action has long been a powerful motivator of conservation action (Cronon, 1995; Rangarajan and Shahabuddin, 2006). The establishment of protected areas that exclude people, and their traditional activities, reflects a conceptual division between nature and human society that has deep roots in Western thought (Hutton and Adams, 2007).

From a wider international policy perspective, the protected area approach or ‘protect and reserve’ approach has been central to European conservation in recent decades. The aim is to protect species and create reserves to preserve habitats, as encapsulated in the 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and related European Union Directives (e.g. Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)) (Kenward *et al.*, 2009a). Currently, 17 percent of Europe’s land area is within the Natura 2000 network (the main pillar of EU conservation policy that encapsulates the Birds and Habitats Directives), which gives strict protection to certain species and habitats but also includes some provision for the use of resources, for example, through hunting.

Critically referred to as the ‘fortress model’ by political ecologists, the current mainstream strategy for biodiversity conservation relies on the idea that conservation requires large territories where ecosystems are allowed to function undisturbed by human activities (Neumann, 2009). Kenward *et al.* (2009a) argue that, although the ‘protect and reserve’ system of protecting species has changed social attitudes to wildlife favourably, it has not prevented the loss of biodiversity through land use activities such as agriculture (Paine and Pienkowski, 1997; Pretty, 2002). In recent years, political ecologists have pursued several areas of inquiry related to fortress-style biodiversity conservation

(see Cronon, 1995; McCarthy, 2005; Paulson *et al.*, 2003; Robbins, 2004; Neumann, 2009). Consequently, many political ecologists stress the importance of recognising the history of human use and occupation of protected areas and the ways this has influenced biodiversity.

However, advocates of fortress-style biodiversity protection have tended to disregard or downplay historic human occupation and the role of human use and management on the ecology and landscape targeted for preservation. To highlight this, Tovey (2009) states that very little of the European countryside, particularly the Irish one, can accurately be categorised as ‘wilderness’. She suggests that the ‘unspoilt’ places that we still have, such as National Parks, are socio-historical and class-based constructions, often the work of eighteenth and nineteenth century landlords following fashionable ideas of the sublime in landscape painting during the Romantic period (see also Slater, 1993). Neumann (1998), for example, has carefully documented the way in which imported Anglo-American wilderness aesthetics – ideas of how wilderness ought to look – were imposed on African landscapes, inventing environments that had previously not existed. In general, political ecology’s primary concern with the fortress approach is that it is deeply flawed for both ecological and political reasons. In ecological terms, global biodiversity losses have accelerated during the same period in which the number of parks and equivalent reserves increased exponentially (Neumann, 1999).

In recent decades, one of the largest international conservation policy frameworks, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), has begun to recognise the need for a framework encompassing the ‘sustainable use’ of resources (Kenward *et al.*, 2009a). The CBD defines sustainable use as the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations (UNEP, 1992). The CBD has ‘sustainable use’ as its second objective and refers to it as a process to: Protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements; and adopt economically and

socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity (UNEP, 1992; Kenward *et al.*, 2009a).

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) also identifies four kinds of ecosystem service; provisioning services such as food, water, timber and genetic resources; regulating services such as waste treatment or the regulation of climate or flooding; cultural services such as recreation and aesthetic enjoyment; and supporting services such as soil formation, nutrient cycling and plant pollination (MA, 2003). From a policy perspective, the MA recognises that ecosystems are considered public goods to be sustained by public funding. A number of political ecologists also argue that supporting and regulating services of ecosystems benefit society as a whole. For example, Robbins (2004) suggests that it is important not to forget about the traditional and cultural users of land or resources when making decisions about conservation and land.

The concept of keeping any use of biodiversity sustainable is not particularly new. It goes back more than a century in German forestry, and was articulated as the 'Land Ethic' of Aldo Leopold (1948). In general, it notes that humans value and, hence, conserve what is useful to them (Webb, 2002): 'what pays, stays'. In 2000, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) adopted a policy statement on sustainable use of wild living resources, which includes the conclusion that: 'Use of wild living resources, if sustainable, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them' (Kenward *et al.*, 2009a). However, it is also important to point out that the concept 'sustainability' has been much discussed and debated by political ecologists over recent decades in many different scientific, political and public areas. Consequently, the concept is contested, and is defined and used in many different ways and meanings. This section does not seek to elaborate on the different definitions, as many papers provide insights into this (for a comprehensive overview, see Hansen, 1996). In 1987, the Brundtland Commission introduced the concept of 'sustainable development' and gave the following – by now famous – definition:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 43).

In terms of promoting sustainable use activities, it is important to recognise that this is not simply a matter of eco-tourism, in which high-carbon travel may associate with high pressure on local water and other resources, but also of local communities gathering flowers, angling or hunting as much for recreation as for food, and developing rules to keep the service sustainable. For example, for more than two millennia, wildlife reserves have been created for hunting (Gadgil and Guha, 1992), with modern recreational hunters and anglers adding closed seasons, quotas, catch and release (Kenward *et al.*, 2009a).

It is within this context that the CBD recognises that the majority of natural habitats exist on privately-owned land and few governments can afford to enforce or subsidise biodiversity conservation beyond designated sites (see Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003; Oldfield *et al.*, 2003). In recent years, a number of studies have shown that the existence of resource use activities, such as hunting, may provide an incentive for the preservation and restoration of certain habitat types on agricultural land. In the UK, for example, MacDonald and Johnson (2000) surveyed landowners examining their motivations for habitat management and found that there was a tendency for hunting farmers to report having removed less hedgerow in the decade preceding the survey. There was also evidence that other non-productive habitats were better treated by these groups. Oldfield *et al.* (2003) found that landowners participating in hunting activities maintained more established woodland and planted more new woodland than those who did not, despite the equal availability of subsidies. Stoate (2002) also suggested that recreation activities such as hunting have the potential to provide rural employment, whilst introducing both diversity and resource use to the farmland landscape.

In a survey of land management practices in the UK, Piddington (1981) argues that landowners with hunting interests, especially game shooting, are active in creating and managing a variety of habitats for wildlife. The same study found that a third of landowners with woodland in hand had planted and managed

undergrowth for certain game species and had been influenced in their choice of trees for recent planting by hunting considerations. Piddington (1981) also found that a third of those with uplands undertook heather management for red grouse shooting purposes. Of those with arable and grassland in hand, 25 percent had retained hedgerows and 14 percent had planted cover crops to encourage game, whilst 9 percent had managed water to encourage duck species or wildlife.

It has also been suggested that the participants involved in fox hunting traditionally manage woodland as cover for foxes and maintain their hedgerows and dry stone walls to provide jumps for followers on horse-back where otherwise lower maintenance wire fences, which are much less desirable from a biodiversity perspective, might have been situated. Ewald *et al.* (2006) surveyed 92 fox hunts in the UK examining their contribution to woodland management. They found that 56 percent of the hunts surveyed managed woodland motivated by the improvement of their sport. Woodland management techniques included tree planting, coppicing, felling, ride and perimeter management. Follow-up case study examinations revealed that vegetation cover in managed and unmanaged sites averaged 85 percent and 64 percent respectively, and managed areas had higher plant diversity than unmanaged areas.

From a wider economic perspective, it has been suggested that where land is relatively unproductive, the recreational or cultural use of resources frequently competes effectively with intensive uses, for example, where hunting is more economic than livestock farming in southern Africa (see Prins *et al.*, 2000), and hunting has restored endangered wildlife populations through management and reintroduction much more widely (see Dickson *et al.*, 2009). A recent pan-European project entitled 'Governance and Ecosystem Management for the Conservation of Biodiversity' (GEMCONBIO) conducted a large case study on uses of biodiversity in the European Union (see Kenward and Sharp, 2008). A high proportion of the 27 EU states were covered by the survey for hunting (96 percent) and angling (64 percent) with 81 percent for bird-watching and 42 percent for collecting fungi.

With participation in hunting and angling estimated from licence data, the results presented in GEMCONBIO suggest that approximately 7 million Europeans are recreational hunters and 23 million are anglers. With data from 10-14 countries on spending, it can be estimated that they spend about €35 billion annually, or at least €40 billion if (less reliable) estimates from bird-watching are included (Kenward and Sharp, 2008), and that perhaps a quarter of the 490 million EU citizens gather fungi and plant products. This is equivalent to at least €121 for each of the 331 million hectares of the EU. In the UK alone, a survey in 2002 estimated annual income from a wide range of resource use activities (including the collection of plant products and fungi but excluding released game) at €7.2 billion, which was 30-50 percent the value of UK agricultural production and accounted for some 58,000 jobs (IUCN-UK and ESUSG, 2004; Sharp and Wollscheid, 2009). In the USA, the latest five-year survey of US spending on wildlife-associated recreation (USDI, FWS and USDC, 2007) estimates that 88 million US adults (38 percent of adults) watched (71 million), fished (30 million) and hunted (13 million) wildlife in 2006, spending \$122 billion. That represents \$155 for each of the 774 million hectares of the USA.

Over the last 30 years, many localised studies examining the economic presence of hunting have been undertaken throughout the world. The motivations for undertaking such research are varied. In the USA, for example, a number of studies examining the economic value of hunting have been undertaken to make decision-makers more aware of the value of natural resources and to assist in developing management philosophies and guiding decisions on where to focus resources. At a less technical level, expenditure estimates for wildlife-related recreation are important for economic questions because policy-makers understand them as indicators of the relative importance of competing demands for resources in the countryside (Martin and Gum, 1978).

For example, Loft (1998) examined the economic contribution of deer, antelope and sage grouse hunting to North-Eastern California. In this research, it was estimated that hunter expenditure amounted to \$2.26 million during 1997, of which deer stalking expenditure contributed \$2.1 million of this figure. In another study, Wallace *et al.* (1991) estimated that hunting expenditure in Alabama on goods and services amounted to \$512 million and created an

additional 7,921 jobs. As an illustration of usefulness of these monetary value estimates, it was estimated that huntable land had an average value of \$229 while the average sale value for cattle was only \$137. Similarly, in the UK, PACEC (2006) conducted a survey of game shooting sports and found that the 480,000 people involved spend £2 billion each year on goods and services and estimate that shooting is worth £1.6 billion to the UK economy.

2.9 Conclusion

Drawing on post-structural theory and, more specifically, social constructivism, this chapter has provided a medium to challenge the ways in which nature, animals and rurality are constructed by various groups in debates about hunting. In this context, various social forces have brought about a range of industrial, ethical, conceptual and emotional changes in human-animal relationships. These various ‘sites of contestation’ connect to both broad, structural historical changes, such as those presented by Thomas (1983), Elias (1994) and Tester (1992) regarding urbanisation and industrialisation, and the new ‘sensibilities’ established by the end of the nineteenth century making it ‘offensive’ to see animals being killed.

The literature also points to the development of an ‘animal rights’ discourse over the past thirty years. From this perspective, some animal rights advocates construct the view that animals are like humans (with ‘cultural’ human rights), whereas some hunters, in contrast, construct humans to be like animals (embedded in ‘natural’ life-cycles and food chains) (Franklin, 2001).

The literature presented also highlighted that specific constructions of rurality by various groups have the potential to affect the extent to which certain activities can be considered appropriate in rural space. This work on rurality demonstrates that the social space of rurality – often fuelled by idyllic concepts – play an important role in how meanings of rurality are constructed, negotiated and experienced. In some constructions of rurality (e.g. in the UK scenario), the realities of recreational hunting are disconnected from the countryside in order to maintain ‘the rural idyll’ and in some respects, the rural idyll has turned against hunting (see Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). At the same time, rural space has

increasingly come to be considered as recreational space with more calls for it to function as an area for rest and relaxation.

Drawing on a limited number of studies undertaken in the UK, it is clear that nature and rurality connect in rather uneven ways within specific regions of England and Wales. In this context, this chapter highlighted how the changing nature of rural life (e.g. see Bell, 1994) and shifting political and economic relationships in rural areas has affected the place of hunting in the countryside (e.g. see Marsden *et al.*, 1993). According to Woods (1998a: 1221), these constructed spaces of the countryside need to be viewed as transitional spaces between the city and wilderness that have become bound up with particular forms of rurality and nature where “the landscape, animals, and indigenous populations are all expected to perform particular roles according to pastoral myth of the rural idyll”.

Recent work in political ecology is useful to conceptualise the ways in which we typically conceive of nature-society relations in rural space. In general, political ecologists have staked out the middle ground, stressing that the idea of the social construction of nature does not mean that nature exists only in our collective imaginations. The prevailing position within political ecology accepts the existence of a material world independent of human consciousness and sensory perception, while at the same time recognises that our knowledge of that world is always situated, contingent, and mediated (Neumann, 2009).

Being critical of the conventional ‘protection-oriented’ approaches to international biodiversity conservation, political ecologists frequently argue that mainstream land use policies largely ignore key aspects of social and political processes that shape conservation in specific contexts (Wilshusen *et al.*, 2002). Kenward *et al.* (2009b) illustrate that people living with wildlife, and directly benefiting from it through recreation or sustainable use are given an incentive to conserve species and habitats (see also Hackel, 1998; Langholz and Lassoie, 2001). From this perspective, hunting activities can be placed in a broader rural policy context which is built around a variety of measures linked to diversifying

the rural economy, promoting multifunctional land use and conserving wildlife habitats on private land.

Thus far, however, very few studies have examined recreational hunting in Ireland. Those that do exist (e.g. Burke *et al.*, 1992; Corbally *et al.*, 1998) have approached hunting in terms of its material elements, describing it in terms of facts and statistics. The conceptual framework presented in this chapter is useful in that it provides a way to cross the boundaries of nature and society. The post-structural approach, in particular, illustrates how hunting is constructed, produced, established, and positioned within rural policy circles and the farming community in rural Ireland. However, the study also relies, to a lesser extent, on a positivistic approach to explore, at a more empirical level, the ways in which hunting is part of the rural economy and the ecological management of rural space⁹. Under this dual conceptual framework, it is possible to simultaneously encompass the deeper cultural understandings of hunting with the use of a material and statistical element in order to gain a better understanding of the presence of hunting in rural Ireland.

This dual contextual approach not only allows for more diverse data to be collected, but also provides a broader understanding of the place of hunting in rural Ireland. Although positivist and post-structural approaches are sometimes posed as diametrically opposite ways of approaching research, Roth and Mehta (2002) argue that combining both approaches can further the goals of a research project by contributing information that may have been missed by adopting only one contextual perspective. In this context, each approach is important in its own right, however, combining the two can provide even greater analytic value to a research project.

⁹ Unlike post-structuralism, the aims of positivist research are to offer explanations leading to control and predictability. Roth and Mehta (2002) explain that the positivist paradigm sees the world as being based on unchanging, universal laws and the view that everything that occurs around us can be explained by knowledge of these universal laws. Positivism has been a predominant way of knowing the social world; what Lincoln and Guba (2000) refer to as the 'received view'.

In general, this chapter has helped identify three key points about recreational hunting in rural Ireland: 1) that this is a relatively new research focus, which in turn implies 2) there have been relatively few empirical studies and 3) there is a necessity for an interdisciplinary approach. The next chapter describes the methodological framework used in this study. It begins by contextualising the aims and objectives of the study in line with the methodological approach used. It then goes on to discuss the application of the fieldwork methods, the collection of primary data and the methods used to analyse the data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the conceptual framework for this study, which illustrates that concepts such as nature, rurality and animals can be interpreted in various ways and their understandings are dependent on subjective interpretation. Paralleling this conceptual position, the chapter suggested that there is no 'neutral' conception of nature, and that nature, at least in some senses, belongs to human imagining and practice (Anderson, 2001). The chapter also drew on a range of socio-cultural discourses of rurality, particularly idyllised meanings, as well as the interconnections between constructions of rurality and nature. Coupled with the restructuring process taking place in rural areas, this 'idyllised' approach to conceptualising the rural increasingly positions the countryside as a recreational space, with more calls for it to function as an area for leisure and relaxation. From this perspective, hunting activities provide a useful focus for research, particularly in relation to the contested and complex understandings of nature, rurality and human-animal relationships that circulate in Western industrialised societies.

This chapter shifts the focus of concern away from the conceptual framework and outlines the research methodology used in this study. The first section contextualises the research questions in line with the methodological approach used. The chapter then discusses my positionality, as a researcher, in the context of the study and explains the application of the fieldwork issues and methods. Here, the chapter describes the collection of primary data in the form of questionnaire surveys with hunters and hunting organisers, analysis of rural policy documents, interviews with policy-makers and focus group discussions with farmers. The final part of the chapter discusses the methodology used to analyse the data.

3.2 Research Questions

3.2.1 Question 1. How is Hunting Present in Contemporary Irish Rural Space?

Within the EU and Ireland respectively, there has been intense debate about the future of farming, the role of agriculture within the countryside, the extent to which the sector will maintain support from the CAP and the future direction of rural policy (Garforth *et al.*, 2003). Current Irish rural development policy places agriculture in a broader context and encourages diversification of the rural economy and conservation of the environment, biodiversity and the amenity value of the countryside. Ireland's Rural Development Strategy (2007-2013) (Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 2007), for example, focuses on three key objectives:

1. Increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector through support for restructuring.
2. Enhancing the environment and countryside through support for land management.
3. Strengthening the quality of life in rural areas and promoting diversification of the rural economy.

A number of international policies, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (IUCN, 1992), recognise that people living with wildlife, and directly benefiting from it, through recreation or sustainable use, are sometimes given an incentive to conserve species and habitats (see Hackel, 1998; Langholz and Lassoie, 2001; Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003; Oldfield *et al.*, 2003). This policy recognition is supported by work in political ecology (see Robbins, 2004; Hanna *et al.*, 2008) which suggests that cultural activities, involving the use of biodiversity, can facilitate conservation, economic growth and other needs and aspirations of local communities. Furthermore, local communities involved in the cultural use of resources, such as gathering flowers, angling or hunting can be frequently involved in the development of rules and regulations to keep resources sustainable (Kenward *et al.*, 2009a). Recreational hunting activities represent a particularly good case study in this regard as they involve the cultural use of resources and have the potential to contribute to the development of rural economies and landscapes.

In line with the current focus within national policy (e.g. Ireland's Rural Development Strategy 2007-2013), international policy (e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity), and political ecology, it was decided to consider two distinct approaches for the first research question of this study: 1) to assess the relationship between hunting and the rural economy; 2) to assess the relationship between hunting and the ecological management of rural space.

From an economic perspective, recreational hunting is widely considered to have a noticeable presence in rural areas (e.g. see Giles, 1978; Baumann *et al.*, 1990; Southwick, 1994; Cox *et al.*, 1996; Adams *et al.*, 1997; Cobham Resource Consultants, 1997; Grado *et al.*, 1997; Lewis *et al.*, 1998; Grado *et al.*, 2001; PACEC, 2006; Kenward and Sharp, 2008). However, investigating the ways in which hunting is part of a rural economy is not a straightforward task. For example, some studies have attempted to examine the indirect effects of hunting on rural businesses (e.g. PACEC, 2000). This type of analysis involves estimating the indirect and induced effects of hunting. For the purpose of this study, however, this type of approach was considered to be both abstract and methodologically complicated. Instead, it was decided that the most appropriate and direct method to examine the relationship between hunting and the rural economy would be to examine the expenditure patterns of hunters on, for example, licenses, equipment, animals, hunting-related social costs and other associated expenses.

In order to explore the relationship between hunting and the ecological management of rural space, the extent to which management practices are undertaken to create habitats and other ecological features for hunting in Ireland was examined. This analysis was conducted using a questionnaire survey which was sent to the various hunting organisers¹⁰ in the Republic of Ireland.

¹⁰ Hunting organisers are the organisations (i.e. clubs and associations) that promote hunting meetings (e.g. rough shooting organisers are gun clubs, hunting with hounds organisers are hunts and coursing organisers are coursing clubs). They are generally governed by committees of members and subscribers and they have annual financial accounts.

Finally, some of the perceptions of the farming community were also encompassed within the remit of this objective. In particular, farmers' insights into the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and the management of ecology in Irish rural space were considered.

3.2.2 Question 2. How is Hunting Constructed within Irish Rural Policy?

Rural areas have long been seen and used as appropriate locations for recreation activities (Toner, 1996). In recent years, however, outdoor recreation has increasingly become recognised within rural policy as an important land use activity that can help address the development of sustainable rural communities (Roberts and Hall, 2001; CnaT, 2006). Despite the recent interest and growth in recreation participation, our understanding of the Irish policy mindset towards hunting activities in rural areas is surprisingly limited. Consequently, this objective sets out to interrogate and interpret how hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy documents and by rural policy decision-makers.

In doing so, this objective pays particular attention to the ways in which hunting is constructed in relation to socio-cultural discourses of nature, rurality and animals. It considers, for example, how society-nature interactions are affected by broader discursive constructs relating to the changing nature of human-animal relations and questions regarding the ethical appropriateness of recreational hunting¹¹. In addition, the objective considers how discourses of nature have become closely connected with understandings of the countryside and rurality (Williams, 1973; Soper, 1995; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). In the words of Cloke *et al.* (1996), the countryside has come to represent the spatialisation of nature (see also Milbourne, 2003a). For example, Chapter 2 illustrated that the image of the rural idyll and romantic gaze – where people live in harmony with nature and animals – is greatly valued by the public and within rural policy (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). In this context, this objective attempts to explore

¹¹ A number of organisations in Ireland (e.g. Animal Rights Action Network (ARAN), Irish Council Against Blood Sports (ICABS)) are opposed to hunting, primarily because of concerns over animal welfare and cruelty. Many of these organisations refer to hunting activities as 'blood sports'.

whether some hunting activities (e.g. mounted fox hunting with hounds¹²) are constructed differently in terms of socio-cultural aspects of rurality in comparison to, for example, game shooting in which the animals hunted have been used in representations of Irish nature and sporting symbolism on old coins and stamps (McDonagh, 2001).

This objective also considers that policy-makers at international, national and regional levels are increasingly interested in the promotion of local development and innovation in rural areas because they continue to suffer job losses in the agricultural sector. The changed rural economy makes possible diversification a potentially lucrative economic proposition. From this perspective, the extent to which hunting is constructed as a potential tool for rural economic and ecological development within Irish rural policy was examined.

3.2.3 Question 3. How is Hunting Constructed within the Irish Farming Community?

As stated in Chapter 2, research on some hunting activities (e.g. hunting with hounds in the UK) confirms its socio-cultural embeddedness in local rural spaces (e.g. Cox and Winter, 1997; Norton, 1999; Milbourne, 2003a). Studies outside of the UK, however, which have considered perceptions towards hunting within rural communities, are practically non-existent. It can be suggested, therefore, that there remain important gaps within our knowledge regarding the place of hunting in rural spaces. Moreover, the small number of local studies that have been undertaken provide a rather limited account of hunting in rural areas (Milbourne, 2003b). In this context, they have tended to explore the place of hunting from the perspectives of those individuals and groups involved in the practice (e.g. see Cox and Winter, 1997; Marvin, 2001).

This objective attempts to fill this gap by exploring the social and cultural position of hunting from a community-based perspective in Ireland. In particular, this objective examines the ways in which hunting is constructed by a large

¹² Fox hunting is generally seen as a traditional English country pursuit. Many of the current fox hunts in Ireland operate a similar style to English fox hunts and were established during the plantations of Ireland when fox hunting was in very popular in the UK (Lewis, 1975).

segment of Irish rural communities, namely, farmers. As this research question sets out to explore hunting from a broad rural community context, it was not considered appropriate, for example, to focus on hunters and/or hunting organisers. It was envisaged that focus group discussions with hunters and/or hunting organisers might not capture the wider social and cultural dynamics and sets of cultural tensions and conflicts surrounding hunting activities within rural Ireland. Furthermore, as this study operates within a broad discourse of rural change and restructuring, farmers were considered to be a key 'rural' group because they are frequently at the end point of policy changes dealing with land use, access, recreation, etc. Finally, not only are farmers embedded within rural space but they constitute a powerful position in that they provide access for hunters to use their land¹³. Hence, their voices were considered to be fundamental regarding the negotiation of the place of hunting within a rural development context.

Amongst other things, this objective considers that some discourses of rurality have elevated certain hunting activities (e.g. mounted fox hunting with hounds in the UK) to positions of prominence (see Bell, 1994; Milbourne, 2003a). As Lowe *et al.* (1995) have stressed, the practice of hunting carries with it a great deal of social and cultural baggage; representing a key emblematic component of the dominant anti-urban culture in Britain (Milbourne, 2003a). From this perspective, this objective sets out to examine whether hunting is constructed by farmers as an appropriate cultural and social activity in the Irish countryside.

Being aware that the public priorities for rural areas have been transformed, this objective also attempts to explore the ways in which farmers position hunting from a wider rural development perspective. The rationale for this approach is that agriculture is multifunctional, producing not only food but also sustaining rural landscapes, protecting biodiversity, generating employment and contributing to the viability of rural areas (Potter, 1998). However, recreational hunting activities have rarely been mentioned in diversification debates on the leading issues of agriculture and recreation (Cox *et al.*, 1996). In recent years,

¹³ Most hunting takes place on private land as recreational hunting on state-owned land in Ireland is prohibited. However, some hunting takes place on (state-owned) foreshore areas under licence.

farm diversification has mainly become synonymous with activities such as forestry, tourism and organic farming food products (Rotherham and Cartwright, 2000). For successful diversification, the aspirations of farmers and landowners are vital (Pigram and Jenkins, 1999). In this context, this objective aims to explore the perceptions of farmers and landowners in relation to the potential promotion of hunting activities in rural Ireland.

Finally, this objective sets out to explore whether or not farmers have any issues/concerns with people hunting on their land. Some studies (e.g. Ward, 1999) have highlighted the extent to which farmers and landowners may suffer costs and consequences from hunting. These costs may involve damage, disruption and inconvenience and can be difficult to quantify. As a result, discussions with farmers and landowners were considered the most suitable method to gain insights into this phenomenon.

Table 3.1 shows the relationship between the research questions, the data sources and the thesis chapters.

Table 3.1 Relating the research questions, the data sources and thesis chapters

Research Questions	Data Sources	Chapter
How is hunting part of contemporary Irish rural space?	Questionnaire survey with hunters, hunting organisers and focus group discussions with farmers	4
How is hunting constructed within Irish rural policy?	Analysis of rural policy documents and interviews with rural policy decision-makers	5
How is hunting constructed by farmers and positioned within Irish rural life?	Focus group discussions with farmers	5

3.3 Positionality of the Researcher

Given the apparently polarised nature of social responses to hunting, it seems important to situate my personal position towards hunting as a researcher conducting this study. This proved fundamental to my negotiation of access to hunters, policy-makers and farmers and for the performance of the research. A

number of areas of interest in my life and studies influenced my decision to make hunting the focus of my Ph.D. research. My main interest and motivation emerged through participating in game shooting (and fishing) with my father and brother from an early age.

Through participating in hunting, I have acquired some knowledge about hunting and hunting culture. These experiences, I believe, have been very useful, particularly for understanding the embodied knowledge that is part of hunting (see also Bye, 2003). However, for the purpose of this research, I am aware that my involvement in hunting and my upbringing within a rural setting has shaped my understanding of nature, human-animal relationships and rurality in particular ways. My upbringing, for example, has socialised me to think about nature as a space which, in many cases, requires active management in order to conserve biodiversity. As a hunter, I have assisted my local Gun Club in restocking game birds, controlling ‘pest’ species and creating habitats for game-birds. In this context, I recognise that my understanding of the countryside, and the animals therein, may be different to that of other people, particularly non-hunters. In my daily life, and through writing this thesis, I became increasingly aware of my own perspectives (as a hunter) and how I have been socialised to think about a range of concepts critiqued in this study. For example, I have become increasingly aware that the same aspect of nature, e.g. animals, will have different physical attributes and implications for societies depending on how those societies use it. In this context, I follow Castree’s (2001) perspective that the physical characteristics of nature are contingent upon social practices: i.e. they are not fixed.

When working through the material and data in this study, I found myself drawing inferences about the ways in which farmers and rural policy decision-makers are socialised to think about specific concepts and about hunting in general. From this perspective, I recognise that I am not an ‘objective’ outsider in this research process and I accept that I have been socialised to think about nature, rurality and animals in particular ways. However, during the course of this research, I have endeavoured to ensure that the analysis and results are

represented as faithfully as possible, whilst recognising the conceptual baggage that I bring to this research project.

My upbringing in a rural setting and my association with hunting activities (i.e. game shooting) also had a number of methodological implications for this study. First, I believe that my involvement in hunting enabled me to better interpret the various statements made by rural policy decision-makers and farmers concerning hunting in rural Ireland. Second, when approaching the main hunting organisations to obtain access to lists of hunters and hunting organisers, my association with hunting appeared to provide some comfort to the main representatives of Ireland's hunting organisations. Although I did not present myself as a hunter, I was frequently asked whether I had any involvement in hunting by individuals in hunting organisations. In this context, some hunting organisations may have been more willing to assist with this research because of my (hunting) background. This supports Bryman's (2004) assumption that, gaining access is usually mediated by gatekeepers who are concerned about the researcher's motives, what the organisation can gain from the investigation, what it will lose by participating in the research in terms of staff time and other costs, and the potential risks to its image. Cassell (1988: 93) describes gaining access as involving two stages: "getting in, or achieving physical access, and getting on, or achieving social acceptability". Consequently, gaining access is almost always a matter of negotiation and as such inevitably turns into a political process.

During the course of this research programme, it became apparent that Irish hunting organisations were very cautious about any research carried out on hunting activities and, particularly, about providing researchers with access to their members. For example, on more than one occasion, individuals involved in Ireland's main hunting organisations stated that some segments of the wider public do not understand their activities. Hence, by having an association with hunting, it was evident that the heads of the various hunting organisations felt that I brought a certain amount of trust to the research process. At other levels, hunters may have considered me to be 'a fellow hunter' and that the research would not pose any significant threat to their activities.

During the course of the research process, however, I adopted the position of a rural geographer without any pre-planned political or ethical agenda. At the same time, it should also be pointed out that the objectives of this research did not appear to pose any noticeable threat to Irish hunting organisations or indeed to any other interest groups. The research was always introduced as a rural geographical study which sought to explore the place of hunting in rural Ireland.

However, it is important to state that at the outset of this study, when I made contact with Ireland's main hunting organisation, the Federation of Field Sports of Ireland (FACE Ireland), they expressed a keen interest in my proposed economic examination on hunting and, subsequently, offered to provide some financial support for my research fieldwork for this part of my study. After numerous consultations with FACE Ireland, a three-year funding package was agreed from 2007-2010. It is important to stress that although FACE Ireland provided funding for this study, they were only interested in my proposed work on the relationship between hunting and the rural economy. FACE Ireland was not involved in any other manner in terms of shaping my research design or objectives. Consequently, the research environment was far more enabling than is often the case with some types of privately-funded research.

3.4 Data Collection: Examining How Hunting is Present in Rural Ireland

The process of conducting research on hunting activities in Ireland proved to be a challenging task. At an early stage of the project, it was decided that a comprehensive assessment required a mixed-method approach. In general, the approach to mixed-method research occurs when the researcher cannot rely on a single method alone and must structure his/her findings using a combination of research methods (Bryman, 2004).

In this study, postal questionnaires were used with hunting participants and organisers, semi-structured interviews were used with rural policy decision-makers and focus group discussions were used with farmers. As a result, the strengths of the different data sources complement each other by creating a body of empirical data that provides an in-depth understanding into the diversity of issues regarding the place of hunting in rural Ireland.

In order to examine the relationship between hunting and the rural economy, it was decided to assess hunters' expenditure on a range of hunting-related goods and services. According to Stynes and White (2006) the measurement of expenditure may be as complex as the measurement of attitudes as the area lacks corresponding methodological literature and guidance for researchers. The vast majority of expenditure studies on recreation activities are applied studies that are not published in formal outlets. Expenditure studies that do appear in peer-reviewed journals are frequently spin-offs of applied work rather than studies designed specifically to test particular hypotheses or alternative methods (Stynes and White, 2006).

Measuring the ways in which hunting is part of an economy is not a straightforward task. Recreational hunting is an activity in which individuals are involved; it is not a standard product or an industry that produces goods or services that can be easily measured and valued. However, there are widely used criteria by which the various economic dimensions of hunting activities can be assessed. Pinet (1995) argues that the most reliable method is to ask a random sample of hunters, using questionnaire surveys, to provide their hunting-related expenses over a particular period of time. This type of analysis has been conducted in a variety of regions (see Giles, 1978; Baumann *et al.*, 1990; Winter *et al.*, 1993; Southwick, 1994; Cox *et al.*, 1996; Adams *et al.*, 1997; Grado *et al.*, 1997; Lewis *et al.*, 1998; Burger *et al.*, 1999; Grado *et al.*, 2001; PACEC, 2006). The approach requires a determination of participants' total expenditures on items such as travel, licenses, food, clothing, equipment and other associated costs.

From a rural development perspective, there are two broad, but not exclusive, types of recreational hunting (Sharp and Wollschied, 2009). The first is local hunting, where the hunter lives close to the hunting area, and organises and pays appropriate fees to hunt locally. The second is hunting tourism, where the hunter travels some distance from home, often abroad, and is prepared to pay considerable sums of money, including to an intermediary supplier to organise

aspects of the hunt. In Ireland, the primary type of hunting carried out is local hunting or resident hunting¹⁴.

For the purpose of this study, the principal method used to examine how hunting is part of the rural economy involved analysing the various expenditures of resident hunters in the Republic of Ireland using a postal questionnaire survey. The topics contained within the questionnaire surveys examined participation in hunting, frequency of hunting and expenditure relating to hunting. Hunter expenditures were defined to include all expenditures made by resident hunters in the Republic of Ireland during 2007. These included the purchase of goods and services ranging from equipment, guns, ammunition, animal-related expenditure, social expenditure and miscellaneous costs. The surveys also attempted to establish the extent to which hunters' expenditure was made in the rural and the non-rural economy. In this case, hunters were asked to estimate what percentage of their expenditure was made: a) in a city/large town; b) in a country town; c) in rural area and d) by mail order.

The merits of questionnaire survey research are widely documented (see Hall and Hall, 1996; Bryman, 2004). Neuman (1999) argues that research in the form of a questionnaire survey has the ability to produce a large quantity of descriptive information over a range of different subject areas, which supplies the results with a measure of representativeness. The questionnaires were constructed taking care to minimise bias and maximise response rates as outlined in numerous texts (e.g. Bryman, 2004). The initial questions were straight forward and were framed to encourage the participants to respond without too much difficulty. The majority of the questions were closed-ended. The main advantage of this form of question is that the respondents can give their response quickly, enabling the respondent to answer a large number of questions in a short space of time (Veal, 1997). Furthermore, data from closed-ended questions take less time to input into, for example, a database, in comparison to open-ended questions.

¹⁴ Some tourist hunting takes place in Ireland. The most popular type of tourist hunting is driven game-bird shooting, which mainly takes place on private estates. There is very little information available on tourist hunting in Ireland.

The questionnaire surveys were devised following consultation with a range of other hunting expenditure studies (e.g. Winter *et al.*, 1993; Cox *et al.*, 1996; Grado *et al.*, 2001; PACEC, 2000; PACEC, 2006) and were preceded by a pilot exercise. In total, six different questionnaires were designed to survey the different types of hunting activities in the Republic of Ireland (see Appendix 2-7).

3.4.1 Sampling

In general, there are two main statistical criteria for designing an efficient research survey project. The first is that the process be unbiased; the second is that it be efficient (Cegielski *et al.*, 2001). Meaningful surveillance therefore requires that sampling strategies are both feasible and capable of producing unbiased estimates or, more realistically, estimates with minimal levels of bias for population subgroups. In general, representativeness is achieved and bias is minimised by the process of random sampling. In random sampling, all members of the population have an equal chance of inclusion in the sample (Veal, 1997). However, it needs to be appreciated that even where surveys have been conducted using a truly representative sample, the results reported should be treated with caution (Cegielski *et al.*, 2001).

Attempts to generate random samples of hunters proved to be problematic as there are no national lists of hunters available to design an appropriate sampling frame. To overcome this issue, the study employed a multi-stage sampling procedure. Multi-stage sampling means that sampling is not done directly but is done in stages. This technique is frequently used when no general sampling frame exists (Veal, 1997). In the context of this study, the first step was to select, at random, a sample of regions in Ireland which were divided at county level. Then, for each selected county, a comprehensive enumeration of all hunters was made by obtaining a local sample frame within which a random sample of hunters was selected.

3.4.2 Determining Sample Sizes

In general, most authors (e.g. Fowler, 1993; Veal, 1997; Neumann, 1999; Bryman, 2004) agree that the decision regarding sample size is not a

straightforward one; it depends on a number of considerations and there is no definitive answer. In the majority of cases, decisions on sample sizes are affected by considerations of time and cost. One of the most basic considerations is that it is the absolute size of a sample that is important and not its relative size.

Therefore, a decision about sample size should be based on how much sampling error one is prepared to tolerate (Bryman, 2004). The less sampling error one is prepared to tolerate, the larger the sample size will need to be. Fowler (1993), however, warns against a simple acceptance of this criterion and argues that, in practice, researchers do not base their decisions about sample size on a single estimate of a variable. Most survey research is aimed at generating a host of estimates and it is not normal for survey researchers to be in a position to specify in advance “a desired level of precision” (Fowler, 1993: 34). With these issues in mind, the main criteria for deciding on the size of the sampling frame were determined by:

- The level of precision in the results.
- The level of detail in the analysis.
- The available budget.

Bryman (2004) argues that, with sample sizes of up to 1,000, the gains in precision are noticeable as the sample climbs from low figures of 50, 100, 150, and so on upwards. After a certain point, often in the region of 1,000, the sharp increases in precision become less pronounced and, although it does not plateau, there is a slowing down in the extent to which precision increases (Bryman, 2004). Considering this, it was decided to aim for a survey response rate of approximately 1,000 hunters using a probability multi-stage sampling method for each different hunting activity (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Survey of hunters divided by hunting activity

Hunting Activity	Sampling Population	Surveys Sent	Surveys Returned	% Response
Game Shooting	29,800	2,370	362	15
Hunting with Hounds (Mounted Followers)	8,000	950	164	17
Hunting with Hounds (Foot Followers)	3,000	400	83	21
Coursing	8,000	1,600	183	11
Falconry	100	100	34	34
Deer stalking	2,800	700	138	20
Total	51,700	6,120	964	16

3.4.3 Sampling Game Shooting Participants

At the outset of the study, surveying game shooting participants appeared to be a challenging task. Due to confidentiality and security issues expressed by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) and Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI), it was not possible to obtain any lists of individuals involved in game shooting in the Republic of Ireland. Consequently, a multi-stage sampling procedure was used. This involved randomly selecting eight Regional Game Councils (RGC) (i.e. the representative county bodies for gun clubs in Ireland), and within each RGC, secretaries were requested to distribute questionnaires (200 per RGC) to random samples of their members (see Appendix 2). All RGC secretaries have in their possession a list of rough shooting participants (in their county) which are affiliated to NARGC gun clubs. In the majority of cases, it was not possible to get access to the lists of hunters within each RGC. Instead, I had to rely on the goodwill of the RGC secretaries to distribute the postal questionnaires on my behalf. Almost all RGC secretaries, however, expressed a positive interest in the project and assisted in the distribution of questionnaires.

The initial response rate was poor. After numerous negotiations with the NARGC, a decision was made to distribute 800 questionnaires to a random sample of NAGRC members through their annual member's magazine. Countryside Alliance Ireland also agreed to distribute 300 questionnaires to a random sample of their members through a membership newsletter. Questionnaires were distributed on numerous occasions in an attempt to increase

the response rate. In total, 2,370 questionnaires were sent to the participants involved in game shooting. Of these, 362 surveys were returned which represented a satisfactory 15 percent response rate (see Table 3.2)¹⁵.

3.4.4 Sampling Deer Stalking Participants

In 2007, there were approximately 2,800 participants licensed to shoot deer in the Republic of Ireland. Access to the official lists of deer stalking participants was not granted by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Consequently, deer stalking participants were surveyed through their respective deer stalking organisations (namely, the Irish Deer Society and the Wild Deer Association of Ireland) and Coillte (a semi-state forestry agency)¹⁶. These organisations agreed to randomly distribute 700 questionnaires (see Appendix 3) to deer stalking participants of which 138 (20 percent) questionnaires were returned (see Table 3.2).

3.4.5 Sampling Participants involved in Hunting with Hounds

There were no set lists available to draw random samples of hunting with hounds participants. As a result, a multi-stage sampling method was used. Similar to the game shooting survey, nine counties were selected at random and hunt secretaries within these counties were requested to distribute surveys to random samples of their mounted and foot hunting members. In total, 950 questionnaires were distributed to the mounted hunting participants (see Appendix 4) and 400 questionnaires were distributed to the foot hunting participants (see Appendix 5). Of these, 247 questionnaires were returned (see Table 3.2).

3.4.6 Sampling Coursing Participants

Sampling coursing participants proved to be a challenging task as there was no uniform list of coursing participants available to design a simplified sampling

¹⁵ Attempts were made to contact driven shoot operators to distribute questionnaires to their members and shooting clients. Although some shoots agreed to take questionnaires, none were returned. Of the participants that returned the game shooting questionnaires, 12 percent indicated that they were involved in driven shooting.

¹⁶ Coillte operates a commercial hunting policy whereby participants involved in deer stalking can apply for a licence to shoot deer on areas of its forest estate. Coillte agreed to distribute questionnaires to a random sample of its permit holders involved in deer stalking for the purpose of this project.

regime that would see all coursing participants having an equal chance of being selected. As a result, a multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select nine counties at random and within these counties coursing club secretaries were requested to distribute surveys to coursing participants.

Questionnaires were sent to the participants of coursing (1,000) and following negotiations with the Irish Coursing Club (ICC), an agreement was made to distribute 600 questionnaires through a random sample of coursing participants supplied by ICC (see Appendix 6). The questionnaires were distributed on numerous occasions to increase the response rate. Of the 1,600 questionnaires distributed to coursing participants, 183 (18 percent) were returned (see Table 3.2).

3.4.7 Sampling Falconry Participants

In 2007, there were approximately 100 people licensed to hunt with birds of prey in Ireland. Almost all of these individuals were affiliated to the Irish Hawking Club (IHC). Following negotiations with the IHC, it was decided to send all participants involved in falconry a questionnaire (see Appendix 7). Of the 100 participants surveyed, 34 returned the questionnaire (see Table 3.2).

3.4.8 Income and Expenditure by Hunting Organisers

Although the primary method used to examine the relationship between hunting and the rural economy involved assessing the expenditure characteristics of hunters, the income and expenditure patterns associated with hunting organisers (i.e. gun clubs, hunts, coursing clubs and driven shoots) were also explored. This process was undertaken with the aim of generating a broader understanding of the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and an insight into hunting organiser membership details, frequency of hunting and other specific characteristics such as employment characteristics as well as details about social events. The response rate from the hunting organiser survey is outlined in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Response rate from hunting organisers in Ireland

	Number of Organisers	Questionnaires returned	% Response
Fox hunts	36	28	78
Mounted harrier hunts	44	28	64
Ward Union hunt	1	1	100
Foot harrier (inc. mink) hunts	73	61	84
Beagle hunts	15	14	93
Gun Clubs	930	82	9
Coursing Clubs	90	39	43
Driven Shoots	30	12	33
Total	1,219	265	22

The approach used to survey the hunting organisers is discussed in the next section, which describes relationship between hunting and the management of ecology in rural space.

3.4.9 Hunting and Ecological Management

One of the most significant factors attracting hunters to various locations in the countryside relates to the existence of the quarry¹⁷ species they wish to pursue. In the majority of cases, the quarry species require suitable ecological conditions. Hence, hunting for these species, more often than not, takes place in areas where suitable habitat and quarry are available. For example, red grouse prefer heather-dominated habitat so participants venturing red grouse shooting will undoubtedly choose areas where such habitat is present. Similarly, those involved in hunting foxes with hounds will choose areas where suitable fox habitat exists and where lands are accessible for horses and hounds to travel on (see Table 3.4).

¹⁷ Quarry relates to any species which can be legally shot or hunted that has an open season.

Table 3.4 Quarry species hunted in Ireland

Activity	Main Quarry Species
Fox Hunting	Fox
Harrier Hunting (mounted)	Fox, hare and drag ¹⁸ hunting
Harrier Hunting (foot)	Fox and hare
Beagling	Hare
Mink Hunting	North American mink
Ward Union Hunt	Red deer (stags only)
Coursing	Hare
Falconry	Game ¹⁹ and vermin ²⁰
Game Shooting: Rough	Game and vermin
Game Shooting: Driven	Game
Deer stalking	Deer (red, fallow and sika)

In order to investigate the interaction between hunting and ecological management, hunting organisers were asked whether their habitat management strategy had been ‘removal’, ‘encouragement’ or ‘left alone’ in relation to a range of habitat types (MacDonald and Johnson, 1999). A fourth option allowed organisers to indicate when the habitat was not present. Encouragement of ecological features was broken down into a ‘created’ or ‘managed’ option (see Table 3.5). Along with this question, there were a number of open-ended questions seeking information about other management practices undertaken to encourage quarry species for hunting.

¹⁸ Drag hunting is an activity in which a pack of dogs (usually fox hounds or harriers) chase an artificial scent that has been laid (dragged) over a terrain before the hunt.

¹⁹ Game includes a variety of species which have an open season e.g. pheasant, duck, snipe, certain geese species, woodcock, and red grouse.

²⁰ Vermin is a term given to animals or birds that are considered by some people to be pests or nuisances. They are usually not protected by any open/closed hunting season and include species such as North American mink, fox, grey crow, magpie, rat, and grey squirrel.

Table 3.5 Principal ecological management questions in the hunting organiser questionnaires

Habitat Type	Removed	<i>Encouraged</i>		Left alone	Not present
Hedgerows		Created	Managed		
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ²¹					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ²²					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ²³					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

The availability of hunting, which chiefly takes place in rural areas, is to a large extent dependant on the agricultural sector in Ireland. From this perspective, the majority of habitats outlined in Table 3.5 are considered to be non-productive agricultural habitats. This is a term that refers to ecological features found on farmland that do not directly contribute economically to the agricultural production of the farm (MacDonald and Johnson, 1999). Hunters are considered to engage with these ecological features during the course of hunting and, consequently, may be motivated to develop these habitats to create better conditions for specific quarry species in their local hunting area.

3.4.10 Rough Shooting Organiser Survey

In Ireland, the organisers of rough shooting are gun clubs. In 2007, there were 930 gun clubs affiliated to the NARGC. Two surveys were conducted in order to establish the ways in which rough shooting organisers contribute to the management of ecological features in rural Ireland. First, a multi-stage sampling approach was used to randomly select eight counties where gun club secretaries were sent questionnaires. Within each county, RGC secretaries were requested to distribute surveys to their affiliated gun clubs. In total, 280 game shooting organisers were asked to complete questionnaires within these counties (see

²¹ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

²² Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

²³ A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 8). As Table 3.3 outlines, a total of 82 game shooting organisers returned the questionnaire giving a 9 percent response rate.

In addition to surveying gun clubs, all 28 RGC secretaries in the Republic of Ireland were contacted in an attempt to establish the ecological management practices undertaken by gun clubs at national level. RGC secretaries were asked to provide information relating to the number of gun clubs: 1) releasing pheasant, 2) planting game crop, 3) managing wetlands for duck and 4) managing habitat for red grouse (see Appendix 9). Questionnaires were returned from all RGC secretaries. Finally, all 30 driven shoots in Ireland were sent a survey (see Appendix 10). After numerous attempts to improve the response rate, 12 questionnaires (40 percent) were returned.

3.4.11 Hunting with Hounds Organiser Survey

The objective of ecological management by hunts is to improve the hunting experience by providing the quarry with suitable habitat and cover away from human disturbance but where they are still accessible (Hobson, 2000). In 2007, there were approximately 300 hunts in the Republic of Ireland. Of these, 169 were registered with specific organisations that govern the various hunting activities. Each of the 169 registered hunt secretaries in the Republic of Ireland was sent a questionnaire (see Appendices 11 - 13). Of the hunts (i.e. the fox hunts, mounted harrier hunts, Ward Union hunt, foot harrier hunts, mink hunts, beagle hunts) surveyed, 132 (78 percent) returned the questionnaire (see Table 3.3 for a detailed breakdown of the response rate).

3.4.12 Coursing Organiser Survey

Questionnaires were sent to all 90 coursing clubs in the Republic of Ireland. Amongst other things, the questionnaires requested information relating to the ways in which coursing clubs managed land for hares (see Appendix 14). The questionnaires were distributed on numerous occasions to increase the response rate. In total, 39 (43 percent) of the questionnaires were returned (see Table 3.3).

3.5 Data Collection: Examining How Hunting is Constructed in Irish Rural Policy

3.5.1 Rural Policy Document Analysis

In order to examine the ways in which recreational hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy, two methods were used to gather data. The first involved analysing a range of rural policy documents and the second involved conducting interviews with rural policy decision-makers.

The rural policy document analysis attempted to explore how hunting is constructed in relation to discourses of nature, animals and rurality within rural policy. The documents analysed included national and regional Rural Development Plans, national Rural Development Strategy reports, the Irish Countryside Recreation Strategy, the White Paper on Rural Development and various other rural/agricultural reports. A number of specific archival, library and online searches for rural policy documents that potentially discussed hunting were also undertaken. Academics, rural policy decision-makers and other individuals were also consulted when searching for rural policy documents.

The intention was to survey the maximum number of policy documents as possible that made reference to hunting activities in rural Ireland. However, during the course of the analysis, it became evident that very few documents made specific reference to recreational hunting. In total, only six documents were found to mention hunting in one form or another. Two of these documents were published in 1969 and 1972 respectively and one document (i.e. the Leave No Trace Ireland Outdoor Recreation Strategy), which did not mention hunting, was included in the analysis because of its overall relevance to the objective. The six documents included were:

1. County Kerry Agricultural Resource Survey (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972)
2. West Donegal Resource Survey (The Agricultural Institute, 1969)
3. National Countryside Recreation Strategy (CnaT, 2006)
4. Leave No Trace Ireland Outdoor Recreation Ethics (LNTI, 2006)
5. Recreational Hunting Policy (Coillte, 2005)
6. Options for Farm Families Programme (Teagasc, 2005)

The first document, entitled the ‘County Kerry Agricultural Resource Survey’ (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: preface), was compiled by members of the County Kerry Advisory Service and was carried out “to place the current state of agricultural development in the county in proper perspective”.

The second regional rural development report that made reference to hunting was the ‘West Donegal Resource Survey’ and was published by *An Foras Taluntais* (The Agricultural Institute) in 1969. The purpose of this report was to assess the extent to which agriculture could be developed in County Donegal.

The National Countryside Recreation Strategy is currently the principal recreation policy document in Ireland. The purpose of this report is to define the scope, vision and suggested framework for the implementation of countryside recreation in rural Ireland as agreed by *Comhairle na Tuaithe*. *Comhairle na Tuaithe* was a special committee of experts established by Mr. Éamon Ó Cuív T.D., Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in February 2004 to address the following priority issues:

1. Access to the countryside.
2. Developing a countryside code.
3. Developing a countryside recreation strategy.

The Countryside Recreation Strategy is also underpinned by the principles of Leave No Trace Ireland, which was officially established in 2006. Leave No Trace Ireland is a state-funded network of organisations and individuals that have an interest in promoting responsible and sustainable use of the Irish countryside, mountains, lakes, forest and seas. This is done through education and creating awareness of the ethical approach to recreation in the outdoors (LNTI, 2006).

The Recreational Hunting Policy, published by Coillte, the state-owned forestry company, aims to provide a set of guidelines for hunters who wish to hunt in the Coillte estate. Coillte is the largest recreation provider in Ireland owning over 440,000 ha. (1.1 million acres, circa 6 percent of the total land area) of forest and open land.

The Options for Farm Families Programme was published by Teagasc in 2005. This programme is designed with the intention of promoting the concept of a multifunctional agriculture regime in Ireland. In so doing, it attempts to encourage the sourcing of income from both farming and non-farming activities (Farrell *et al.*, 2008).

3.5.2 Interviews with Rural Policy Decision-makers

The second part of this objective involved using semi-structured interviews to examine the ways in which rural policy decision-makers construct hunting in Ireland. Research extolling the virtues and various forms of interviewing is well documented (see Seale, 1999; Neuman, 2000; Bryman, 2004). In comparison to questionnaires, which are useful for quantifying general information, interviews allow a thorough investigation of attitudes, beliefs and opinions. In addition, they are more informal in nature, when compared to questionnaires, and cannot be self-administered (Kitchen and Tate, 2000).

It was decided to use a semi-structured interview technique because there was concern that a structured interview guide might not allow genuine access to the constructions and understandings relating to hunting, nature, animals and rurality that inform the views of rural policy decision-makers. I was also interested in asking a range of follow-up and probing questions (e.g. “could you say more about that”?). Semi-structured interview methods that use open-ended questions attempt to provide participants with an opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses in the way that closed-ended questions do (Bryman, 2004). Open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are meaningful and culturally salient to the participant, unanticipated by the researcher and explanatory in nature (Bryman, 2004).

The approach used to select the rural policy decision-makers for interview involved extensive research into a number of sources. The aim was to ensure the inclusion of a range of Irish rural development policy organisations and agencies that contribute to the policy decision-making process. In this regard, it was decided to approach all rural policy institutions and agencies. E-mails were sent

to the heads of all rural policy organisations in Ireland explaining the background to the study and the interview procedure, followed by telephone calls to arrange a mutually suitable interview time. The willingness to participate in the survey was high. Table 3.6 lists the organisations that were interviewed.

In all cases, the principal decision-maker within each organisation was interviewed (see Appendix 15). The interviews were conducted in a flexible manner and the order of questions varied. In some cases, questions that were not included in the questionnaire were asked when I picked up on specific things discussed by the interviewee. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

Table 3.6 Selected organisations for interview

Organisation
Teagasc (Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority)
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Rural Development Division)
Fáilte Ireland (National Tourism Development Authority)
Leave no Trace Ireland

The rural policy document analysis and the semi-structured interviews were devised with the aim of exploring: a) the ways in which hunting is positioned within Irish rural policy; b) the construction of rurality, nature and human-animal relationships within Irish rural policy; c) whether rural policy considered hunting activities as playing a rural development role in Ireland; d) the extent to which rural policy organisations would be in favour of developing policies to recognise or promote hunting, and e) the main factors preventing hunting activities from inclusion within rural policy objectives. The data from the rural policy document analysis and the interviews with rural policy decision-makers are presented in Section 1, Chapter 5.

3.6 Data Collection: Examining how Hunting is Positioned in Irish Rural Life by Farmers

In order to explore the ways in which hunting is constructed within Irish rural life, focus group discussions were conducted with farmers in rural Ireland. Focus

groups allow participants to bring to the fore issues in relation to a topic that they deem to be important and significant (Bryman, 2004). Hence, for this study, focus group discussions offered the opportunity to study the ways in which farmers collectively made sense of recreational hunting and the constructed meanings around it.

Focus groups are increasingly being adopted and developed as a powerful technique in policy-making and academic research (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1998; Bryman, 2004). Krueger (1994) notes that this tool differs from other research methods in that it facilitates group interaction and a deeper insight into the reasoning behind understandings and perceptions. In comparison to individual interviews, focus group discussions facilitate the development and clarification of a respondent's answers by other participants within the group and also encourage the stimulation of new ideas (Breakwell, 1990).

In order to acquire samples of farmers for the focus group discussions, Ireland's two main farming organisations, the Irish Farmers' Association²⁴ (IFA) and Macra na Feirme²⁵ were contacted. Following this, an agreement was made to attend several members meetings within various county branches of these organisations (see Table 3.7) to conduct the focus group discussions.

Table 3.7 Groups that participated in the focus group discussions

Mayo IFA
Sligo IFA
Galway IFA
Macra Mayo
Macra Clare
Macra Roscommon
Macra Louth

²⁴ The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) is a national organisation that represents the interests of all sectors of farming in the Republic of Ireland with over 85,000 members. The IFA's head office is at the Irish Farm Centre, in Bluebell, Dublin.

²⁵ Macra na Feirme (which translates to Stewards of the Land) is a rural youth organisation for people between the ages of 17 and 35. The organisation consists of a nationwide network of clubs with six key areas of activity: agriculture, sports, travel, public speaking, community involvement and performing arts. Macra na Feirme is committed to the personal development of members and puts emphasis on social interaction and participation (Macra na Feirme, 2010).

There were between 7 and 14 individuals present per focus group. This is relatively similar to Morgan's (1997) suggestion that the typical group size should be six to ten members. In total, seven focus group discussions were conducted. Deciding on how many focus groups to conduct can be based on a number of factors. Calder (1977) proposes that, when the moderator reaches the point that he/she is able to anticipate fairly accurately what the next group is going to say, there are probably enough focus groups completed. In this study, Calder's (1977) concept was adhered to and no new data appeared to emerge during the seventh focus group discussion.

At the start of each focus-group, ground rules were established. These included letting everyone have an equal chance to speak and respect each other's opinion. Physical prompts were introduced throughout the duration of the focus group in an effort to maintain interest in the topic under discussion and to engage the participants in specific topics of conversation relating to hunting. I was interested in not just what farmers and landowners said but how they said it, for example, the particular language they employed. Attention was also paid to differences between the older farmers comprising membership of the IFA and the younger farmers affiliated to the Macra groups. Similarly, I carefully observed for any differences in perceptions between male and female farmers as there were between one and three females in each Macra focus group interview and one female in one of the IFA focus group interviews. Each focus group discussion lasted approximately one hour and was recorded and transcribed.

In general, the objectives of the focus group discussions were to: a) ascertain how farmers constructed hunting in relation to discourses of nature, rurality and animals; b) establish how farmers constructed hunting from an economic, ecological and socio-cultural perspective in rural Ireland; c) determine how farmers would feel if hunting activities were further integrated within current rural policy in Ireland; d) establish the association, if any, between hunting and

rural development, and e) assess whether farmers had any issues/concerns with people hunting on their land²⁶ (see Appendix 16).

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Analysing the Questionnaire Surveys

Two different sets of questionnaire surveys were used in this study to examine hunters' expenditure on hunting and hunting organisers' involvement in ecological management. In most cases, the computer programmes Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) were used to manage, sort and analyse the questionnaire data. The main advantage of using programmes like Excel and SPSS is that they enable a large amount of data to be stored and analysed quickly (Bryman and Cramer, 2001). In the majority of cases, descriptive statistics were used to create useful conclusions from the data.

When analysing the expenditure data from the hunter surveys, a variety of possible analysis errors were considered. It is widely understood that self-administered questionnaires are frequently not fully completed by respondents (Rylander *et al.*, 1995). In this context, results can vary significantly depending on how these missing data are handled. In some circumstances, there was uncertainty whether blanks beside expenditure items were to be treated as zeros or missing data. In order to prevent over-estimating the expenditure data, when categories were left blank or were not filled with zeros by hunters, blanks were routinely filled with zeros in these expenditure categories.

In an attempt to generate certain estimates from the expenditure data, the standard error was used as a measurement of confidence and reliability. The standard error of a measurement is the standard deviation of the sampling distribution of a statistic. Standard errors are important because they reflect how much sampling fluctuation a statistic will show. The standard error of a statistic

²⁶ It was evident, based on the responses, that some of the farmers, who participated in the focus group discussions, were directly involved in hunting. However, no attempt was made to interrupt or segment the group dynamic by asking farmers, for example, about their involvement in or individual perceptions of hunting. The overall aim of the focus group discussions was to allow the farmers to agree or disagree with each other in order to provide an insight into the range of ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation that exist within the Irish farming community in relation to the place of hunting in rural Ireland.

depends on the sample size. The larger the sample size the smaller the standard error and, typically, when the sample is representative, the standard error will be small.

In this study, standard errors were useful for illustrating the measure of spread in the expenditure data. The expenditure estimates shown are presented using the mean \pm standard errors. In addition, the graphs (in Appendix 17) that illustrate the mean participant expenditure estimates use error bars (highlighted by an 'I' bar going up and down from the mean), which give a general idea of how accurate the data is, or conversely, how error free the data might be.

3.7.2 Analysing the Textual Data

As previously discussed, the conceptual framework used in this study considers post-structural literature and, more specifically, the theory of social constructionism which, from a methodological perspective, remains a stance, an orientation, an outlook we apply to better understand the world around us (Gergen, 2001). In other words, all of the ways that people understand the world are filtered through social systems of meaning-making. In utilising this theoretical framework, the research was in a better position to scrutinise the data for evidence of paradigms, binaries, meaning repertoires, values and attitudes, which construct knowledge, talk and practices (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

In order to analyse the textual data that emerged during the interviews with rural policy decision-makers, analysis of rural policy documents and focus group discussions with farmers, a methodological approach termed content analysis was used. For a variety of reasons, content analysis was considered to be the most flexible method for understanding the frameworks through which the meanings of hunting, rurality, nature and human-animal relationships are produced. It was also extremely well-suited to analysing the multifaceted and sensitive data that emerged during the research process.

Content analysis is widely used as a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action

(Burnard, 1996). By definition, it is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages and allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enhance understanding of the data (Cole, 1988). As Graneheim and Lundman (2004) argue, a text always involves multiple meanings and, hence, this type of methodological approach facilitates a degree of abstract thinking (theorising) about the concepts underpinning the content of text (Elo and Kyngas, 2007).

In content analysis, there are no systematic rules for analysing data; the key feature is that the words of the text are classified into much smaller content categories (Weber 1990; Burnard, 1996). However, deciding on what to analyse, and in what detail, are important factors before selecting the unit of analysis (Cavanagh, 1997). In this study, the preparation phase started with selecting units of analysis (McCain, 1988; Cavanagh, 1997; Guthrie *et al.*, 2004) which consisted of words and themes (Polit and Beck, 2004).

The first part of the analysis involved reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and to obtain a sense of the meaning from the text (Tesch, 1990). Then, the data were read word by word to derive codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. Next, notes were made of my first impressions, thoughts and initial analysis (Elo and Kyngas, 2007). As this process continued, labels for codes were used that were reflective of more than one key thought. These codes then become the initial coding scheme and this process included open coding, creating categories and themes.

Open coding means that notes and headings are written in the text while reading it. In this context, the written material was read through and as many headings as necessary were written down in the margins to describe all aspects of the content (Burnard, 1996; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The coding process provided a means to organise the data and relate it to the theories drawn upon in this study such as ethics, discourses of rurality, human-animal relations and nature.

From this, the next step involved identifying and categorising important themes in the narrative. A theme can be defined as a pattern found in the information that describes and organises the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). In order to uncover the themes, it was necessary to read the interview transcripts a number of times, as well as review notes, questionnaires and focus group data and dissect the data meaningfully while keeping the relations between all the parts intact (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This involved taking note of common themes that emerged from the research but making sure not to lose sight of the broader context from which the theme emerged. This form of analysis allows and encourages cross comparisons between different interviews and different parts of the same interview (Wiles *et al.*, 2005).

In identifying the common themes, it was necessary to separate, sort and synthesise the data via the coding process. During this process, a number of spreadsheets were created containing various headings, for example: 1) nature, 2) rurality, 3) animals, 4) ethics, 5) killing, 6) rural economy, 7) conservation. Some of these themes were drawn from the theoretical framework and the kinds of questions the research is addressing. Other themes were developed to reflect the meaning of the statements by the participants. In this context, the method of analysis chosen was a hybrid approach incorporating both the data-driven inductive approach (see Boyatzis, 1998) and the deductive approach outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999). In other words, the analysis was theory driven and data driven. This approach allowed the central tenets of the theoretical framework to be integrated into the process of deductive content analysis while allowing for themes to emerge directly from the data using inductive coding. The theory also helped to direct my search for categories, which were based on the content of the data.

The following chapters, which present the research results, draw on some of the many quotations from the interview and focus group discussion surveys. In these chapters, extracts from the interviews and focus groups are intended. They are taken directly from transcripts and as a result may contain some colloquial language. The consistent usage of vernacular phrases by the respondents lends legitimacy to the responses. If the colloquialisms used were absent, this would

not be an accurate reflection of the representations used by policy-makers and farmers regarding the place of hunting in rural Ireland.

3.8 Write-up of the Study Results

The objective of the write-up is to communicate research theories and results in a clear and logical manner. In order to achieve this objective, a provisional structure for the final thesis was chosen at an early stage in the research process for two reasons, first to facilitate continuous writing up of results at the different stages of analysis within a structured outline and, second, to allow for changes to this framework as the study progressed and findings emerged.

3.9 Conclusion

A mixed-method approach was used to gain a deeper understanding into the three research objectives used in this study. Primary research methods included questionnaire surveys, interviews and focus group discussions. Data analysis and write-up of the study results were undertaken simultaneously, and a chapter outlining the discussion of the research was written, whereby the findings were related back to the literature review.

The next two chapters present the analysis of the primary research findings. To begin with, Chapter 4 examines the ways in which hunting is present in rural Ireland. Chapter 5 explores the construction of hunting in rural policy and within the farming community.

Chapter 4: The Economic and Ecological Presence of Hunting in Rural Ireland

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present a picture, using economy and ecology as lenses, of the presence of recreational hunting in contemporary Irish rural space. In doing so, it considers evidence from the analysis of questionnaire surveys with hunters and hunting organisers as well as some data from the focus group discussions with farmers. As previously discussed, the rationale for this objective considers that the countryside has changed from a space that was organised solely for primary production to one which recognises an increasing array of rural commodities, services, lifestyle products and experiences, otherwise termed the ‘consumptive countryside’ (Cloke, 1993; Cloke and Perkins, 2002; Perkins, 2006). This process has resulted in the emergence of new forms of rural development (Lowe *et al.*, 1995; Van Der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000), which have prompted mechanisms to stimulate the rural economy and enhance the rural environment through support for land management. Examples of such rural policy incentives in Ireland include farm diversification extension programmes (e.g. Options for Farm Families Programme) and schemes to support the ecological management of rural landscapes (e.g. Rural Environment Protection Scheme).

The increasing pursuit of leisure activities has also been one of the dominant social trends in recent decades and is serving to alter not only the use of the countryside but also its social significance. Decisions affecting the countryside are now felt to be legitimate matters of concern for the population as a whole, rather than simply those who live in rural areas (Ward, 1999). This trend has brought rural recreation activities into the policy sphere because of their potential to contribute to local rural economies and the rural environment (CnaT, 2006; Hynes *et al.*, 2007b).

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter indicate that recreational hunting contributes to the Irish rural economy. The largest expenditure categories by

hunters were on their hunting animals (e.g. horses for hunting with hounds, gun dogs for game shooting, greyhounds for coursing, etc.), hunting-related social activities and hunting equipment costs. Hunters also illustrated that the vast majority of their expenditure was made in what they perceived to be ‘rural areas’ and ‘country towns’. The hunting organiser survey illustrated that the mounted hunts were involved in directly employing staff to manage their facilities. Evidence from the focus group discussions with farmers also positioned hunting as an activity that sometimes makes a positive contribution to the rural economy and maintains the economic viability of farm businesses.

The findings from the hunting organiser survey suggest that hunting organisers directly encourage ecological features through a range of habitat management practices. Evidence from the farmer focus group discussions supported these findings and suggested that hunters can play a role in maintaining a healthy ecological balance in rural areas in terms of controlling ‘pest’ species, creating habitats, nature reserves (hunting sanctuaries) and releasing game birds.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section describes the relationship between hunting and the rural economy. The second section describes the relationship between hunting and the management of ecology. Both sections draw on data from the hunting organiser surveys and farmer focus group discussions. The chapter concludes with a short discussion about the wider implications of the findings.

4.2 Section 1. Hunting and the Rural Economy

Hunting is set in the rural economy. Hence, it is important that the evidence presented in this chapter is conceptualised in the wider context of the economic and social changes that have taken place, and are taking place, in the countryside. In general, Ireland’s regions are predominantly rural, characterised by medium-sized and small market towns, villages and open countryside²⁷. However, only 10 percent of the population resides outside a 40 km radius of the thirteen main urban centres. Hence, the rural economy is not that geographically separate from

²⁷ Some 60 percent of Ireland’s population may be described as being rural, i.e. they live outside the major urban centres and predominantly in coastal counties (Central Statistics Office, 2007).

the urban or national economy (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 2007). In recent decades, however, the numbers employed in traditional rural activities including agriculture have declined. This has implications for the future viability of more remote rural areas, with an ageing farming population relying solely on agriculture for income. Coupled with this, the proportion of part-time farmers has risen from 24 percent in the mid 1970s to 42 percent of farmers indicating that they had some form of off-farm employment in 2006 (Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 2007). These changes signal the progressively weakening role agriculture plays, not only nationally but also in rural areas and their economies. It is within this context that current rural development policy attempts to promote non-agricultural activities in rural areas to stimulate the rural economy.

In an effort to understand the relationship between hunting and the rural economy, it is useful to discuss the participation levels in hunting over recent decades in Ireland²⁸. Table 4.1 shows that participation in all hunting activities, with the exception of coursing, increased since 1992 (Burke *et al.*, 1992) and 1997 (Corbally *et al.*, 1998) in the Republic of Ireland (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Hunter participation levels for various hunting activities in Ireland

Activity	1992	1997	2007
Hunting with hounds	4,846	6,937	8,338
Coursing	14,785	*	6,300
Falconry	50	*	120
Deer stalking	687	1,352	3,200
Game shooting	60,000	72,000	86,000
Total	80,368	n/a	104,008

Sources: Burke *et al.* (1992); Corbally *et al.* (1998); NARGC (2008); Garda Síochána (2008); NPWS (2008) * missing data

²⁸ Because there is no accurate information regarding the numbers of participants involved in hunting, this allows for various claims to be made. For example, the main European hunting organisation, FACE Europe (the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU) (2007) suggests that Ireland has the highest percentage of hunters per population (7.1 percent) in Europe with 300,000 hunters. However, it is unknown how the figure was generated but it is likely to be an overestimate as it is not based on any specific research. In comparison, the data generated in this study indicates that there are 104,000 hunters (or 2.4 percent of the population) in Ireland.

The reason for the significant decrease in participation in coursing is unknown. However, it is important to point out that the methodologies for establishing participation in coursing differed between the 1992 study (Burke *et al.*, 1992) and this study. The figure of 14,785 was based on data provided by the Irish Coursing Club (Burke *et al.*, 1992) whilst the figure (6,300) generated in this study was based on a survey of coursing clubs in Ireland. Despite the methodological differences, it is evident that there has been a substantial decline in the membership of coursing clubs over the past 20 years. A similar decline occurred in the UK, albeit, it was over a much longer time period. Data suggest that there were 382 coursing clubs in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century (Franklin, 2008) whilst in 2000 there were only 24 coursing clubs (Burns *et al.*, 2000). Interestingly, the number of coursing clubs in Ireland has also declined slightly from 92 in 1992 (Burke *et al.*, 1992) to 90 in 2008 (Irish Coursing Club, *pers. comm.*). The exact reason for this decline is unknown. It may reflect broader lack of interest in coursing or it may be as a result of an increasing level of anti-hunting sentiment and political pressure directed at coursing by groups such as the Irish Council Against Blood Sports (ICABS). However, it is worthwhile mentioning that the spectator element to coursing appears to have remained relatively consistent with over 30,000 reported to have attended the National Coursing Meeting in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary in 2007 (Irish Times, 2007).

Given the trajectory of change in relation to nature-society relations, Franklin (1999) suggests that it would be plausible to imagine that hunting activities would have declined in recent decades. In this context, every book published since the 1970s that reflects on modern relationships between humans and animals urges more restraint, more humanity, more paternalism and protection, more respect for animal life and rights (Franklin, 1999). This 'greening' of society imposes expectations that to be a good citizen one must express a sensitive, concerned attitude towards 'nature' and a humane and caring consideration of animals (McLeod, 2004).

This overall rise in participation in hunting supports Franklin's (2008: 105) observation that hunting activities have become 'enigmas in modernity' –

because even as the killing of animals has become increasingly viewed as being unethical, “hands on killing sports have enjoyed sustained popularity and growth during the twentieth century”. Now that an estimate of participation in hunting has been considered, the following section considers the expenditure on hunting by the participants involved (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Mean annual expenditure on hunting activities

Types of Hunter	Mean Expenditure	Standard Error
Hunting with hounds (mounted)	€6,931	€410.3
Coursing	€6,663	€487.8
Falconry	€4,161	€878.5
Deer stalking	€3,709	€328.1
Game shooting	€1,856	€108.8
Hunting with hounds (foot)	€891	€157.4
Mean expenditure	€4,035	€395.15

Table 4.2 presents the mean hunter expenditure estimates for the various hunting activities in Ireland. Although the expenditure estimates appear to be high, they are supported by a range of studies undertaken in other regions. For example, a study of game shooting in the UK (PACEC, 2006) indicated that the average participant involved spent €4,166 in 2004. Research by Pinet (1995) suggests that the average European hunter was spending a mean of €1,500 in the early-to-mid 1990s. However, mean hunter expenditures discussed in Pinet’s (1995) study reflect an enormous degree of variation, ranging from €5,800 in Belgium to €1,200 in France, and did not employ a standard methodology.

In this study, the hunting activities with the highest participant expenditures were hunting with hounds (mounted), coursing and falconry. Interestingly, within each of these activities, the largest component of expenditure related to maintaining specific animals for hunting; i.e. horses for hunting with hounds, greyhounds for coursing and birds of prey for falconry. Other high expenditure categories by hunters during 2007 were equipment costs, hunting-related social expenditure,

vehicle expenditure and travel expenditure. The following section presents the most substantial hunter expenditure categories that emerged from the analysis²⁹.

4.2.1 Expenditure on Animals

Most hunters use animals during the hunting process. For example, individuals involved in game shooting use gun dogs to flush and retrieve game birds. Deer stalkers increasingly use hunting dogs to search for or track deer. Individuals involved in mounted hunting with hounds use horses to follow dogs (or hounds) which hunt foxes and hares. Those involved in coursing test greyhounds against each other for speed and skill in pursuit of hares, whilst falconers use birds of prey to hunt game and other quarry.

The significance of animals for hunting is expressed through the language of hunting which has developed to describe the differences between particular animals. For example, the dogs used in hunting with hounds are defined as 'hounds'. The horses that are ridden to hounds are called 'hunters'. Foxes have been represented in hunting memorabilia and writing for centuries by the colourful character 'Reynard' or 'Charlie'. These conceptions have important bearings on the treatment and geography of these animals, determining the spaces in which they are included and excluded (Anderson, 1998; Norton, 1999).

For example, through the example of foxhounds, Marvin (2001) reveals how blurred the line is between these two ideas. These dogs, he states, are domesticated and only exist through human manipulation (breeding techniques). Fox hounds, that is, have no 'purpose' outside of their use within a hunting context. In one sense, fox hounds could be considered purely a product of human creation, yet in the context of hunting they are expected to 'perform' in a manner that is similar to that of a pack of wild dogs. They constitute "a culturally created pack, a pack created for performance; each hound is specially bred for its role in this performance" (Marvin, 2001: 274).

²⁹ See Appendix 17 for a detailed description of the participation levels and mean hunter expenditure estimates associated with each hunting activity.

Consideration of the animals used by hunters also disrupts normative society-nature understandings about ‘appropriate’ human-animal relationships. For example, both hunters’ animals and the animals which are hunted are central to the hunting experience. However, the relationship between hunters and animals is complex. For example, hunters sometimes tend to express a love for all animals (McLeod, 2004), yet at the same time shoot/hunt/chase animals for which they have great affection.

From an economic perspective, expenditure on working animals by hunters is frequently considered to be a significant expense because working animals require daily feeding and specialised breeds of animals are often bought from professionals. Occasionally, they also require veterinary care, sometimes following injury (Pinet, 1995). Table 4.3 outlines the mean number of animals kept by the various types of hunter and the mean expenditure on animals.

Table 4.3 Mean annual numbers of animals and mean annual expenditure on animals per hunter

Type of Hunter	Mean no. of animals	Mean Expenditure	Standard Error	% of total spending
Coursing	3.8 dogs	€4,425	€328.1	66
Hunting with hounds (mounted)	2.2 horses	€4,186	€422.9	60
Falconry	1.6 birds	€2,309	€488.5	55
Game shooting	2.1 dogs	€407	€28.7	22
Deer stalking	0.4 dogs	€283	€28.6	8

The most significant animal expenditure costs were incurred by those involved in hunting with hounds, coursing and falconry. The mean participant expenditure on maintaining greyhounds for coursing was €4,425 (SE: €328) during 2007. Of this figure, the largest expenditure item was dog food (comprising 27 percent). This was followed by greyhound-related vehicle costs (comprising 14 percent). Other significant expenditure costs included coursing entry fees, training aids, care equipment and veterinary charges. The questionnaire survey for coursing participants also attempted to estimate the mean number of greyhounds kept by coursing participants in Ireland during 2007. The results indicate that each participant kept a mean of 3.8 (SE: 0.3) greyhounds for coursing.

For individuals involved in hunting with hounds, the highest expenditure category related to stabling/livery fees (46 percent). Veterinary costs (14 percent), horse transport (14 percent) and farrier fees (14 percent) were also significant expenditure categories. Each hunt follower was asked to specify the number of horses they owned specifically for hunting. The data suggest that the average follower kept 2.2 horses for hunting. If this figure (2.2 horses) was multiplied by the number of active mounted hunting participants (4,721), it would amount to a total of 10,386 horses used for hunting in Ireland. The hunting organiser surveys also reveal that a significant percentage of fox hunt income (18 percent) and harrier hunt income (30 percent) was generated through the organising of equestrian events. These data highlight the wider role of hunting with hounds as an equestrian activity that is intrinsically intertwined with other activities within the rural economy.

Figure 4.1 indicates that the vast majority of the fox and harrier hunts organised at least one point to point³⁰ event during 2007. A significant number of hunts also organised hunter trials³¹ and cross country rides. Other equestrian events organised by the mounted hunts included team chases, gymkhanas³² and horse shows. The vast majority of mounted hunts (90 percent) also rented horses to non-hunt members. Fox hunts rented on average 3 horses per meet whilst harrier hunts leased 2 horses per meet. These data support the assumption by Hennessy and Quinn (2007) who argue that hunting with hounds is the biggest equestrian activity in Ireland.

³⁰ A point to point event is a form of amateur horse racing over fences for hunting horses.

³¹ A hunter trial is a test for hunters held under the auspices of a hunt, in which the course is laid with obstacles to simulate actual hunting conditions.

³² A gymkhana is an event in which horses and riders display skill and aptitude in various races and contests.

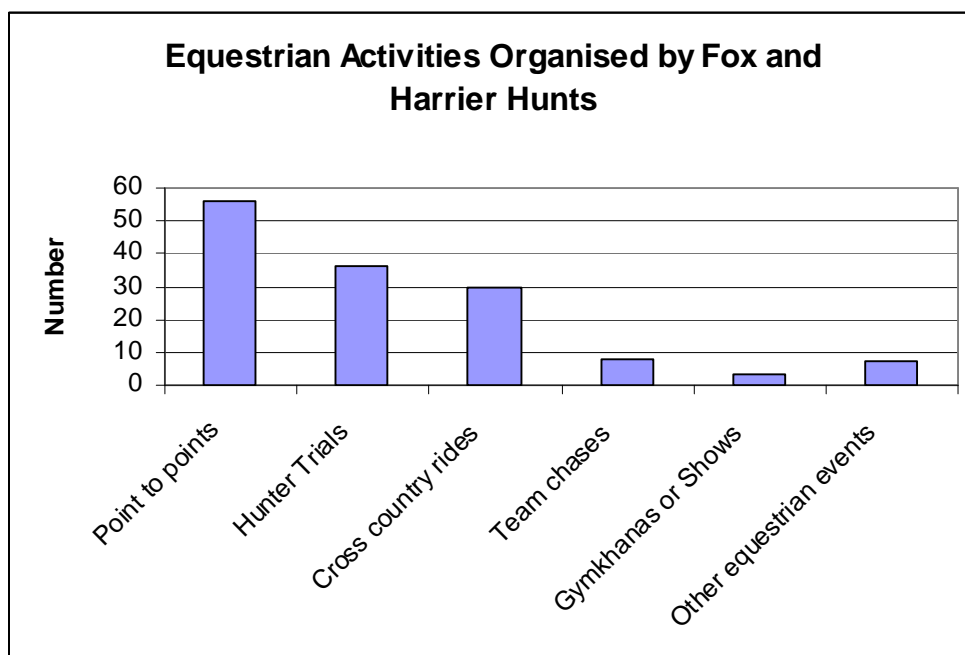


Figure 4.1 Number of equestrian events organised in 2007 by fox and harrier hunts

The most significant expenditure items for individuals involved in falconry related to aviaries (bird housing) (22 percent) and telemetry equipment (20 percent). Other significant expenditure costs related to maintaining specific dogs for falconry (13 percent) and bird food (12 percent) which was followed to a lesser extent by equipment and veterinary costs.

These findings encourage us to think about rural space in a more complicated manner whereby practices involving animals (which are increasingly being viewed as being unethical) contribute to the rural economy. The way in which these human-animal relationships are constructed from a policy perspective will also be of interest particularly at a time when the European multifunctional agricultural regime encourages a variety of mechanisms (including outdoor recreation activities) to ameliorate the effects of rural restructuring.

4.2.2 Equipment Expenditure

Hunting is a specialised form of recreation, which requires equipment that varies according to each hunting activity. For example, individuals involved in game shooting generally require firearms, ammunition as well as specialised clothing

and footwear. In Ireland, hunting equipment is typically purchased from specialised hunting/fishing outlets, which are located in both urban and rural areas. The findings suggest that there was considerable variation in the expenditure estimates on equipment between the various types of hunters. Table 4.4 illustrates this breakdown in greater detail.

Table 4.4 Mean annual expenditure on equipment

Activity	Mean Expenditure	Standard Error	% of total spending
Deer stalking	€1,300	€162.1	35
Game shooting	€700	€64.8	38
Hunting with hounds (mounted)	€509	€45.2	7
Falconry	€263	€66.9	6
Coursing	€140	€11.4	2
Hunting with hounds (foot)	€83	€15	9

Those involved in game shooting (i.e. game shooting and deer stalking) spent the largest amount on hunting equipment. Of their total expenditure on equipment, 80 percent related to the purchase of ammunition, firearms and repairs, whilst 20 percent was spent on special clothing. Those involved in hunting with hounds also spent a considerable amount (€509; SE: €45) on tack and riding equipment. In comparison, the individuals involved in falconry, coursing and foot hunting with hounds spent smaller amounts on equipment and special clothing during 2007.

4.2.3 Social Expenditure

A distinctive feature of hunting is that it plays an important role in the social lives of people living in the countryside (Norton, 1999; Milbourne, 2003a; Murphy, 2006). For example, hunts are considered to organise a variety of fundraising events throughout the year such as charity rides, auctions and hunt balls where hunting and non-hunting people participate (see Costecalde and Gallagher, 2004; Pardo and Prato, 2005). In the UK, hunting is sometimes referred to as the ‘golden thread’ of country life providing people with an important platform to socialise in rural settings (Norton, 1999). Table 4.5 outlines the social expenditure by the various types of hunter.

Table 4.5 Mean annual expenditure on hunting-related social activities

Activity	Mean Expenditure	Standard Error	% of total spending
Coursing	€1,038	€137.4	16
Hunting with hounds (mounted)	€1,008	€103.6	15
Falconry	€386	€133.9	9
Hunting with hounds (foot)	€356	€111.0	40
Game shooting	€142	€12.8	8
Deer stalking	€119	€14.2	3

Table 4.5 illustrates that those involved in coursing and hunting with hounds spent considerable sums of money on hunting-related social activities. This is likely to relate to the fact that these activities typically operate at a more formalised level in comparison to other hunting activities (e.g. hunting with hounds is typically organised by hunts, whilst rough shooting participants can hunt individually or in small groups without the necessity of organisation by a local gun club). In addition, the organiser surveys reveal that the vast majority of coursing clubs and hunts organised a number of specific hunting-related social events during the year, providing opportunities for individuals to meet and socialise. For example, the mounted hunts organised an average of three social/fund-raising events during 2007, with an average attendance of 180 people per event, as a means of generating income for the hunt. These events consisted of functions such as hunt balls, supporters' dances and fund-raising dinners.



Figure 4.2 Members of East Cork Gun Club socialising after the opening day of the pheasant season. Source: personal photograph.

As outlined in Table 4.5, the average coursing participant spent €1,038 (SE: €137) on coursing-related social activities. Interestingly, much of this expenditure (42 percent) related to gambling at coursing events. The coursing club survey also indicated that 13 percent of clubs organised one-day coursing events (mean attendance 190; SE: 85), 71 percent organised two-day events (mean attendance 507; SE: 38) and 16 percent organised three-day events (average attendance 1,200; SE: 760) during 2007. For statistical purposes, the attendance of the main Irish coursing (three-day) event is not included in these figures as it attracted over 30,000 spectators in 2007.

4.2.4 Hunting Organiser Expenditure

As discussed in Chapter 3, the principal method for establishing the economic presence of hunting was through examining the expenditure patterns of hunters. However, it was also considered useful to illustrate the various income and expenditure patterns of the hunting organisers in Ireland (i.e. hunts, gun clubs and coursing clubs). Table 4.6 presents the mean income and expenditure figures for the different hunting organisers in Ireland during 2007.

Table 4.6 Mean hunting organiser income and expenditure

	Income	Standard Error	Expenditure	Standard Error
Fox hunts	€88,000	€11,171	€91,000	€10,915
Harrier hunts (mounted)	€30,600	€5,498	€34,500	€11,625
Coursing Clubs	€17,177	€1,905	€14,545	€1,915
Beagle hunts	€3,846	€1,138	€4,020	€240
Gun Clubs	€3,737	€547	€3,813	€523
Harrier hunts (foot)	€2,440	€325	€2,521	€327

In terms of expenditure breakdown, the fox hunts and the mounted harrier hunts spent significant amounts in comparison to the other hunting organisers³³. As a result of the extent of this expenditure, the following section takes a look at the fox hunt and mounted harrier hunt expenditure patterns in greater detail. Table 4.7 outlines the expenditure from the fox hunts and mounted harrier hunts in 2007.

³³ Although 12 driven shoots returned questionnaires, only three provided a limited amount of data in relation to their income and expenditure levels. These data were considered unusable as it had too many missing values.

Table 4.7 Breakdown of expenditure: fox and mounted harrier hunts

Expenditure	Fox Hunts	Harrier Hunts
Staff costs	46%	29%
Utilities and property	10%	14%
Goods purchased	8%	12%
Vehicles and equipment	11%	12%
Services purchased	8%	13%
Other expenditure	17%	20%
Total	100%	100%

Interestingly, the largest expenditure categories for both hunt types were staff costs. The surveys revealed that the fox and mounted harrier hunts typically employed between one and three members of staff. Generally, there would be at least one full-time huntsman, a kennel-man, as well as one or two part-time fencers or wall builders. A further employment breakdown can be seen in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Hunt employment: average per mounted hunt

Hunt Employment	Fox Hunts	Harrier Hunts
No. of full-time employees	1.6	0.7
No. of part-time employees	1.7	1
Total employed	3.3	1.7

If these employment figures were grossed-up, the fox hunts would be employing approximately 119 employees (3.3×36 fox hunts) and the harrier hunts would be employing 75 individuals (1.7×44 harrier hunts) during 2007. However, caution should be exercised as the grossing-up assumes that the hunts that did not respond were similar in their employment structure to the hunts that did return questionnaires.

4.3 Hunting and the Rural Economy: Perceptions of Farmers

During the focus group discussions, a number of themes emerged regarding the relationship between hunting and the rural economy. The most significant theme positioned hunting as an important economic tool for stimulating local businesses in rural areas. In this context, six older farmers from within the IFA focus group discussions referred to the changes taking place in rural Ireland, highlighting the weakening significance of agriculture in rural areas. It seems understandable that

this issue was raised by older farmers as they would probably have more experience of the long-term socio-economic changes in rural Ireland. Hunting was also constructed by eight farmers as an activity that played a role in maintaining the economic fabric of rural areas. A number of different examples were provided. For example, the following comment was made by a Galway farmer in relation to the benefits of hunters in terms of supporting local pubs and restaurants in rural areas:

The East Galway Hunt near me is very active; they hunt once or twice per week during the season. They have a huge gathering and they normally meet outside local pubs or restaurants where they spend a lot of money. The economic and social side to this particular hunt is huge – more so than most realise (Galway IFA member).

Hunting with hounds, in particular, was positioned as an important economic contributor to the equestrian industry in Ireland. In this context, a number of farmers referred to the costs involved in maintaining horses for hunting and suggested that this spending was important for the wider horse sport industry and, consequently, the rural economy:

The members of my local hunt must keep about 70 or 80 horses which is an amazing contribution to the local economy. I keep horses myself and I know the type of costs involved in feeding and maintaining them and keeping them at livery (Galway IFA member).

Another significant theme that emerged related to the role of hunting in maintaining jobs in rural areas. Three examples were provided from both young and old farmers highlighting the costs associated with keeping hunting horses in livery and the necessity to pay stable staff to look after hunting horses. From another perspective, two farmers stated that driven shooting was important for bringing tourist hunters into remote rural areas:

There is a large driven shoot near me and I know that tourist hunters put money into the local economy by staying in local accommodation and spending money in pubs. This is important, especially during the winter months (Sligo IFA member).

Referring to the main Irish coursing event in Clonmel, County Tipperary, a young farmer from a Macra focus group highlighted the economic contribution of coursing to the local economy:

Look at the Irish Coursing Championships in Clonmel; they draw thousands each year. That is a great boost to Clonmel town. Thousands travel from all over to stay there that weekend (Clare Macra Member).



Figure 4.3 Spectators in Clonmel, County Tipperary watching the National Coursing Championships. Source: personal photograph.

In each of these examples, hunting was positioned as an important economic activity that is embedded in the economic fabric of local rural spaces. Only three farmers suggested that the economic presence of hunting in rural Ireland was ‘marginal’ in comparison to other economic activities in rural areas. The following statement was made by an IFA member:

I wouldn't say that there's a major boost to the rural economy because of hunting. It probably helps some businesses but, overall, I can't see it being a big deal (Galway IFA member).

Hunting was also perceived as an activity that contributes to the economic viability of farm businesses. Throughout the focus group discussions, there was a multiplicity of interests and representations drawn in relation to the negative economic impacts of certain animals in the countryside. In this context, rural

space was constructed by farmers as a dynamic ecological system whereby its ecology needed to be maintained through controlling/managing certain ‘pest’ animals. The animals referred to included foxes, grey crows, magpies, North American mink and deer. It was apparent from the analysis that these animals caused a variety of agricultural problems (e.g. lamb predation, poultry predation, crop damage) in rural space and that farmers perceived control to be a necessity, rather than an option, in order to maintain the economic viability of their farm businesses.

Although this theme crosses the boundaries between the economic and ecological presence of hunting in Irish rural space, it is dealt with in the latter part of the next section, which considers the relationship between hunting and the ecological management of rural space.

4.4 Section 2. Hunting and Ecological Management

Many ecosystems are degraded in Ireland and in the European Union (MA, 2005; EEA, 2007). Furthermore, the general biodiversity trend on agricultural land is negative (De Heer *et al.*, 2005), despite agricultural policies being increasingly geared towards biodiversity conservation. It is increasingly well known that the loss of habitat and intensification of agriculture resulted in declines of a range of wildlife species (Krebs *et al.*, 1999), the best documented of which has been for birds.

This loss of biodiversity is not only considered a problem because of the so-called ‘intrinsic’ value of nature, but also because it results in a decline in ecosystem services, goods produced and work done by ecosystems. These are now widely recognised as benefits to human well-being and considered as real values in economic terms (Brouwer *et al.*, 2009). The loss of broad-leaved woodlands, hedges, wetlands, moorlands, etc., also meant a loss of habitat for game species. In the UK, it has been suggested that “a not inconsiderable proportion of these habitats had been originally created, retained and/or managed to provide habitat for game and hunted species” (Cox *et al.*, 1996: 30).

Recent years have witnessed an explosion of debate concerning the appropriate approach to biodiversity conservation (Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, conservation continues to embrace two main approaches. A ‘protect and reserve’ approach, the main focus for European conservation in recent decades, aims to protect species and create reserves to preserve habitats, as encapsulated in the 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats and related European Union Directives.

The second approach makes ‘sustainable use’ of biodiversity a basis for conservation. In some respects, current Irish rural development policy recognises the sustainable use approach through, for example, promoting agri-environmental schemes. These aim to provide opportunities for protecting and conserving ecological features on agricultural land. The schemes that currently exist include the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Farm Plan Scheme, Commonage Framework Plans, the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) and the more recent Agri-Environmental Options Scheme (AEOS). As discussed in Chapter 2, the complementation of protection by sustainable use or incentive-based conservation (Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003) is important, because in the Republic of Ireland, and globally, the majority of land is not protected.

The following section illustrates the findings of the analysis into the ways in which recreational hunting contributes the ecological management of rural space. Overall, the evidence illustrates that 69 percent of hunting organisers (i.e. gun clubs, driven shoots, hunts and coursing clubs) carried out ecological management practices to improve hunting conditions during 2007. Furthermore, it emerged that no hunting organisers removed ecological features within their hunting area. Most ecological features were left alone and a relatively small number were identified as being not present. Table 4.9 outlines the breakdown of the ecological management work undertaken by hunting organisers during 2007.

Table 4.9 Percentage response of hunting organisers undertaking ecological management work during 2007

Hunting Organiser	%
Driven shoots	100
Coursing clubs	85
Hunts	51
Gun clubs	40
Mean	69

Although a variety of ecological features were managed by hunting organisers, four significant ecological categories emerged from the data. These included woodlands, coverts, hedgerows and field margins. Table 4.10 outlines the breakdown of the ecological management work undertaken in relation to these specific ecological features.

Table 4.10 Percentage of respondents that created and managed selected habitats during 2007

	Woodland		Coverts		Hedgerows		Field Margins	
	Created %	Managed %	Created %	Managed %	Created %	Managed %	Created %	Managed %
Fox hunts	11	28	0	67	11	17	11	17
Harrier hunts (mounted)	13	13	0	13	7	13	6	11
Harrier hunts (foot)	20	22	9	20	11	13	9	13
Beagle hunts	13	13	0	25	25	25	13	25
Coursing clubs	18	28	5	13	18	28	15	33
Gun clubs	12	16	-	-	18	20	10	16
Driven shoots	75	88	-	-	38	75	38	50

4.4.1 Woodlands

The findings in Table 4.10 indicate that all hunting organisers were involved to some extent in woodland management during 2007. Driven shoots were most active in terms of creating (75 percent) and managing (88 percent) woodland. The questionnaires indicated that coppicing and ride (access) management were the most popular woodland management techniques undertaken by the driven shoots. The significant involvement of driven shoots in woodland management is understandable as large numbers of game-birds are reared for shooting on these estates, therefore requiring significant habitat development.

The fox hunts (28 percent), coursing clubs (28 percent) and foot harrier hunts (22 percent) were also active in woodland management. However, only a small percentage of beagle hunts (13 percent) and gun clubs (16 percent) managed woodland during 2007. Additional comments in the questionnaires from several hunting organisers indicated that the primary methods employed to manage woodland by hunts were small-scale coppicing, opening skylights, ride maintenance and new plantings, usually in smaller woodlands (see also Cobham Resource Consultants, 1997; Ewald *et al.*, 2006).

4.4.2 Coverts

Coverts can be defined as thick areas of underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes. Table 4.10 indicates that 67 percent of fox hunts managed areas of cover during 2007. The findings reveal that the majority of existing coverts are managed by coppicing and perimeter management. Beagle hunts and harrier hunts were also involved to a lesser extent in covert management to improve conditions for hares.

According to Lewis (1975) and Costecalde and Gallagher (2004), most covert planting by mounted hunts took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Ireland. Lewis (1975) states that, due to the poor condition of the Irish landscape, ecological management work was necessary to provide better conditions for hunting with hounds. Lewis (1975) refers to covert planting that took place in Castlewarren, Bishopslough and Knockroe in Co. Kilkenny (see also Corballis, 1999). These coverts included plantations of gorse and small stands of trees with a thick undergrowth of bracken or fern. At the time, these were a new element in the landscape, seldom exceeding 5-6 acres in size (Corballis, 1999). Reports also suggest that covert planting took place in Co. Tipperary where over 60 coverts were created (Lewis, 1975). Covert planting for fox hunting also took place in counties Limerick, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Tipperary, Meath, Westmeath and Cork (Corballis, 1999). By these means, excellent hunting was ensured; the followers were virtually guaranteed a two-mile gallop after the quarry as it dashed from one covert to another (Lewis, 1975).



Figure 4.4 Photo of small covert (in the right middle-ground) managed by a fox hunt. Source: personal photograph.



**Figure 4.5 Photo of covert (in the middle-ground) managed by a fox hunt
Source: Rhys James**

4.4.3 Hedgerows

Table 4.10 indicates that the driven shoots were most active in creating (38 percent) and managing (75 percent) hedgerows to improve game shooting. Beagle hunts, to a lesser extent, were also involved in creating hedgerows (25 percent) to benefit hares. The coursing clubs (28 percent) and beagle hunts (25 percent) were also active in managing hedgerows. To a lesser extent, fox hunts (17 percent) and gun clubs (20 percent) were involved in hedgerow management (see Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Photo of hedgerow management by a gun club. Source: personal photograph.

The interest in hedgerow management by hunting organisers in Ireland may complement research conducted in the UK by MacDonald and Johnson (2000). Their study, which surveyed of 800 farmers, indicated that enthusiastic fox hunters had removed 35 percent less hedgerows than the average farmer during the 1970s apparently because of their desire to produce good fox habitat.

4.4.4 Field Margins

The definitions of field margins are varied. In this study, the term field margin is defined as a margin or strip of the semi-natural habitat associated with the field boundary (Marshall and Moonen, 2002). As linear features, field margins act as corridors for the movement of fauna and flora.

Table 4.10 indicates that the driven shoots were most active in creating (38 percent) and managing (50 percent) field margins to improve game shooting. The coursing clubs (33 percent) and beagle hunts (25 percent) were also active in managing field margins. To a lesser extent, fox hunts (17 percent) and gun clubs (16 percent) were also involved in field margin management.



Figure 4.7 Photo of field margin managed by a gun club. Source: personal photograph.

4.5. Gun Clubs and Ecological Management

In order to explore the extent to which gun clubs are involved in undertaking ecological management work at Regional Game Council (i.e. national) level in Ireland, all 28 RGC secretaries (representing 930 gun clubs) were asked to complete a survey that sought details about the activities of their affiliated gun clubs. The results are outlined in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Gun clubs and ecological management

	Releasing Pheasant	Managing Duck Ponds	Planting Game Crop	Managing Red Grouse
Number	615	170	126	23
Percentage	66%	18%	14%	2%

The findings indicate that 615 gun clubs (66 percent) were involved in pheasant release at gun club level in Ireland. Although this is a substantial figure, it is important to note that reared pheasants generally suffer a high rate of loss soon after release (see Hessler *et al.*, 1970; Krauss *et al.*, 1987; Brittas *et al.*, 1992). In addition, they have lower annual survival rates than wild pheasants (Robertson, 1986), and produce fewer young than wild pheasants (Jarvis and Engbring, 1976).



Figure 4.8 Photo of pheasant release pen situated in game crop. Source: personal photograph.

Although pheasants are an introduced bird species to Ireland and may not be considered a native part of Irish fauna, it is frequently suggested that gun clubs undertake ecological management work to improve the conditions for pheasant survival. Some techniques include predator control, supplementary feeding through grain provision and planting game crops (NARGC *Pers. Comm.*). A question was provided on the survey requesting RGC secretaries to estimate the number of gun clubs providing supplementary feeding for pheasants. However, most RGC secretaries did not provide an answer to this question. Some gave answers such as ‘unknown’, ‘most gun clubs’ or ‘all gun clubs’, particularly those involved in pheasant release programmes.

The RGC survey indicated that 126 gun clubs (14 percent) planted game crop in 2007. The game crop planted would generally consist of seed mixtures such as wild flower seed mixes with kale and maize and, less frequently, barley and oats. Gun clubs typically plant game crop along field margins occupying on average 1-3 acres of land with the cooperation of landowners (NARGC *Pers. Comm.*).

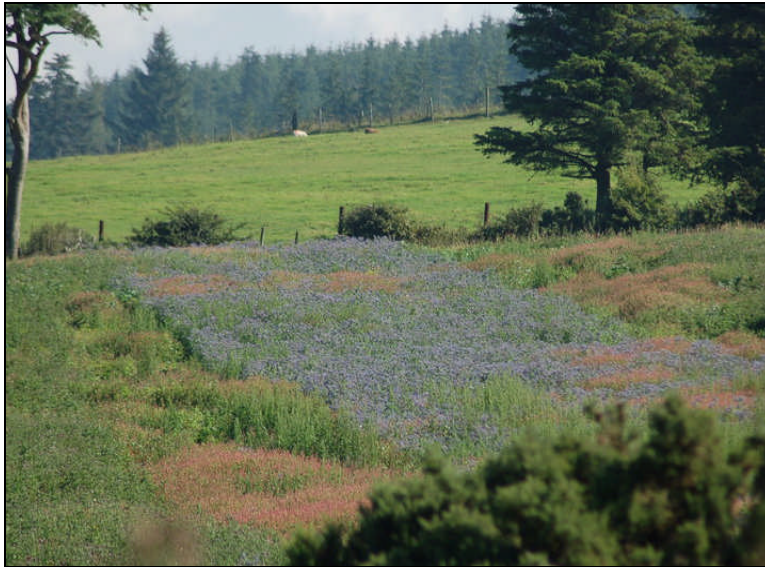


Figure 4.9 Photo of game crop planted by a gun club. Source: personal photograph.

The third aspect of the RGC survey attempted to establish the number of gun clubs managing wetlands to improve the conditions for duck species. The motivation for gun clubs in this regard is to produce a sustainable harvest of duck (released duck or wild duck) for shooting. The results indicate that 170 gun clubs (18 percent) were involved in duck pond management during 2007 (see Figure 4.10).

The final question in the RGC survey set out to establish the extent to which gun clubs are involved in red grouse management in Ireland. Red grouse have been identified as a Red List species of conservation concern, having exhibited a decline of over 50 percent in the last 40 years (Cummins *et al.*, 2010) and are listed on Annex III/I of the EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC). For a gun club, red grouse management generally involves controlling the specific factors limiting the red grouse population in any one area. These ecological management practices typically include maintaining the distribution and diversity of heather quality, increased predator control, along with territory management and monitoring of the red grouse population (see Figure 4.11). Table 4.11 suggests that 23 gun clubs (2 percent) were involved in red grouse management during 2007.



Figure 4.10 Photo of a duck pond created by a gun club. Source: personal photograph.



Figure 4.11 Heather management for red grouse by a gun club. Source: personal photograph.

Gun clubs are also considered to be actively involved in predator control on an ongoing basis. During 2007, all RGCs participated in the NARGC national predator control competition (NARGC *Pers. Comm.*). This is where gun clubs

compete (at RGC level) against each other on the basis of the numbers of predator species harvested each year. In the gun club questionnaires, many secretaries elaborated upon their answers in supporting correspondence, and a large number added ‘pest control’ as an additional conservation activity.

4.6 Coursing Clubs and Ecological Management

In order to investigate the link between coursing and ecological management, a range of questions were provided in the coursing club questionnaire. In general, the ecological management work undertaken by coursing clubs would aim to increase the population of hares in their local area. Each coursing club in Ireland is associated with a number of discrete localities that are habitually used for the annual netting of hares. Consequently, coursing clubs refer to their annual hunting grounds as ‘preserves’. The Irish Coursing Club (ICC) advocates active hare population management including predator control, prohibition of other forms of hunting such as shooting and poaching and the maintenance and enhancement of suitable hare habitat within club preserves (Reid *et al.*, 2010). In this regard, the questionnaire for coursing clubs also set out to establish the number of clubs that are involved in specific hare-related ecological management practices (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 Ecological management work carried out by the 39 coursing clubs that returned questionnaires

Management Activity	No. of Clubs	%
Actively patrol preserves	36	92
Predator control work in preserves	35	90
Walk fields before silage cutting in preserves	8	20
Delayed cutting of silage in preserves	7	18
Providing feed for hares in preserves	5	11

Table 4.12 indicates that 36 coursing clubs (92 percent) actively patrolled their preserves to prevent poaching (illegal hunting). In addition, 35 coursing clubs (90 percent) carried out predator control work to conserve hare numbers. Other less popular management activities included walking the fields before silage cutting, which was carried out by 8 clubs (20 percent), and the delayed cutting of silage in preserves, which was carried out by 7 coursing clubs (18 percent).

Finally, 5 coursing clubs (11 percent) stated that they provided food for hares during the winter. The food would typically consist of apples, barley or other crops. These findings may be significant because, as with other farmland species, the Irish hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*) has undergone a substantial population decline since the early twentieth century.

Although these data show that coursing clubs put in place habitat management measures to improve the ecological conditions for hares within their preserves, there is an intrinsic ethical and moral conflict in that hares are also netted and then coursed (i.e. chased by two greyhounds within an enclosed park)³⁴. From this perspective, it is not entirely clear that hunters can be presented in a pro-conservation or pro-animal manner. For the participants involved, coursing may indeed designate the proper place of ‘nature’ and ‘society’, however, some non-coursing individuals may construct those involved as having a ‘blood-thirsty’ disposition, inflicting unnecessary suffering on hares for sport. Protestors to hare coursing in Ireland increasingly argue that hares undergo considerable stress during the netting and coursing process (see ICABS, 2013).

Referring to the divide between humans and animals, some animal rights enthusiasts, such as Gold (1995), have argued that animals are feeling individuals and, in this context, where an organism has interests, these interests should be given equal consideration. Hence, from Gold’s (1995) perspective, it would be inconsistent to solely restrict membership of the ‘moral’ community to human beings alone because animals, like humans, have interests (see also Norton, 1999). Peter Singer similarly argues that humans have a moral obligation to minimise the pain and suffering that are the causes of our actions (Singer, 1977).

³⁴ The Irish hare also is listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention and Annex V(a) of the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and is listed as an internationally important species in the Irish Red Data Book (Whilde, 1993). Subject to an All-Ireland Species Action Plan, it is one of the highest priority species for conservation action in Ireland.

In light of the perceived ethical concerns for hares, the Irish Coursing Club made it compulsory for greyhounds to be muzzled during coursing events in 1993³⁵.

However, according to the Irish Council Against Blood Sports (2013: webpage):

“Muzzling has failed to eliminate the cruelty from coursing. Thousands of hares are snatched from the wild and chased by greyhounds. Some of the hares will be battered and mauled into the ground by the dogs. Some will sustain injuries so severe that they will die on the coursing fields. All will suffer the fear and stress of running for their lives”.

This illustrates that the frequently reported love for nature (and animals) expressed by hunters (McLeod, 2007) and their desire to conserve habitats (Franklin, 2008) is open to various interpretations. This is primarily why coursing and indeed all hunting activities involve the contesting of narratives about multiple spaces of ethics, natures, ruralities, and political struggles over the meaning and constitution of animals. Although data from this study suggest that hunters manage ecological environments for animals, they also create spaces for various interpretations to be made. It remains to be seen how these ‘ecological benefits’ will be constructed from a wider a rural community and rural policy perspective.

4.7 Hunting and Ecological Management: Perceptions of Farmers

During the focus group discussions, hunting was widely constructed as being an important tool for maintaining a healthy ecological (and economic) balance within Irish rural space. In this context, farmers drew on specific society-nature understandings in order to construct a range of animals as ‘pests’, which were regarded as being unnatural and problematic within Irish rural space.

Interestingly, the term ‘vermin’ was used by almost all farmers to describe these species, which are often collectively referred to as predator species in a wider wildlife management context. Clearly, it is worth noting here that one person’s ‘wildlife’ is another’s ‘vermin’ and the perceptions of threat and nuisance rely on

³⁵ Reid *et al.* (2007a) suggest that the muzzling of dogs has significantly reduced levels of hare mortality. For example, in courses using unmuzzled dogs from 1988/89 – 1992/93 mean hare mortality was 15.8% compared to 4.1% in courses using muzzled dogs in 1993/94-2003/04 (Reid *et al.*, 2007a). The most recent estimates of the total hare population of the Republic of Ireland are 233,000 and 535,000 hares during 2006 and 2007 respectively (Reid *et al.*, 2007b). Reid *et al.* (2007a) suggest that mortality post 1993 removes <0.1% of the total adult population annually.

the meanings attached to human relations with these animals (see Cloke *et al.*, 1996).

As a result of hunters' role in controlling pest species, it was evident that the vast majority of farmers perceived hunters to be active participants in the food chain that play a part in 'natural' ecological management processes. This contrasts markedly with those constructions of nature that favour a romantic visual relationship between humans and the natural world, in which contact with nature is done visually without disrupting 'natural' processes (Macnaughten and Urry, 1998). In this context, nature/culture boundaries are being transformed in a manner whereby hunting is constructed as an important tool in terms of controlling these pest species.

There was a considerable focus on the role of game shooting by farmers and, in particular, gun clubs. This is somewhat understandable as there were 930 gun clubs distributed throughout rural Ireland in 2007. Hence, in terms of participation, it remains the most popular hunting activity. Almost 20 farmers discussed what they perceived to be positive work done by gun clubs in terms of controlling certain predator species. This theme was particularly emphasised by the older farmers from within the IFA focus group discussions. For example, one Sligo farmer stated that most farmers were happy to see gun clubs controlling predator species, particularly sheep farmers:

Well I am a sheep farmer and I recon I loose about 10 percent of my stock every year to foxes. So I like to see gun club members out shooting vermin. We couldn't run our farm otherwise (Sligo IFA member).

Several other farmers expressed their satisfaction, whilst referring to the 'positive' efforts undertaken by hunters in controlling certain pest species:

By and large, most farmers are happy to see gun clubs out controlling vermin. Keeping control on vermin is important. Grey crows, magpies, foxes and mink do a lot of damage, particularly during lambing and to wildlife in general (Mayo IFA member).

Although many of the comments about vermin control were from older farmers referring to the need for the protection of lambs, a number of younger farmers also referred to problems caused by deer in terms of overgrazing. For example, one Co. Mayo farmer stressed the necessity for hunters to control deer species:

Someone needs to manage the deer around my farm. Without control, I'd be eaten out of house and home (Mayo Macra member).

There were also some discussions by four farmers about the role of gun clubs in controlling crows and pigeons for crop protection purposes. Three of these were Co. Louth farmers, which is somewhat understandable as there is more land under arable production in the east of Ireland. One Louth farmer stated:

Sometimes I call some of the lads in the local gun club to shoot pigeons off my land. I plant rape and kale and at certain times there's a lot of damage done like when the crop is just planted. I offer them [i.e. gun club members] the price of cartridges but they're just happy to get shooting (Louth Macra member).

It became apparent that the animals referred to as vermin were constructed as being 'unhealthy' or 'unnatural' in terms of maintaining a balanced rural ecosystem. In some cases, a number of older farmers used strong language when referring to certain predator species. For example, one Sligo IFA member went so far as to describe vermin as being 'pure bastards':

Vermin definitely deserve to be named because they're pure bastards. I worry that, some time in the future, legislation will be brought in to protect vermin by the Greens [i.e. the Green Party]. I heard debates about protecting magpies and grey crows before. People may try to protect them. But if they were ever to become a protected species, there would be out-roar from farmers (Sligo IFA member).

From a wider biodiversity context, five farmers expressed concern about a number of native and non-native animal species that predated ground-nesting birds. A number of farmers spoke about releases of North American mink from fur farms in their locality and referred to the damage caused to ground-nesting

bird species. The following comment was made by the only IFA female focus group participant³⁶:

I know where mink were released near my land and they have caused devastating damage to local wildlife. Gun club lads have been trapping mink for years on my land. I think they should be given some government support for their efforts (Sligo IFA member).

Four farmers spoke about the effects of the non-native grey squirrel on the native Irish red squirrel population. In all of these discussions, hunting was perceived as an important tool for maintaining a healthy ecological balance in rural Ireland. Concern was also raised by three farmers about the ecological consequences of having too many predator species in a specific area. These farmers spoke about the need to control fox populations in order to prevent the spreading of various diseases. In this context, hunting was constructed as being an important tool for managing unhealthy animal populations in the rural ecosystem. For example, one farmer from Co. Mayo made reference to foxes acquiring diseases due to a lack of management:

In my area, a few years ago, there used to be a lot of hunting for hares and foxes. Since they've stopped, foxes are spreading diseases and there's so many [i.e. foxes] around that they are also spreading diseases to other wildlife. It's the last thing a farmer wants to see and at the moment they're [i.e. foxes] anything but healthy looking. So what I'm saying is that hunting is important to keep a balance in the wild (Mayo IFA member).

From the perspective of most farmers, hunters can be conceptualised as hybrid human-animals which play an important role in maintaining healthy ecological conditions in rural space.

4.7.1 Hunters as Nature-builders

The findings from the hunting organiser surveys, presented in the previous section, which suggest that hunting contributes to the management of ecological features in rural space, also emerged during the focus group discussions with

³⁶ Although females were present in each of the Macra focus groups and one of the IFA focus groups, there were no apparent differences between male and female perceptions or understandings of hunting activities in rural Ireland.

farmers. From this perspective, numerous farmers positioned hunting within a conservation discourse associated with the creation and management of ecological features in rural space. For example, several farmers referred to the management of hedgerows, woodlands and the planting of game crop by hunting organisers:

My local gun club plants special crops on my land for game birds which is good to see because other birds benefit along with the pheasants (Roscommon Macra member).

In any place where gun clubs are active they control vermin and there is always more game in the area. A great benefit! They also grow special food crops for pheasants which are important as there's very little food for wild birds these days (Galway IFA member).

Six references were also made about hunting organisers managing specific areas as game/wildlife sanctuaries. For example, one farmer in Co. Roscommon made reference to his local gun club looking after a large area of bog (with a no hunting policy) to restore game species in their local area. Only three farmers commented on the link between hunting with hounds and ecological management, of which two comments related to hunts managing areas of cover for foxes and hares. There were also a number of comments about the role of coursing clubs in creating ecological features. For example, a Clare farmer stated that his local coursing club in Co. Tipperary was very active in managing habitat for hares:

I know one place outside Cashel [Co. Tipperary] where the local coursing club has carried out huge management work. This has mainly involved keeping hares from going out onto main roads to stop them from getting killed and farming the land in certain ways. There are easily up to 60-70 hares there. It's about 400 acres and it involves several farmers. It's very impressive to see such a huge amount of hares. I think in a situation like that, those farmers should get some funding for their efforts to put back into minding hares (Clare Macra member).

Another theme which emerged during the ecological discussions about hunting related to the practice of gun clubs releasing game birds such as pheasants. When referring to this, five farmers also commented on the lack of suitable habitat for game birds and the decline of many bird species as a result of the changes in

agricultural policies. For example, prior to commenting on the role of gun clubs releasing pheasants, a female Co. Roscommon farmer stated:

From my own point of view, it's good to see gun clubs releasing game birds such as pheasants... wild pheasants are not around at the moment... you never see them. We'll say back 20-30 years, there were an awful lot of wild pheasants around my place and they're all gone now because of the way farming has changed (Roscommon Macra member).

4.8 Implications of the Evidence

4.8.1 Contributions to the Rural Economy

The findings presented in this chapter encourage us to think about Irish rural space in a more complicated sense. In this way, it is important to comprehend that the countryside is not just an agricultural space, but a space where a variety of non-agricultural activities, such as recreational hunting, are practised. The results also illustrate the importance of considering the role of non-agricultural activities from a wider rural development perspective. This chapter suggests that the economic and ecological presence of hunting, may contribute to contemporary Irish rural policy goals, which seek to focus less on the production of agriculture and more on innovation and diversification of the rural economy.

The mean hunter expenditure estimates ranged from €1,856 for participants involved in game shooting to €6,931 for participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds. The findings from the focus group discussions also positioned hunting as a contributor to rural businesses and as an important ecological service which contributes to the economic viability of their farm businesses. However, the overall extent to which hunting contributes to the rural economy is difficult to assess. One way to consider the relationship between hunting and the rural economy can be seen in Table 4.13. Here, hunters were asked to estimate the extent to which their expenditure was made in different regions, comprising: city/large town, country town and rural areas.

Table 4.13 Breakdown of expenditure by region

Activity	City/Large town (%)	Country town (%)	Rural areas (%)	Other (%)
Game shooters	14	36	48	2
Deer stalkers	28	34	33	5
Hunting with hounds (mounted followers)	7	29	63	1
Hunting with hounds (foot followers)	6	28	65	1
Coursing participants	13	34	52	1
Falconry participants	27	28	43	2
Mean percentage	16	31	51	2

The results indicate that 82 percent of hunters' expenditure was made in rural regions (i.e. rural areas and country towns). The remaining 16 percent was spent in cities/large towns with only 2 percent spent outside of Ireland either through mail order or travel abroad.

However, when considering the hunter expenditure estimates in this study, it is important to highlight that the estimates are likely to be higher than what the average hunter spends. Within the hunting participant questionnaires, each hunter was requested to rank their involvement in hunting into one of three categories: 1) more than the average hunter; 2) about the same as the average hunter and 3) less than the average hunter. Table 4.14 shows a breakdown of these data per hunting activity.

Table 4.14 Hunters' stated involvement in hunting

Activity	More (%)	Average (%)	Less (%)
Game shooting	47	42	11
Deer stalking	58	32	10
Hunting with hounds	69	28	3
Coursing	75	22	3
Falconry	57	36	7
Average	61	32	7

Overall, the results indicate that 61 percent of the participants that returned questionnaires stated that they were more actively involved in hunting than the average hunter. Only 32 percent of respondents stated that they were as involved

to the same extent as the average hunter. The remaining 7 percent stated that they were less involved than the average hunter.

Although hunting, as an economic activity, is likely to be small or almost invisible in terms of national aggregates (Burns *et al.*, 2000), this chapter illustrates that the individual expenditure estimates are quite large. The evidence presented also highlights that some hunting activities (e.g. hunting with hounds) may play a wider role in contributing to other sectors of the rural economy (e.g. the equestrian industry). Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that when hunting takes place in more remote regions, where farming is vulnerable and there are few alternative jobs close at hand, it may play a recognisable role in terms of employment (PACEC, 2000; Burns, 2000). The focus group discussions also illustrate that hunting may support rural businesses that supply hunting-related services and goods. In addition, from the viewpoint of some farmers, hunting is constructed as a contributor to the economic viability of their farm businesses.

4.8.2 Contributions to Conservation

Around the world, it has been argued that hunting is a powerful tool to promote conservation when conducted in ways that are biologically sound within appropriate governance and institutional settings (Wall and Kernohan, 2003; Wall, 2005; Booth and Cumming, 2009; Mahoney 2009). In general, conservation comprises actions that directly enhance the chances of habitats and species persisting in the wild (Leader-Williams, 2009). While conservationists agree over the need to conserve biodiversity, polarised debates often arise over whether protection or use is the best way of achieving this objective. However, some have asked whether a combination of both is possible for additional conservation gains (Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003).

The findings from the hunter organiser survey indicate that there appears to be a cause and effect relationship between hunting and ecological management in Irish rural space. These findings are supported by a number of other studies that show that, hunters have been, and still are, a major influence on decisions to plant and manage habitats such as woodland and hedgerows (Short, 1994; Cox *et*

al., 1996; Cobham Resource Consultants, 1997; MacDonald and Johnson, 2000; Howard and Carroll, 2001; Stoate, 2002; Oldfield *et al.*, 2003; Ewald *et al.*, 2006; PACEC, 2006). The findings also illustrate that recreational hunting is constructed by farmers as playing an important role in the Irish agro-ecosystem. In this context, farmers positioned hunters as nature-builders in terms of managing habitat and as important actors within the 'natural' ecosystem, in terms of controlling 'vermin', which otherwise are seen to play a negative ecological role in the Irish countryside.

From a wider ecological management perspective, it could be argued that the ecological features created by hunting organisers produce a range of knock-on benefits in terms of biodiversity conservation. For example, the planting of game crop is widely considered to be beneficial to a variety of farmland bird species. This has been illustrated in research by Stoate and Szczur (1997), Boatman *et al.* (2000) and Stoate (2002). In this context, increased winter mortality is thought to be responsible for population declines of some farmland birds (Peach *et al.*, 1999). However, game crops and the provision of supplementary feeding are considered to contribute to the conservation of a variety of seed-eating bird species (Stoate, 2002).

Predator control, which was widely cited by farmers as being an important aspect of maintaining the viability of farm businesses, is also shown to have a range of biodiversity benefits. Tapper *et al.* (1996) have demonstrated that for ground-nesting birds, control of potential predators during the nesting season increases the number of chicks hatching which, in turn, increases autumn bird numbers and the numbers of breeding birds in the subsequent spring. Research also shows that sensitive ecological management combined with some predator control can result in increases in local hare populations (see Reynolds and Tapper, 1996; Reid *et al.*, 2010).

In recent decades, there has been increasing emphasis on the enhancement of woodland in Ireland, which is currently undertaken by some hunts, coursing clubs and driven shoots. Woodlands are habitats for a range of species and create linkages across agricultural landscapes (Radford and Bennett, 2007). In Europe,

forests and other wooded areas cover 47 percent of the total land area. However, the Republic of Ireland is currently one of the least wooded countries in Europe, with forest cover standing at approximately 10 percent of the total land area (EPA, 2004). In addition, the vast majority of forests are even-aged commercial plantations of exotic conifers, with Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) making up more than 50 percent of the forest estate (EPA, 2004). This type of woodland is not considered to be beneficial to biodiversity (Carnus *et al.*, 2006).

Hedgerows, which are created and managed by a considerable number of hunting organisers, are a key feature of Irish countryside and an important provider of habitats for a wide range of species (Green *et al.*, 1994; Baudry, 2000; Boutin *et al.*, 2002; LeCoeur *et al.*, 2002). Hedgerows are also widely considered to be on the decline in both quality and quantity. From a biodiversity perspective, hedgerows are important ecological features as they provide cover and feeding for many species of animal, bird, insect and plant (see Newton, 2004).

Field margins, which are created and managed by some hunting organisers, are also considered to be important ecological features. In this context, Roy *et al.* (2003) argue that field margins are important sites for botanical diversity that are used as refuge and over-wintering sites for a wide range of invertebrates (Barr *et al.*, 1993), birds (Bradbury *et al.*, 2000; Brickle *et al.*, 2000; Marshall and Moonen, 2002; Vickery *et al.*, 2002) and bees (Svensson *et al.*, 2000). Field margins also support a high diversity of plant species and provide a food resource for mammals (Tew *et al.*, 1994), a refuge for beneficial parasitoids (Powell, 1986) and predators such as beetles (Bohan *et al.*, 2000).

During the last three decades, studies have repeatedly shown that small biodiversity measures can have major impacts at little cost. Newton (2004) identified the main factors associated with the decline of 30 bird species as: (i) weed control, (ii) early ploughing, (iii) grassland management, (iv) intensified stocking, (v) hedgerow loss and predation. All of these factors can be addressed in ways that produce fractional reductions in agricultural yield. An example is a small reduction in cereal crop yields when headland-edges are left unsprayed, which increases abundance of game birds and other wild fauna and flora (Boatman and Sotherton, 1988).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate the various ways in which hunting is part of the rural economy and the management of ecological features in rural space. The evidence suggests that hunters spend considerable sums of money annually on maintaining specific animals for hunting, on specialised hunting equipment and on hunting-related social activities. Other sizeable expenditure categories by hunters included vehicle expenditure, travel expenditure and staff costs for some hunting organisers, specifically the mounted hunts. The evidence suggests that the majority of this money is spent in the rural economy, with probable leakage into the wider economy. The chapter also outlined a number of themes that emerged during the focus group discussions with farmers in relation to the wider impacts of expenditure on hunting activities in rural areas.

It is important to state, however, that this chapter only presented the primary expenditures associated with hunting activities and did not attempt to extrapolate or ‘gross-up’ the estimates to ascertain the total contribution of hunting to the Irish economy³⁷. Whilst the methodology used and analyses of the hunting expenditures were conducted with the essential statistical rigour, and it is valid to aggregate (‘gross-up’) the survey results, there were a range of complexities and limitations associated with the hunting expenditure estimates in this study. These included complications relating to ascertaining accurate numbers of participants involved in some hunting activities; problems of overestimation as the more active hunters returned most surveys; the fact that the respondents replied to questions about activities, which had taken place, in some cases, a considerable number of months previously; that the majority of respondents relied upon memory rather than carefully-kept records and accounts; and finally, that some expenditures may have been overestimated or underestimated. Hence, a decision was made not to ‘gross-up’ the mean expenditure estimates to obtain figures for the total expenditure associated with hunting in Ireland.

³⁷ In a number of hunting expenditure studies, spending estimates are frequently grossed-up to generate the total expenditure associated with hunting to an economy (e.g. PACEC, 2000; Grado *et al.*, 2001; PACEC, 2006).

In addition to examining the primary expenditures on hunting, some studies have attempted to examine the secondary or induced effects arising from participant expenditure on hunting (and other recreation) activities (e.g. see Burger *et al.*, 1999; Matilainen and Keskinarkaus, 2010). These types of analysis frequently involve the use of economic multipliers and cost-benefit analysis (e.g. see Archer, 1976; Smith 2000), and investigations into the relationship of recreation to regional development and employment (e.g. see Sinclair, 1998; Hanley *et al.*, 2003). In general, the majority of these models are concerned with the ways in which expenditure on recreation activities filters throughout an economy, stimulating other sectors as it does so (Pearce, 2001). More specifically, they are based on estimating input-output analysis models which consider inter-industry relations in an economy, depicting how the output of one industry goes to another industry, where it serves as an input, and thereby illustrates the flow of money through an economy (Winter *et al.*, 1993).

For example, once a hunter makes a purchase, the retailer buys more merchandise from wholesalers, who buy more from manufacturers, who in turn purchase new inputs and supplies. In addition, the wages and salaries paid by these businesses stimulate more economic impacts. Input-output analysis tracks how these various rounds of purchasing benefit other industries and generate economic impacts. There are many different kinds of multipliers reflecting which secondary effects are included and which measure of economic activity is used (e.g. income, expenditure or employment) (see Hall and Page, 2006).

Despite their extensive use, it should be noted that multiplier models are difficult to calculate precisely under the best circumstances (Winter *et al.*, 1993). To be accurate, multipliers require substantial amounts of very detailed data and must be based on a thorough and realistic understanding of the underlying interconnected networks of interdependent activity that constitute the economy of a particular region or country (Bergstrom *et al.*, 1990). Hence, deriving input-output models for regional or national economies is an extremely difficult task. Although input-output models have been conducted in Ireland for different regions and sectors (e.g. see Henry and Deane, 1997; McFeely *et al.*, 2011), few, if any, models exist at sub-sector levels.

Furthermore, as parts of the hunting sector are frequently entangled within other economic sectors (e.g. fishing from a retail industry perspective), it is not a self-contained industry and therefore, more often than not, it is absorbed within a range of retail industries. This makes hunting problematic when it comes to measuring its economic impacts as the underlying assumptions to be used in an input-output model would be quite restrictive³⁸. Input-output analysis would also assume that spending would not take place by hunters if there were no hunting activities in Ireland. In the absence of hunting, however, it is probable that the expenditure by resident hunters in Ireland would be made in other economic sectors.

Aside from these imperfections, the multiplier technique has been frequently questioned, particularly as its use has often produced exaggerated results³⁹. Even if it were possible to generate input-output multipliers for the hunting sector in Ireland, they would have to be treated with extreme caution because the models are generally static with no dynamics to take into account time-lag effects. Multiplier models have been frequently misused and misinterpreted in recreation and tourism studies (Archer, 1984) and therefore remain a considerable source of confusion among some non-economists (Winter *et al.*, 1993). As a result of the complexities and problems associated with exploring the indirect/induced economic effects of hunting, it was decided to rely solely on presenting the mean hunter expenditure estimates to illustrate the relationship between hunting and the rural economy.

The results of this analysis do, however, raise a number of practical issues relating to current rural development policy in Ireland. For example, the results could be used to promote rural development and financial support for resource-based recreation activities in Ireland. Similarly, the evidence could potentially make policy-makers more aware of the wider economic role of hunting activities,

³⁸ Like all formal economic models, the input-output framework is derived from assumptions about economic behaviour and definitions about a range of variables relative to particular economic sectors.

³⁹ Other non-priced values of hunting have also been undertaken such as travel-cost analysis and contingent valuation but these are also subject to scrutiny even when done well (Gartner and Lime, 2000).

which may alter future decisions in relation to rural development plans and wildlife-related policies.

This chapter has also presented evidence from the hunting organiser surveys and the farmer focus group discussions, which illustrated that hunting activities contribute to the creation and management of ecological features in the Irish rural landscape. The specific habitats managed by hunters are also considered to be important for broader aspects of biodiversity conservation. Hence, in some cases, hunting activities in Ireland may play a role in species-specific conservation and support rural development goals that promote the multifunctional use of farmland.

These findings are important particularly as global conservation policy has broadened from its original focus on specific areas of key importance. Furthermore, this habitat management work is carried out at no cost to the Irish exchequer. However, as outlined in Section 4.6, discussions about the relative significance of ecological management work undertaken by hunters can frequently become polarised on ethical and moral grounds. Furthermore, there is concern that the extractive use of many living resources has been, and continues to be, biologically unsustainable (Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003). From this perspective, it is understood that hunting activities can make some conservationists very nervous given that over-harvesting has remained a key factor in the decline and extinction of some species (e.g. see Robinson, 1993; Keane *et al.*, 2005).

Work in political ecology suggests that these scenarios have led to the development of preservationist-orientated policies towards biodiversity, including regulations and the designation of areas that are strictly protected. However, this approach to conservation ignores that the cultural use of resources, such as hunting activities, provide an incentive to create and manage habitats in the rural landscape. From a rural policy perspective, the same ecological features that are created and managed by hunting organisers are also encouraged in various European and Irish rural development policies, most notably, Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It is here that agri-environment schemes

such as the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) have been designed to encourage the retention of various landscape features (including hedgerows, woodlands, wild bird covers and field margins).

The European Habitats Directive, which was transposed into Irish legislation in 1997, also aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity through a range of support mechanisms. Furthermore, Article 11 of the Convention on Biological Biodiversity (CBD) states that “Each contracting party shall as far as possible and as appropriate, adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity” (Convention on Biological Biodiversity, 2002: 8). Thus far, however, the Irish rural policy community seems unaware of the conservation role of hunting and/or there are other unexplored issues at play which explain the lack of recognition of hunting within the rural policy environment.

The next chapter suggests a need to evaluate how different rural actors construct hunting in the Irish countryside and how they (differently) perceive the potential functions of the rural landscape. More specifically, it examines how recreational hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy and within the farming community. Considering work by Macnaghten and Urry (1998), it recognises that diverse, contested interpretations of nature are created through, and cannot be separate from, social practices. Particular currency can be found in their assertion that “questions concerning...whether hunting and shooting should be considered legitimate countryside pursuits...all depend on assumptions concerning just what sort of space the countryside is” (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998: 189).

Chapter 5: Constructions of Hunting within Rural Policy and the Farming Community

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented evidence to suggest that recreational hunting contributes to the rural economy and the management of ecological features in Irish rural space. Consideration of these data was contextualised by the assumption that the countryside is a multifunctional space, producing not only food but also sustaining rural landscapes, protecting biodiversity, generating employment and contributing to the viability of rural areas (Potter and Burney, 2002). This chapter shifts the focus away from hunters and hunting organisers and explores how hunting is constructed within rural policy and the farming community.

Using interview, focus group and rural policy document material, this chapter connects hunting with post-structural insights to open up new channels of inquiry and understandings about the complex interactions between nature, rurality and human-animal relations. For example, it positions hunting in relation to ideas about ethics, animal welfare, and sustainability, whilst encompassing wider ideas about how nature is socially constructed. The chapter also considers the importance of rurality as a discursive category, or indeed as an unknowably complex category which has become ambiguous and ambivalent (see e.g. Mormont, 1990; Halfacree, 1993; Lawrence, 1997; Murdoch and Pratt, 1997; Cloke, 2006a).

As we shall see, there are a range of differences between the ways in which hunting and hunting practices are positioned within rural policy in comparison to the farming community. Within rural policy, hunting is constructed as a cruel and ethically contested activity. However, within the farming community, the act of hunting is constructed as being ethically justifiable and an important part of rural life. Farmers also asserted that rural people have a more realistic and appropriate view of nature and animal life cycles than the average urban dweller who might criticise hunting.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first part presents the results of the interview analysis with rural policy decision-makers and the rural policy document analysis. The second part presents the findings of the focus group analysis, which illustrates how farmers construct hunting in rural Ireland.

5.2 Section 1. Hunting in Irish Rural Policy

This section considers data from the interviews with rural policy decision-makers and analysis of rural policy documents⁴⁰. The evidence presented illustrates that there is an ambiguous relationship to hunting within contemporary Irish rural policy. At the outset, data are presented to suggest that hunting is a neglected rural activity that is seldom considered within rural policy debates in Ireland. Some of the broader themes preventing hunting from greater inclusion within Irish rural policy relate to specific constructions about how rural areas, and the animals therein, should be consumed. In this context, issues relating to ethics, animal welfare, changing human-animals relations, a lack of knowledge about the needs of hunters as well as specific constructions of idylled ruralities emerged, which cast hunting as ‘out of place’. Issues relating the ecological sustainability of hunting also hindered greater inclusion within Irish rural policy. Despite these issues, some evidence is presented to suggest that rural policy recognises that hunting plays a wider economic and ecological rural development role in Ireland.

5.2.1 Hunting: A Neglected Rural ‘Other’

One of the most significant themes that emerged during the interview analysis positioned hunting as a neglected activity within contemporary Irish rural policy. This was supported by a number of tangible examples whereby rural policy decision-makers constructed hunting activities as a ‘dormant’ or ‘non-existent’ issue within Irish rural policy. The following excerpt illustrates this issue in detail:

⁴⁰ Rural policy decision-makers are referred to using a numeric referencing system as each interviewee requested to remain anonymous due to the sensitive and political nature of the material discussed.

I don't see hunting appearing anywhere in Irish rural policy. In fact, I have yet to pick up a document where rural policy specifically refers to hunting in one way or another, either supporting, or not supporting it. They [hunting activities] are simply a dormant issue (Policy-maker: 02).

Interrogation into this phenomenon highlighted a number of themes that hindered closer relationships between hunting and Irish rural policy. Building on recent work in animal geography, it was evident that, first, an increasing range of animals have been drawn into closer, emotional association with modern cultures (Franklin, 1999) and second, Irish rural policy has been subject to the global spread and popularisation of a set of values concerning human interactions with nature which has introduced new standards for environmental protection (Woods, 2005).

At an early stage of the interview process, it became evident that hunting was conceptualised as a series of ethically-charged society-nature interconnections that did not 'fit' comfortably within current rural policy objectives. In this context, policy-makers drew on specific understandings about animal welfare and expressed concern about the general public's sentiments towards hunting because it involves the killing of animals:

I think that, for a lot of people, hunting is seen as a cruel and sometimes as an unnecessary activity and if we were to support hunting, technically then, we would be of the position that there are no welfare issues with hunting. I'm not sure if we can do that (Policy-maker: 01).

Building on this theme of ethics and animal welfare, rural policy decision-makers also drew on a range of far-reaching changes regarding urbanisation and the 'separation' of the countryside and the city (Williams, 1973), which has led to widespread repugnance towards seeing animals being killed (McLeod, 2004). Although not always voiced overtly, a number of interviewees positioned the hunting issue as a product of different values held between rural and urban people. This complements the findings of a number of studies on hunting which have shown that urban people have more negative attitudes toward hunting (e.g., Dahlgren *et al.*, 1977; Shaw, 1977; Kellert, 1978; Mankin *et al.*, 1999; Teel *et al.*, 2002). During the interviews, rural policy decision-makers constructed urban

people as being more ‘sensitive’ to animal-related issues in comparison to rural people. Two interviewees drew on specific discourses relating to the changing nature of human-animal relationships. The following comments highlight these issues in greater detail:

I think that in the last number of decades we’ve become over-sensitised to animal welfare issues. For urban people, it’s perfectly fine to kill farm animals for food but once wild animals are involved, things are different. Rural people seem to understand the cycle of life and death in the countryside in a different way (Policy-maker: 03).

People can relate to wild animals more so than farmed animals and then look at them differently. I don’t think that everyone in this agency would be happy to include hunting in rural policy because of the welfare and highly opinionated concerns involved (Policy-maker: 02).

In one of the above excerpts, rural people were constructed as having a better understanding about ‘life and death’ in the countryside in comparison to urban people, which were regarded as having a more ecocentric understanding of nature. This supports Thomas’s (1983) argument which suggests that, when society becomes more urbanised and humans become more physically and economically distanced from animals, the need to maintain the categorical distance is often substantially revised. This relationship then gives way to symbolic relations between humans and animals based on separation and difference.

These society-nature understandings of animals appear to be connected with particular connotations, symbolic meanings and ideas of natural practices associated with spatial sites. According to Sheilds (1991), the naturalness of routine practice is derived from attitudes towards specific places and, in the case of hunting, it is evident that rural policy decision-makers construct nature in a manner that is pertinent to ideas about ethics and welfare. One interviewee, for example, stated that there was an important need to know more about the ecological and animal welfare implications of hunting before rural policy agencies could incorporate hunting into rural policy objectives:

Before this organisation supports hunting, I would like to see some clear guidelines about animal welfare or a detailed study on animal welfare. I think that there are people qualified to assess welfare issues in hunted animals. For example, we have very clear guidelines for livestock welfare from people with backgrounds in veterinary and animal science. I would like them to state if there are welfare issues with hunting rather than an emotional debate taking place (Policy-maker: 01).

Concerns about the ethical appropriateness of hunting were also evident in the rural policy documents. For example, Coillte's (2005) document on forest recreation drew on the wider public's 'concern' about hunting as a means to disallow some hunting activities within its forest estate. The report states that:

"In light of the general public concern surrounding fox hunting and similar types of hunting and the changes in the laws in the UK – with a possible increase in UK-based hunts wishing to ride here – Coillte has adopted a general policy stance prohibiting such hunting on its estate except where a long established traditional right or convention which predates Coillte's ownership of the land may exist" (Coillte, 2005: 75).

This perception by Coillte highlights the changing nature of human-animal relations suggesting that our interactions with animals are becoming increasingly contested. This perception is further illustrated by another statement in their document which points out that: "while peoples' perspectives on such activities *may be changing* [emphasis added], they [i.e. hunting activities] are still a legal activity engaged in and enjoyed by many rural people" (Coillte, 2005: 75).

One of the most pertinent examples illustrating how particular understandings of nature and animals affect the place of hunting in Irish rural policy emerged from an interview with Ireland's principal tourist promotion agency, Fáilte Ireland. Due to the ethical and controversial nature of hunting with hounds in the UK, Fáilte Ireland adopted a position that refuses to incorporate any hunting activities into their current policy objectives:

Hunting is something that we don't actively promote. This decision was made when Tony Blair (then British Prime Minister) was debating the hunting ban in the UK in 2004. Because it got so much media coverage, the then Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism John O'Donoghue TD, thought that if hunting was going to be actively promoted or developed in

Ireland, a similar amount of animal rights controversy would arise here in Ireland (Policy-maker: 04).

Along with concerns over ethics, there remained a cultural flow of ideas about how hunting is positioned within discourses of ecological sustainability. In this context, hunting was constructed as a potential ‘biodiversity issue’ amidst concerns about over-hunting, species conservation and the limited regulations governing hunting activities in Ireland.

Two rural policy decision-makers stated that there remained a need to enable an estimation of sustainability to be calculated in relation to the ecological impacts of hunting. In some respects, this paradigm positions nature as external to society and as a material reality to be classified and quantified. It was also evident that a number of rural policy decision-makers drew on wider representations over the threat to ‘nature’ in narratives about promoting hunting within rural development policy. For example, one interviewee expressed concern about the lack of detailed information in relation to the potential negative ecological impacts of recreational hunting activities:

I would like to see if there are any negative impacts regarding these activities... Are wild birds shot irresponsibly? Are some animals being over-hunted? We know so little about hunting activities; I suppose this would contribute to the reluctance of incorporating them within policy (Policy-maker: 05).

Another interviewee stated that their agency could not support an activity “which was as under-regulated as hunting” and expressed concern about the implications of irresponsible hunters (particularly tourist hunters) over-harvesting certain animals and birds (Policy-maker: 02). It was also evident that rural policy decision-makers relied on a ‘protection’ based approach to conserving rural environments. The following excerpt illustrates this point in detail:

There is considerable emphasis within rural development policy about the protection of the natural environment and consequently, hunting may not ‘fit’ within our aims for conservation. For example, what about the shooting of Red Grouse which are a threatened species now? A lot of groups would disagree with this (Policy-maker: 03).

Three rural policy decision-makers expressed concern about the lack of knowledge regarding the current scale and intensity of hunting activities in Ireland. For example, drawing on wider representations of threat to the 'ideal' countryside, one policy-maker expressed concern about the way in which hunting activities are regulated and suggested that "we need more guidance about the effects of hunting in Ireland" (Policy-maker: 01). Another policy-maker suggested that they were worried that "hunters could do what they please in the Irish countryside" (Policy-maker: 2). Here hunting was constructed as an uncontrolled and unregulated activity in rural Ireland. This made two rural policy decision-makers nervous because of the potential for possible problems and unknown circumstances to arise. It was also evident that rural policy decision-makers did not want to be associated with any negative press coverage if a hunting-related problem emerged.

5.2.2 Rurality and Hunting

The analysis revealed that rural policy decision-makers constructed rurality and nature in a manner which hindered closer relationships between hunting and rural policy. In a number of situations, rurality was positioned as being dominated by a 'closeness to nature' whereby hunting was cast as being 'out of place'. In this context, the interviewees drew on a range of common imagined geographies dominated by idyllic ruralities with romantic notions of how the countryside should be consumed. From a number of perspectives, hunting was constructed as a threat to the 'ideal' countryside.

We promote outdoor recreation activities but we have never considered hunting. If we did, I'm sure there would be questions by many people who wouldn't like to see our beautiful countryside overrun by people with guns shooting wildlife (Policy-maker: 04).

Another interviewee stated that hunting comes into direct conflict with their agency's 'official' outdoor recreation policy:

Hunting activities, in particular, are likely to bring our Department into conflict with the principles of Leave No Trace Ireland which may restrict any opportunity for our Department to promote hunting in rural Ireland (Policy-maker: 05).

Analysis of the Leave no Trace Ireland (2006) policy document added further evidence to the perceived ‘threat’ to rurality. The document encourages a range of principles that promote “caring recreational use of the countryside” along with the “protection of the natural, cultural and built heritage of our countryside and of the natural environment, including wildlife habitats” (LNTI, 2006: 2). One of the principles states that recreation users should “Avoid making loud and excessive noise. Let nature’s sounds prevail” (LNTI, 2006: 2). From this perspective, game shooting participants using firearms whilst hunting may be considered ‘problematic’. Another principle stresses the importance of not disturbing wildlife and their habitats:

“Observe wild animals and birds from a distance. Avoid disturbing them at sensitive times: mating, nesting and raising young (mostly between spring and early summer)” (LNTI, 2006: 2).

Hunting, by its very nature, does not appear to fit within the principles of Leave No Trace Ireland because it involves disturbing and in many cases killing animals and birds. From this perspective, hunting can be understood as ‘a violation of the rural as a space for nature’ (Woods, 1998a). In general, it appears that the Leave No Trace Ireland (2006) policy favours gentler and less invasive forms of countryside recreation that do not involve loud noises and the direct disturbance of nature.

In the majority of cases, when hunting activities were referred to within rural policy documents, there was a tendency to define them within the remit of other ‘outdoor recreation’ activities. For example, Coillte’s (2005) forestry recreation document refers to hunting activities as being ‘some of the oldest forms of outdoor recreation’. Similarly, the National Countryside Recreation Strategy (2005) listed hunting among 32 other outdoor recreation activities, which were divided into three categories: land-, water- and air-based recreation activities (see Figure 5.1).

Land Based Activities	Water Based Activities	Air Based Activities
Bird Watching	Angling	Aeronautics
Caving	Canoeing	Aircraft Construction
Coursing	Jet Skiing	Aviation
Cycling	Kayaking	Ballooning
Equestrian	Rowing	Gliding and Soaring
Hill walking	Sailing	Hang gliding/para gliding
Hunting/Shooting	Surfing	Micro lighting
Jogging	Swimming	Parachuting
Mountain Biking		
Mountaineering		
Off Roding		
Orienteering		
Quad biking		
Rock Climbing		
Scrambling		
Walking		

Figure 5.1 Countryside recreation activities listed in the Countryside Recreation Strategy. Source: CnaT (2006)

This notion of defining hunting as an outdoor recreation activity was criticised by two rural policy decision-makers. In this regard, hunting activities were constructed as being more specialised than most other forms of outdoor recreation. One interviewee noted that good relationships with landowners and necessary skills/training are required to participate in hunting in comparison to a range of other recreation activities:

Hunting and shooting are different; they're more specialised outdoor recreation activities because they require access to a lot of land and require certain skills. Hunting requires the skill of horse riding. Shooting, requires skill of handling guns and dogs. These aren't just like hill walking or cycling where almost anyone can do them. So they're hard to promote to the lay person (Policy-maker: 01).

Hunting was also constructed as being a more culturally and socially embedded practice in comparison to other recreation activities. It seemed for two rural policy decision-makers at least that hunting was positioned as a 'way of life' and played a more dominant role in participants' lives. The following excerpt illustrates this point in more detail:

I think hunting is an exception; people are much more involved in comparison to other activities; it's almost like a way of life rather than a recreation activity to them (Policy-maker: 03).

One of the main factors distinguishing hunting from other recreation activities is that it involves the intentional killing of wild animals, including popular attractive mammals such as deer and foxes. This 'killing' issue emerged in a number of instances within rural policy reports and by rural policy decision-makers. In many respects, the 'killing' aspect of hunting proved to be a significant socio-cultural barrier which restricted the inclusion of hunting into current rural policy objectives:

It's not easy to promote any recreation activity but, among them all, hunting is probably the most problematic because it involves killing wild animals for sport (Policy-maker: 02).

5.2.3 Hunters: A Non-active Lobby Group

Some rural policy decision-makers drew on the inactive nature of hunters within the rural policy process as a reason to rationalise why hunting remains neglected within rural policy. Two interviewees stated that hunters fail to make their activities visible within the rural policy process. The analysis also suggested that certain interest groups and organisations are perceived, and perceive themselves, to have a remit in 'rural development' while others do not. Referring to the lack of inclusion of hunting within rural policy, one rural policy decision-maker suggested that "we've heard nothing from the hunters about their interest in recent rural policy programmes" (Policy-maker: 03). It was also suggested that if hunting was to be further incorporated within rural policy, hunters would have to become more proactive and vocal in getting their views/interests across:

We respond to needs; what are the needs of hunters? Is there anything coming forward from hunting groups? In what way could hunting be developed? Do they need financial support? I mean, they appear to be self-supporting (Policy-maker: 02).

We would like to see what hunters want presented on paper first. We haven't seen anything like that before (Policy-maker: 03).

The findings presented thus far have highlighted a number of discourses which indicate that hunting is constructed as an ethically contested activity within Irish rural policy. The following section attempts to highlight some of the ways in which hunting is constructed as an economic and ecological tool for rural development within Irish rural policy.

5.2.4 Hunting and Rural Development

Despite the range of ways that hunting was constructed as being neglected, ethically contested, unsustainable, and out of place in relation to conceptualisations of rurality and nature within rural policy, an interesting contradiction emerged whereby hunting was also constructed as an economic tool for rural development in Ireland. Three rural policy decision-makers drew on a range of arguments about the wider economic impacts of the expenditure associated with hunting. The most prevalent examples related to hunting with hounds and its contribution to the Irish sport horse industry:

We recognise that hunting [with hounds] plays a major role to the sport horse industry in Ireland. This is important because we have more sport horses per population here than any other EU country and they're worth a lot to us from an export point of view (Policy-maker: 01).

Comments were also made in relation to the ban on hunting with dogs in the UK and the possible economic consequences of a similar ban in the Republic of Ireland. One interviewee stated that “although it would be very difficult to estimate the costs of a hunting ban in Ireland, there would definitely be implications for the Irish sport horse sector” (Policy-maker: 04).

These interviewees also referred to the ancillary expenditure on hunting as being beneficial to rural businesses. Some of the costs mentioned included feeding animals, purchasing equipment, exercising animals and animal transport. Hunting with hounds was also positioned as being important for sustaining part-time employment in rural Ireland. One interviewee discussed the employment associated with mounted hunts in terms of the followers keeping hunting horses at livery.

From a wider rural development perspective, another interviewee stated that tourist hunting, when properly organised, could be an important rural development tool for attracting people to rural areas. The comments in this regard related to hunts providing horse rental services to visitors, commercial game-bird shooting estates selling shooting days and the spectators that travel to coursing events. There was also recognition that tourist hunters could potentially be important for supporting rural services such as local accommodation, pubs and restaurants over the winter months (Policy-maker: 03).

Another rural policy decision-maker positioned hunting activities as a potential farm diversification option. In this context, the interviewee stated that he was aware of a number of farmers that had diversified their farm businesses into equestrian estates whereby hunting with hounds was an important feature (Policy-maker: 01). There was also an example provided about a landowner who diversified his farm into a game shooting estate where some of the shooting was sold for a fee (Policy-maker: 01).

In the majority of the rural policy documents that were analysed, there was widespread acceptance that the process of rural restructuring has transformed the countryside from an area of agricultural production into an arena of both production and consumption, often involving new constellations of local and global actors. In this context, the decline in the significance of agriculture and the associated need to adopt a multifunctional approach to rural development was highlighted. In addition, there was a range of ideas discussed about how rural space should be consumed.

According to the National Countryside Recreation Strategy, the current policy vision is that “countryside recreation is an area that can help address both issues – that is the improvement of our health and wellbeing and the development of sustainable rural communities” (CnaT, 2006: 6). In the older regional rural policy documents (The Agricultural Institute, 1969; Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972), there was broad emphasis on promoting the countryside as a space for leisure and recreation activities.

For example, contextualised by the process of rural restructuring and the need to promote non-agricultural activities, the County Kerry regional rural policy document (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972) promoted the countryside as a very suitable space for leisure activities:

“Where the terrain and other conditions suit, the possibilities for amenity and recreational facilities must be seriously considered. With the ever-growing needs of our own people and of the tourists who come to visit us for leisure pursuits, these expanses of unspoiled open countryside may have a great deal to offer” (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: 49).

Similarly, in the Donegal regional rural policy report, rural space was constructed in a romantic and picturesque manner where it offers “expanses of unspoiled countryside for outdoor recreation enthusiasts” (The Agricultural Institute, 1969: 49). In this context, a type of rural idyll emerged, which promoted the positive images surrounding many aspects of rural lifestyles, community and landscape, reinforcing, at its simplest, healthy, peaceful secure and prosperous representations of rurality.

In terms of promoting hunting, both documents invoked implicitly romantic and positive constructions of rural space. For example, the County Kerry regional rural policy report promoted the countryside as an attractive place to hunt with an abundant population of game species:

“Due to the mild climate in Kerry there are large concentrations of wild fowl, both native and immigrant, to be found throughout the county... For decades the county has been considered by sportsmen to be one of the best shooting areas in Ireland, unsurpassed for woodcock and snipe... The mountains and foothills also provide excellent hunting grounds for foxes, hares, rabbits and shooting grounds for grouse, woodcock and snipe” (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: 247).

Here, rurality was constructed in association with the centrality of nature, the physical gains associated with outdoor lifestyles, harmony and ‘untouched’ by the harsh influences of urban life (see also Halfacree, 1993). In addition, these representations relied on discourses relating to the changing commodification of the countryside whereby Urry (1992), for example, links the romantic, aesthetic

construction of rural land for visual consumption, to the shift away from agricultural production.

From a wider economic perspective, the Donegal regional rural policy report recommended establishing a system whereby deer stalking should be sold to tourist hunters. Referring to a UK model, the report suggested that “tourists could pay up to £400 per deer, the exact amount depending on the size, weight and shape of the trophy”. The report also acknowledged that these were very high charges but stated that “even if the hunters were to pay £100 per deer, the return would still be high” (The Agricultural Institute, 1969: 52). The report also stated that:

“The benefits could be transmitted also to local farmers who would share in the deer enterprise on a co-operative basis. There would be full or part-time employment for a number of stalkers and guides. Undoubtedly the presence of deer and the added opportunity for the hunter would greatly enhance the tourist attractions of West Donegal thus benefiting hotels and other business and the local community generally” (The Agricultural Institute, 1969: 52).

Similar to the discourses that emerged during the farmer focus group discussions in the previous chapter, a number of themes emerged which positioned hunting as an important ecological tool in rural Ireland. Both of the older regional rural policy reports constructed hunting as being an important part of the natural process of wildlife management in rural Ireland. These themes drew on specific society-nature understandings about certain animals. For example, the County Kerry regional rural development document constructed foxes and certain bird species as a threat to the ecological balance in rural space. At the same time, the report described the positive efforts by hunters in ‘controlling’ these animals:

“Foxes and grey crows are a menace to young lambs. Fox poisoning campaigns are carried out each year throughout the county in an effort to reduce the fox population. Gun clubs and organised hunting parties also play their part in the control of both grey crows and foxes” (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: 196).

In a similar context, some rural policy decision-makers constructed specific animals such as foxes as ‘problematic’ and agreed that hunting is an important

tool in rural Ireland for keeping specific populations of animals in balance or within a manageable level, which minimises damage to the environment. This discourse constructs hunters as responsible predators that provide an ecological service, in turn improving the overall balance of the rural ecosystem. Examples were provided in relation to deer and their grazing impacts on agriculture and forestry, as well as public safety for road users; rabbits and their grazing impacts on grass; the impacts of fox predation on sheep/poultry and the impacts of pigeons/crows on arable land. Referring to fox predation on sheep, one interviewee stated:

I know several farmers who got out of sheep farming because of predation by foxes. In one situation, neighbours sold land and planted it with forestry, and then after a few years there is a big population of foxes in a place where they never existed before. So in these situations we would consider hunting – as a predator control tool – to be important in the countryside (Policy-maker: 01).

Similar themes emerged with reference to non-native animals such as the North American mink and their associated impacts on ground-nesting birds, as well as the impacts of the non-native grey squirrel on the native Irish red squirrel population. In all of these cases, hunters were seen to play an important conservation role in the Irish countryside:

These animals need to be culled somehow or another. The Department of Environment and National Parks and Wildlife Service permit the control of certain animals and birds and we understand that this is necessary from an agricultural perspective as well. The Irish Farmers' Association and other state departments also understand the importance of this control (Policy-maker: 03).

This understanding of certain animals as 'pests' and of hunters as 'conservationists' is also evident in some rural policy documents. From a forest management perspective, Coillte (2005) constructed hunters as important actors for maintaining the ecological balance within their forest estate:

"Hunting and other such activities also contribute to the management of deer and other species that can, if left unchecked, lead to serious damage of the forest crop" (Coillte, 2005: 75).

In terms of managing ecological features in rural space, the two older regional policy reports (The Agricultural Institute, 1969; Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972) recommended a number of management projects such as restocking lakes with huntable water-birds and promoting experimental research projects to improve wetland ecology. The Donegal report, for example, discussed establishing a pilot research project for snipe⁴¹ consisting of a large “scientific experiment and 200 acres for control at the base of Slieve League near Lough Agh in West Donegal” (The Agricultural Institute, 1969: 53). Forestry development was also regarded as having considerable potential to increase the pheasant population for hunting. In one section entitled ‘Possibilities for Wildlife Development’, there was specific attention paid to the promotion of game species such as deer, mallard, snipe, grouse and pheasant shooting in County Donegal.

The County Kerry report also prescribed a number of ecological management recommendations in an attempt to develop hunting in the region. It suggested establishing of a number of habitat management projects to improve the ecological conditions for a number of game bird species. It also made reference to the development and establishment of “small areas to be set aside for experiments in management techniques for game birds” (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: 249).

For red grouse, the report suggested that “a pilot scheme should be operated in a small area, where the numbers could be assessed accurately and which could be managed and put through the kind of known burning regime operated successfully in Scotland” (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: 249). Regarding woodcock, the report suggested that it would be “advisable to carry out some experiments on feeding grounds in order to increase their supply of food, which could be done by encouraging earthworms in certain feeding grounds” (Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972: 249).

⁴¹ Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) are a popular migratory game bird species in Ireland.

Rural policy decision-makers also expressed some interest in developing possible mechanisms to promote the wider ecological role of hunting activities. In relation to game shooting, the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) was mentioned as a possible tool to further incorporate hunting into rural policy objectives. Two rural policy decision-makers suggested that gun clubs could, in conjunction with landowners, avail of subsidies to create habitat for game birds. In this context, it was also suggested that a new measure could be created whereby a group of farmers could get together to create a private hunting area for tourist hunters as a farm diversification option.

Group activity in agri-schemes did occur in the past – for example, with the fencing of commonage. So there is no reason why something like this could not be supported again. Then a local gun club could put in more suitable habitat. However, it would have to be a new measure – in the same way as if there was payment for walk ways on farms. I think we will see more of this in REPS in the future (Policy-maker: 01).

Another policy decision-maker stated that hunters are inactive in terms of calling on the relevant rural policy agencies to develop specific agri-environment schemes to benefit lowland and upland native game birds. The grey partridge and red grouse were mentioned as examples whereby new schemes could be developed to provide habitat measures:

The hunting organisations are completely quiet in this regard. I am yet to see them come forward on any agri-environment public consultations (Policy-maker: 02).

5.2.5 Access to Land

In order to promote countryside recreation activities, a number of rural policy documents made recommendations to encourage landowners to provide for recreation in the Irish countryside (e.g. CnaT, 2006). However, land access was constructed by the majority of interviewees as being a ‘sensitive issue’ particularly in terms of promoting hunting or any other recreation activity (Policy-maker: 05). As noted by Murdoch (2000: 408) “land is a key marker of rurality”. Referring to the cultural embeddedness of land ownership in Ireland, one interviewee stated that:

People fought dearly for the right to own land in Ireland. And they will decide what they will do with it. We have to respect that (Policy-maker: 01).

The sentiments expressed in relation to land access and land ownership in Ireland are understandable due to the social, economic and political power being vested with farmers and landowners in Ireland (McDonagh, 2001). From a policy perspective, there was an understanding that the promotion of any recreation activity would have to incorporate the views of the farming community. For example, two interviewees expressed concern about promoting hunting without the support of farmers and stated that changes in policy could disrupt the traditional relationship between the hunter and the farmer.

By and large, farmers appear to have a good relationship with hunters. However, if there was any change in the current 'status quo' in terms of an increase in hunting outside of the current organised structure, there would be cause for concern. Land ownership and access to land is a tricky issue in Ireland (Policy-maker: 03).

Another policy decision-maker referred to a supplementary measure within the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) which dealt with public access for leisure activities. In this measure, he stated that payments for farmers were conditional on access being offered on a specific route or area agreed by a Local Authority, and farmers were held responsible for the maintenance of the route/area. However, he also stated that:

When the scheme was updated in 1999, a decision was taken by the EU to discontinue the scheme because it was simply paying farmers for access without any benefits to recreation users (Policy-maker: 01).

5.3 Section 2. Hunting in Rural Ireland: Perceptions of Farmers

The remainder of this chapter presents evidence from the focus group discussions with farmers to illustrate the ways in which hunting is positioned in Irish rural life. Some of the evidence highlights that hunting is embedded within social, economic and ecological rural networks. This section also draws on a number of themes which emphasise how hunting is positioned in relation to ethical, nationalist and masculinist discourses. Referring to a range of examples of inappropriate behaviour by hunters, it also highlights the necessity for hunters to

adhere to a specific set of behavioural codes in rural space. From this perspective, farmers expressed concern about any efforts to promote hunting within future rural policies without their participation in the decision-making process.

5.3.1 Moral Killing

At an early stage of the focus group discussions, it became evident that farmers relied on a very different set of society-nature understandings about animals and ethics in relation to hunting. In the previous section, it was evident that there were divergent understandings regarding the ethics associated with hunting. In some respects, rural policy decision-makers abided by the increasingly popular conception that animals are like humans (with ‘cultural human rights’). However, farmers constructed hunting as an ethically justifiable activity embedded in natural life-cycles and food chains. Although Jones (2000) argues that all encounters between humans and animals are ethically charged, the following section highlights a number of key examples whereby farmers positioned hunting as an ethically legitimate activity in rural Ireland.

During the focus group discussions, only one young farmer commented on the contested nature of hunting. In doing so, he drew on a commonly constructed urban-rural dichotomy regarding attitudes towards hunting, nature and rurality.

I know that some people don't agree with hunting and killing animals, but farmers are not too concerned with these debates. I personally think we [i.e. farmers] and the lads who hunt and shoot have a more realistic view of what happens in the countryside than some city people who don't understand (Clare Macra member).

In constructing their relationship with nature in this way, farmers appear to reject an increasingly dominant (urban) discourse that frames nature and humans in a dichotomous relationship, and with an increasing ‘hegemony of vision’ and corresponding ‘romantic gaze’ (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Rather than constructing nature as a visual experience, it was evident that hunting was understood as a genuine and enduring form of natural relation with the environment. In this context, nature/culture boundaries are transformed in a

manner whereby to truly know or understand ‘nature’ you need to participate in a ‘multi-sensed’ way (McLeod, 2007). For example, it was evident that farmers tend to support a ‘hands-on control-based’ approach to wildlife in comparison to other groups who may hold a preservationist approach “warranting quiet observation rather than loud killing” (Matless, 1994: 141).

5.3.2 Hunting: An Embedded Activity in Irish Rural Life

For several farmers, understandings of nature appeared to be deeply embedded in a moral framework which constructs hunting as an important part of environment-society relations in rural space. Within the focus group discussions, a variety of themes emerged that coupled hunting with community cohesion and belonging. In this context, knowledge about hunting was widespread and hunting represented a relatively visible part of local rural life. In a number of ways, hunting was also seen to provide a range of social benefits for those involved. Farmers of various ages and both genders considered hunting to be an important activity whereby the participants involved were provided with numerous opportunities to socialise in rural settings. A number of examples were provided about particular hunting-related social events:

The East Galway Hunt near me is very active; they hunt once or twice per week during the season. The social side to hunting is big – more so than most realise (Mayo Macra member).

Two farmers made reference to specific hunting-related social events during the winter months such as the opening day of the pheasant shooting season (1st of November) or St. Stephen’s Day (26th of December). Three farmers referred to hunters regularly socialising in local pubs or running specific events during the year. For example, one young Roscommon female farmer stated:

I think it [hunting] gives people a chance to get out socialising. The local hunt members near us are regularly drinking in the local pubs. They also organise a hunt ball and a summer barbeque where hundreds show up each year (Roscommon Macra member).

Individuals involved in hunting were considered to be ‘well connected’ to rural life and for one farmer, hunters were ‘the bread and butter’ of rural life. Here,

hunting was seen as being crucial to the manifestation of cultural relationships with the land and Irish rural life:

The hunts in my area are very active in the local community. Everyone knows someone connected to the hunt and a lot are involved in hunting. It's great to see (Mayo IFA member).



Figure 5.2. Gun club members getting ready for a Sunday fox shoot. Source: personal photograph.

It was also claimed by some farmers that because hunting has strong historical roots and majority local support, it is invested with a great deal of acceptance in rural Ireland. These discourses about the embedded nature of hunting and Irish rural life are likely to originate from historical accounts of high degrees of interaction and homogeneity within rural areas (Bull *et al.*, 1984; McDonagh, 1998). For several farmers, hunting was constructed as being a traditional part of rural life:

Coursing has a very strong tradition in Tipperary. There are so many involved in coursing there. It's like a religion. The guys involved put more into their greyhounds than they do their jobs. Everyone knows someone involved in coursing there (Clare Macra member).

Some of these hunts have been around for hundreds of years and they're a big deal to the people involved (Galway IFA member).

Hunting was also constructed as an activity that played a role in educating young people about wildlife and the cycle of food production in the countryside:

Hunting's a good way to teach young about animals and wildlife. Most kids today hardly know where their meat comes from (Sligo IFA member).

It was evident that some farmers drew on a range of natural constructions of rural Ireland and placed a strong emphasis on the natural and farmed landscape, including its associated animals and vegetation, and the healthiness of rural living. For three farmers, hunting was seen to be a natural activity within rural space and a form of 'natural relation' with the environment whereby hunters are important actors in the rural environment. Macnaghten and Urry (1998: 1) point to the importance of "embedded social practices" in understandings of nature, and the ways in which nature is "constituted through a variety of socio-cultural processes".

Throughout the focus group discussions, it was also evident that a traditional type of rural masculinism existed regarding male farmers' understandings of hunting. These constructions about gender and hunting are inextricable from ideas about nature and where men and women fit into both natural and unnatural landscapes. Throughout the analysis, hunting was positioned as a masculine activity – whereby no references to females were made – with numerous references in relation to 'the lads' or 'the guys' involved in hunting. For example, using typical masculinist phraseology, two farmers made an explicit connection the healthiness of being outdoors hunting in comparison to staying in the local pub:

I think hunting is a great way to get young lads outdoors; it's healthier and better than staying in the pub drinking (Louth Macra member).

The lads that are involved in shooting are not drinking every weekend, they're outside getting exercise and enjoying themselves (Galway IFA member).

The widespread participation of men – and women's general lack of participation – in some hunting activities is still understood by many people as crucial for

understanding gender differences (McLeod, 2004). Furthermore, scholarly interpretations of hunting have focused on men's actions and men's writings to demonstrate the close and causal connections between masculinity and hunting, despite differences in time and geography (Bye, 2003). The data from the hunting organiser and hunter surveys indicate that there are noticeable gender differences in some hunting activities, particularly, game shooting, deer stalking, falconry, and, to a lesser extent, coursing (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Gender breakdown of hunting participants

Types of Hunting	% Male	% Female
Game shooting*	99.4	0.6
Deer stalking	99	1
Falconry	97	3
Coursing	84	16
Hunting with hounds (foot)	77	23
Hunting with hounds (mounted)	69	31
Mean	88	12

* Source: (NARGC, 2008)

The male-dominated participation of game shooting and deer stalking in Ireland is similar to the situation in other regions. For example, research carried out by Magnussen (1996) demonstrates the importance of deer shooting in rural male identities in Norway. Her study shows that traditional masculine activities like game shooting, outdoor life, tinkering with engines, and 'hard drinking' have become increasingly important in the construction of male identity in rural areas in Norway. Bye (2003) also notes that in many rural Norwegian wooded regions, elk hunting plays a central role in the shaping of the masculine rural identity. He states that young men are gradually initiated into the male community of the local society through participation in the elk hunting party. 'Carrying a rifle' represents the elk confirmee's first major initiation into the male community. In this context, Bye (2003: 146) argues that "hunting symbolizes and realizes modern man's quest for the space to exercise his abilities, to build self-esteem and to manage on his own". Similar evidence also suggests that game shooting activities in the USA are very much masculine-dominated sports (Franklin, 2008).

From a broader perspective, the male dominance of rural societies is well documented and is often associated with the gendered nature of agriculture (Whatmore, 1991). In research related to gender and rurality, there has emerged, in recent years, an understanding that there are complex connections between the construction of rurality, masculinity and femininity. The close inter-connections between nature and a struggle for the constitution of masculinity have received a special emphasis (see Brandth 1995; Woodward 1998; Brandth and Haugen, 2000; Leipins 2000). This perspective also includes the notion of ‘gendered ruralities’ (Little, 2002). An important point is that these constructions, as well as the connections between them, are not fixed – rather, they are changing constantly (Whatmore, 1994; Little, 2002).

Although many observers and indeed researchers of various disciplines continue to casually link hunting with masculinity, the data on hunting with hounds presented in Table 5.2 challenges many of the popular impressions and interpretations that continue to link masculinity and some hunting activities (e.g. see Franklin, 2008). It outlines that significant percentages of females are involved in mounted fox hunting, harrier hunting and stag hunting.

Table 5.2 Gender breakdown for hunting with hounds

	% Male	% Female
Fox hunts	61	39
Mounted harrier hunts	65	35
Beagle hunts	69	31
Ward Union hunt	74	26
Foot (inc. mink) hunts	77	23
Mean %	69	31

The female interest in mounted hunting with hounds appears to have been maintained for many centuries. For example, Lewis (1975) referred to Shane O’Neill, of Ulster, presenting two Irish hunting dogs to Queen Elizabeth in 1562. Data from the hunting organiser surveys also indicate that mounted hunting with hounds attracts various types of participants to hunting outings. For example, evidence on participation at the average mounted hunt meet suggests that there are approximately 25 non-mounted followers (i.e. foot followers, other followers

and visitors) attending the fox hunt and mounted harrier hunt meetings. The participants in the ‘other follower’ category would include those who follow the course of hunts by car, bicycle or quad bike (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Mean attendance during mounted hunt meets

	Mounted Followers	Foot Followers	Other Followers	Visitors
Fox Hunts	39	10	10	4
Harrier Hunts	29	11	13	6
Ward Union Hunt	50	0	80	2

Despite the broader participation in mounted hunting with hounds, there are some indications that rural masculine identity is losing territory or changing character as a consequence of new groups of people (specifically females) entering into the hunting arena. Smalley (2005), for example, suggests that in recent years, it is not only men in the local community that seek the traditional masculine arena in pursuit of excitement, identity and historical roots. In the context of Ireland, the significant female interest in mounted hunting with hounds illuminates the complexities of gender identification and performance in debates about hunting.

Representations about hunting also appeared to be bound up with images of nationalism. In this context, reference was made to the long history of hunting in rural Ireland and its important connection to the land and rural life. Farmers drew on traditional discourses which relied on nationalistic perceptions about how rural land should be consumed. For example, one farmer drew on a range of nationalistic images when referring to the clothing worn by his local hunt club.

My local hunt wear green jackets not red ones like the English hunts do. They know that if they were running around in red clothing, it would annoy some farmers. They like to brand themselves as Irish. I don't think the red clothing fits in properly (Galway IFA member).

In order to better understand the origin of this rejection of the Anglo-style hunting ‘tradition’, it is useful to look briefly at the political history of Ireland. During the period of English colonisation in Ireland, hunting was associated with

social elites and was “resented as symbolic of domination and oppression” (Franklin, 1999: 120). During the plantations of Ireland (beginning in the 16th century), most of the hunting rights were bound-up with the English landlords of the day. At the time, hunting was largely associated with historic or traditional social elites and reports indicate that few farmers relished the sight of the local hunt charging across their fields (Curtis, 2002). However, for the landed elite in Ireland:

“There was no nobler or more exciting sport than hunting foxes, hares or stags on horseback, and every Big House worthy of the name had stables large enough to accommodate seasoned hunters along with the usual assortment of carriage horses, brood-mares and ponies. To members and followers of the local hunt, the pursuit of ‘preserved’ game across fields and over ditches or fences provided adventure with an aristocratic flavour” (Curtis, 2002: 355).

However, during the nineteenth century, when the era of great estates was slowly coming to an end in Ireland, a long series of Land Acts gradually returned ownership of the land to the people of Ireland (Butler, 2006). Consequently, tenant farmers, after generations, became land owners. In this context, it appears that the political history of Ireland brings together a historical rejection of hunting activities, specifically mounted fox hunting with hounds, and portrays it as an elitist activity, a specific configuration of hunting that occupies an important corner of nationalistic psyche.

It is interesting to consider, however, that mounted hunting with hounds has managed to survive and seemingly flourish in the aftermath of the nationalistic protests against hunts during the nineteenth century (see Chapter 2). Although no apparent explanation can be given, reports suggest that landlords returned to the hunting field after the Irish Land War, but, as Laird (2004: 35) points out, “they did so with a hysterical energy suggestive of a class on the decline”. In this context, Laird (2004) argues that something akin to a switching of codes had occurred towards hunting (with hounds) as a result of more permanent inversion

of rural power relations. At the time, few recognised hunts were prepared to acknowledge their existence at the end of the 1920s⁴² (Curtis, 1987).

Reports further indicate that hunting with hounds rapidly re-established itself and even the First World War and the Civil War failed to extinguish these activities (Lewis, 1975). By 1949, hunting with hounds increased dramatically and this was reflected in the establishment of numerous new hunts. Lewis (1975: 69) stated that whatever the exact answer was, the area hunted had increased considerably between 1929 and 1949 and only “the bog strewn, uplands and extreme western areas remained unhunted”. By 1972, there were at least 222 registered hunts in Ireland (Lewis, 1975) and this figure has increased to 267 hunts in 2008 (see Appendix 1). Although it remains difficult to explain exactly why hunting with hounds increased through a turbulent course of Irish political history, the situation does add weight to Franklin’s (2008: 105) perception that hunting activities remain “enigmas in modernity” as “hands-on killing sports have enjoyed sustained popularity and growth during the twentieth century”.

In terms of social composition, it would appear that some hunting activities in Ireland reflect similar socio-economic characteristics, which are frequently associated with hunting Britain (see Milbourne, 2003a) and other parts of Europe (see Dahles, 1993; Franklin, 2008). Franklin (2008) states that hunting rights in the UK were historically commodified and reserved for a landowning class in specific game laws. Similarly, Itzkowitz (1977) talks of hunting as a peculiar privilege, at once open to all and uniquely aristocratic and English (see also Woods, 1998a). In research on hunting in the Netherlands, Dahles (1993) found that hunting was based within a social group she termed the ‘new leisure class’: predominantly middle-class and middle-aged professionals living, and exerting political influence, within rural communities (Dahles 1993: 172).

Some reports have suggested that the perceived ‘higher’ class-based constructions of mounted hunting with hounds, which are evident in parts of

⁴² By ‘recognised’ is meant that the hunts belonged to the Irish Masters of Foxhounds, Harriers, or Beagles Associations. Most hunters are affiliated to these organisations today (see Appendix 1).

Europe (e.g. the UK and the Netherlands), also exist in Ireland. For example, Lewis (1975) stated that throughout history Irish fox hunts seemed to be more exclusionary and were traditionally associated with major landowners, large businesses and professional people. They tended to be an expression of ‘country’ and ‘professional’ society. In terms of dress, Lewis (1975) stated that fox hunters tended to wear acknowledged hunting apparel: riding boots, breeches, hunting coat, stock, bowler or top hat, or, if a farmer, tweed cap and tweed jacket.

This notion of branding mounted hunting with hounds as a high class activity is supported, to some extent, by data outlining the socio-economic characteristics of Irish hunters (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Socio-economic breakdown (by percentage) of hunting participants in Ireland

	Game Shooting	Deer Stalking	Hunting (foot)	Hunting (mounted)	Coursing	Falconry
Higher Professional/ Managerial	2	10	4	11	6	3
Professional	16	25	10	26	11	25
Administrative/Service	14	11	14	16	20	11
Skilled Manual	29	25	19	8	9	24
Unskilled Manual	2	2	6	1	1	-
Operative	11	12	14	-	4	4
Farming	11	9	17	24	29	3
Student	2	1	-	-	2	13
Self-employed	4	2	-	2	2	-
Retired	7	3	14	4	17	10
Other	1	-	1	8	1	5
Unemployed	1	-	-	-	-	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

These data suggest that mounted hunt followers, closely followed by deer stalkers, represent the highest socio-economic group of hunters in Ireland. There are also fewer participants engaged in the unskilled manual and operative employment sectors involved in mounted hunting with hounds. Other hunting activities, however, cannot be adequately broken down into particular socio-economic groups and would seem to occupy a broad middle ground of Irish rural society. It is possible that the universal participation in most hunting activities in

Ireland reflects a reaction to a very different history of social organisation and ownership of land and resources. It is also interesting to note the large involvement of farmers in hunting with hounds and coursing, which may explain the broad acceptance of hunting activities by the farming community in rural Ireland.

5.3.3 Respecting Land

As discussed in Chapter 2, ideas about the ‘rural’ have a strong hold on the collective of the Irish psyche (see McDonagh, 2001). During the focus group discussions, issues relating to hunting and land access/ownership were sensitive within the farming community. A number of farmers professed a range of conflicts whereby hunters did not adhere to acceptable codes of practice in the countryside. For example, landowners expressed concerns about potential damage to crops, livestock and property as well as potential liability for injury to individuals crossing their lands.

From these discussions, it was evident that farmers expected hunters to abide by a specific set of behavioural codes when using rural land. Most farmers agreed that it was unacceptable for hunters (or other recreation users) to access land without permission. Adding to this, some farmers noted that hunters were reluctant to ask for permission to access their land. For example, it was stated that:

I don't like people coming in 'willy-nilly' without asking me for permission. Nobody should enter land without permission full stop! And it happens every winter (Sligo IFA member).

Some lads, who are members of gun clubs, give us the impression that we won't grant permission and they'll just quietly enter our land anyway without asking. Personally, I only let some people in to shoot from the gun club, but the rest often think they can shoot when they like. They don't like to approach me because they think I will refuse permission. Out of respect, they should have good courtesy and approach me and ask me if they can access my property (Mayo IFA member).

Historically, the land-reform process in Ireland has given rise to a strong social significance attached to private land ownership - one of the highest levels of

owner-occupancy of any country in the EU (Lafferty *et al.*, 1999). Consequently, the strong sentiment towards land ownership is understandable. However, in recent years, access to farm land has generated conflicts between recreationists, landowners and government authorities (Van Rensberg *et al.*, 2006). According to Hynes *et al.* (2007a), there are various reasons underlying farmers' (often negative) attitude towards recreational users on their land. These include fear of litigation, poor behaviour by some recreational users, a decline in the economic viability of smaller farms and frustration that the farming community or landowners are the one party not to gain any direct benefit from commercialised recreational use of their land. In addition, some landowners are concerned with the increasing costs they suffer from public access on their land (Quinn, 2007). These costs can be termed externalities from public access (Cullis and Jones, 1992).

One of the most significant themes that emerged during the discussions with farmers related to hunters acting in a disrespectful manner to farm property. Here, farmers made reference to a range of examples whereby hunters left gates open or damaged stone walls or fences. Farmers also referred to cases whereby hunters disturbed livestock:

I've had some bad experiences with some people. We've sheep and I don't like to see them disturbed by gun dogs. They should keep away from sheep altogether (Mayo IFA member).

There's a hunt near me and there's often a large pack of horses and hounds out over the winter and sometimes they'll travel across land with cattle and they'll drive them mad. This carry on annoys me. They should have the courtesy to keep away from cattle (female Louth Macra member).

We don't like horses coming in and ploughing up the land. I don't think lads out shooting do much damage but hunts can because there are so many followers on horseback (Roscommon Macra member).

Another farmer highlighted the necessity for hunters to behave appropriately in rural space. When this happens, he pointed out, it was generally accepted that farmers will grant permission for hunters to use their land:

I, as a landowner, don't have any objection to hunters once they respect the land as much as possible. For example, opening and closing gates and not damaging fences or wire. It's all about hunters having respect for the people that own the land and doing everything in conjunction with the farmers. If they do that we've no problem (Sligo IFA member).

It was also evident that some farmers were very concerned about litigation and insurance issues. In this context, a number of older IFA farmers expressed concern about recreational users potentially claiming compensation from farmers for accidents on their land. For example, a Mayo farmer stated:

Anyone that has any respect for farmers should have insurance from the NARGC. Then, at least, the farmer knows that he's covered if anything happens (Mayo IFA member).

A number of narratives about tourist hunting also emerged that stemmed from a variety of different representations about belonging and ethnicity in rural space. In this context, it was evident that farmers positioned tourist hunters as a threat to the 'ideal' or 'traditional' Irish countryside. The issues relating to tourist hunters also involved discourses about unsustainable hunting, or more specifically, tourist hunters were seen to reject the culturally constructed idea of sustainable hunting. Specifically, eight farmers expressed concern about tourist hunters' unethical 'sporting' behaviour. Their focus mainly related to the over-exploitation of wild bird species by tourist hunters. The focus groups that discussed this issue in detail were Sligo IFA, Galway IFA and Mayo IFA. The following excerpt from a Sligo farmer highlights this concern in greater detail:

Tourist hunters, mainly French and German, are the big problem. They were let loose around my land and they shot birds indiscriminately and it was an absolute disgrace. But this does not reflect the bigger picture at gun club level. Ordinary gun club members don't even approve of this carry on (Sligo IFA).

I don't mind people shooting in their own parish. But there is a large bog near me where a few lads organise tourist shooting, and I see these foreigners shoot every bird that flies, from robins to thrushes to pheasants. They do this because they love to get shooting at anything in their own country and I don't think they even eat them which is a disgrace (Galway IFA member).

The tourist hunting issue was also wrapped up in the idea of commercialisation and wider representations relating to the ‘exploitive’ tendencies of tourist hunters. For example, one Mayo farmer expressed concern about the behaviour of Irish tourist hunting guides that were organising the tourist shooting trips:

Some lads come from the continent and a few song birds end up in their game bag for some reason. That is completely against what gun clubs feel about what is and what isn't proper order. It turns me off shooting. Also, the persistence of some Irish gillies taking out these tourists is not acceptable. I myself, a few years ago, had to use very strong and very forceful language with one particular gillie. He hadn't permission and he was on my land (Mayo IFA member).

5.3.4 Integration of Hunting within Rural Policy

During the focus group discussions, a number of themes emerged about the relationship between hunting and rural policy. Several farmers were sensitive to the idea of promoting hunting further within Irish rural policy, particularly if any possible policy change did not involve consultation. Furthermore, most agreed that hunting is currently practised at an acceptable level. One farmer stated that “any policy move to promote hunting would have to be done in direct consultation with farmers” (Mayo IFA member). Another farmer stated that:

Farmers appear to have a good relationship with hunters. However, if there was any change in the current ‘status quo’ in terms of an increase in hunting outside of the current organised structure, there would be cause for concern (Sligo IFA member).

There was also concern that certain land access rights might be altered or removed from farmers. For example, one farmer made reference to hill walkers using his land and stressed that “...everyone must have respect for farmers’ rights and land ownership wishes” (Sligo IFA member). Other farmers expressed concern about promoting hunting because too many hunters might be problematic:

I think the activities are fine the way they are. If they were further encouraged there might be more participation and we might not like that (Galway IFA member).

Despite these concerns, there were some suggestions about ways in which hunting could be further developed within Irish rural policy. For example, one young Macra farmer stated that gun clubs should receive grant aid for their habitat management work such as planting game crop or for releasing game birds. Referring to the work done by a coursing club, one farmer stated:

I think they [i.e. hunters] should get some funding for their efforts put into the habitat and minding a huge amount of hares (Clare Macra member).

Two farmers also discussed the possibilities of developing new measures within REPS whereby hunters could avail of grant aid for habitat development. Furthermore, two farmers pointed out that REPS 4 (the fourth REPS scheme) already had measures whereby gun club members could work with farmers to create set-aside areas to plant crops for game birds.

When you mean further encouragement in agricultural policy you must look at what's already happening. In REPS 4, one of the options is to have one percent of the land set-aside, therefore you're promoting the wildlife a bit more. I know that some gun clubs have also worked with farmers in planting crops using the REPS 4 Linnet Scheme (Clare Macra member).

Another farmer suggested that grant aid should be provided to hunters and gun clubs, in particular, to encourage the control of certain predator species in Ireland.

It would also be useful to see some type of grant aid available to encourage the trapping of species like mink and foxes which do a lot of damage to wildlife in my area (Mayo IFA member).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented evidence to illustrate the ways in which hunting is constructed within a) rural policy, through an analysis of rural policy documents and interviews with rural policy decision-makers and b) the farming community, by analysing data from focus group discussions with farmers.

The interviews with rural policy decision-makers highlighted the neglected nature of hunting within contemporary Irish rural policy. Although rural policy decision-makers endorsed hunting for its wider economic and ecological rural development role, they expressed a range of concerns about the ethical appropriateness of hunting in rural Ireland. The evidence in this regard suggests that hunting is constructed as being a contested activity, displaying both positive and negative implications in a rural policy context. The evidence presented also unpacks a variety of factors from ecological sustainability to land access, which hinders closer interactions between hunting and Irish rural policy. Such debates also focus on the perception of a growing urban-rural divide within rural Ireland.

In terms of examining the limited amount of rural policy material that made reference to hunting, the analysis suggests that some of the older rural policy documents recognised and promoted hunting as a tool for rural development. However, similar to the interviews with rural policy decision-makers, a number of contemporary policy reports constructed rurality and nature in a manner that hindered closer relations between rural policy and hunting. One document which referred to hunting drew on its contested nature and another document promoted countryside recreation activities in a manner which does not appear to accommodate hunting activities. Another policy report also inferred that rural space should be consumed in a peaceful, non-intrusive and preservationist manner.

The focus group discussions with farmers illustrated that hunting is constructed as being an acceptable recreational activity in rural Ireland. The positioning of rurality as a social and cultural construct enabled us to capture farmers' understanding of hunting as a complex phenomenon and a lifestyle/way of life in rural Ireland. However, a number of farmers expressed concerns about irresponsible hunting, which involved disturbing farm animals, damaging farm property and unauthorised access to land. In addition, some farmers suggested that they were not in favour of developing hunting within rural policy for a variety of reasons. These related to issues concerning the possible alteration of land access rights and a fear that farmers would not be involved in the policy decision-making process. Despite these concerns, some options for promoting

hunting within rural policy were suggested. These included making grant aid available for ecological management work in the Irish countryside.

The following chapter discusses the findings of this study in greater detail. In doing so, it considers the research findings in line with the aims of the study. It also considers the major contributions in order to improve our understanding of the place of hunting in rural Ireland.

Chapter 6: ‘Blowing for Home’ - Unpacking the Conceptual Place of Hunting in Rural Ireland

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the place of hunting in rural Ireland. The theoretical framework used illustrates that the concepts, which are typically conceived as natural, are bound up and produced through broader sets of social, economic, cultural, and political relations. In this context, the evidence presented suggests that hunting is constructed through a variety of symbolic meanings and ideas about ‘natural’ practices associated with particular spaces. While it appears almost *clichéd* to state that one’s thesis is multi-disciplinary, the multitude of backgrounds drawn upon for this thesis makes this a valid positioning.

This chapter sets out to assess the significance of the results presented in the previous two chapters by considering the broader themes raised in Chapter 2. It begins by discussing the research findings in line with the objectives of the study. In doing so, it revisits the theoretical and substantive aims of the thesis and discusses the major contributions in order to improve our understanding of how hunting fits within economic, ecological, social, and policy systems in rural Ireland.

6.2 The Presence of Hunting in Rural Ireland

Traditionally in Ireland, rural studies aligned rurality with all things agricultural (Tovey, 1992; McDonagh, 2001). The weakness here, McDonagh (1998; 2001) argues, was that Irish understandings of the rural were prone to using a descriptive definition in terms of hard numeric facts, statistical and policy-relevant information rather than making any attempt to analyse the social and cultural dimensions of rural life. However, in recent years, it is increasingly argued (see McDonagh, 2001; Woods, 2005; Cloke, 2006a) that rurality is no longer dominated by concepts of food production and that new uses of the countryside are redefining what constitutes the rural landscape.

At the beginning of this thesis, the ways in which the process of rural restructuring has given rise to a challenging of the position of agriculture as the mainstay of the rural economy in Ireland and other EU member states were highlighted. As a result of the restructuring process, current Irish rural development policy positions the countryside as a space for a range of non-agricultural activities. Outdoor recreation is increasingly regarded as an area that can help address the issues associated with rural restructuring (CnaT, 2006). From this perspective, the following section discusses the economic and ecological presence of recreational hunting activities in rural Ireland. In doing so, it builds on the broad theoretical concepts which were used to contextualise the aims of this thesis.

6.2.1 Hunting and the Rural Economy

The first objective of this study, which set out to explore the presence of hunting in rural Ireland, illustrates that hunters have far more complex relationships within rural space than simply killing animals. The economic data indicate that mean hunter expenditure estimates ranged from €1,856 for participants involved in game shooting to €6,931 for participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds. The principal expenditures by hunters were on maintaining animals for hunting, hunting equipment, hunting-related social expenditure, vehicle expenditure and travel expenditure. The data also suggest that 82 percent of this expenditure was made in rural regions (i.e. rural areas and country towns).

Evidence from the focus group discussions indicates that farmers positioned hunting as an activity that contributes to the economic viability of farm businesses through the control of ‘pest’ animals and birds. In this regard, farmers drew on specific representations about certain animals that were considered responsible for predating livestock and damaging agricultural crops. Hunting was also positioned by some farmers and some rural policy decision-makers as an important activity for stimulating rural economies, particularly through expenditure made during hunting-related social events.

The potential economic impact of tourist hunting and the contribution of hunting with hounds to the wider horse sport industry were emphasised during the

interviews with rural policy decision-makers. The hunting organiser surveys also illustrated that mounted hunts were responsible for directly employing staff. The high level of equine use and employment associated with mounted hunting with hounds may complement research carried out in the UK by Winter *et al.* (1993) and PACEC (2000).

As the first assessment of hunters' expenditure in Ireland⁴³, this evidence provides an intricate understanding of the relationship between hunting and the rural economy. In a number of ways, the data suggest that recreational hunting may contribute to the multifunctional use of rural space, thereby addressing some of the economic issues associated with rural restructuring. The role of hunting in the context of rural restructuring is particularly relevant as governments are increasingly trying to intervene and support sectors beyond agriculture.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that there is currently a lack of economic diversity within rural Ireland, which is anathema to the concept of rural social sustainability (Butler and Hall, 1998). In this context, restructuring has created a fragmented and reduced rural system that seems to lack most of the criteria for sustainability in economic terms (Troughton, 1997). With the emphasis on innovation and economic diversification in rural development policy, by necessity there is a shift towards the inclusion of a wider range of rural development stakeholders (Macken-Walsh, 2007).

Considering the neglect of hunting within contemporary Irish rural policy, the evidence suggests that rural policy may benefit from paying closer attention to the mechanisms and processes that currently exist in rural areas (e.g. hunting activities) rather than encouraging new forms of rural economic diversification. This way of thinking contributes to what has been recently labelled in the

⁴³ Two previous studies attempted to examine the expenditure associated with hunting in Ireland (Burke *et al.*, 1992; Corbally *et al.*, 1998). However, the methodology used in these studies focused on the expenditure associated with hunting organisers and, consequently, the results are not comparable with the findings of this study. Although both studies drew on a limited amount of data, the study by Corbally *et al.* (1998), which was a re-evaluation of the study by Burke *et al.* (1992), only re-examined three hunting activities, namely, mounted fox hunting, mounted harrier hunting and stag hunting (i.e. the Ward Union Hunt). The other activities were updated by a means of price level index.

literature as ‘real’ rural development (Marsden, 2003) or ‘new paradigm’ rural development (Van der Ploeg, 2000; Tovey, 2006). In this context, hunting activities represent an interesting case study in this regard, as they have existed for centuries in Ireland (Costecalde and Gallagher, 2004), but yet remain outside of contemporary rural policy initiatives.

6.2.2 Hunting and Ecological Management

The idea that hunters are interested in managing game species and their habitats is not new (Leopold, 1949; Heberlin, 1987). The findings of this study illustrate that while hunters kill animals, they also contribute practically to improving the habitats for both game and non-game species (see Chapter 4). More specifically, the analysis shows that 69 percent of hunting organisers examined in this study directly encouraged ecological features through a range of management practices. From this perspective, hunting can be positioned within a range of environmental discourses associated with ecological development and conservation.

This evidence may complement research undertaken in the UK which shows that, hunters and private landowners with hunting interests are a major influence on decisions to plant and manage important ecological features such as woodland and hedgerows (e.g. see Short, 1994; Cobham Resource Consultants, 1997; MacDonald and Johnson, 2000; Howard and Carroll, 2001; Oldfield *et al.*, 2003; Ewald *et al.* 2006). The relationship between hunting and the management of ecological features was also recognised by some farmers who constructed hunters as ‘conservationists’ for their efforts in creating habitats, managing hunting sanctuaries and releasing game birds. Through creating and managing ecological features, farmers presented a particular discourse that positioned hunting practices within an ecological ‘moral landscape’ (Proctor, 1998b).

Conceptually speaking, these ecological features represent a meshing of human constructions and natural processes and, in some ways, reveal an intimate and embodied relationship between hunters and nature. If we consider ‘nature’ to be outside of the human realm, then these areas and ecological features are full of paradoxes. To the average person, these well-established ecological features may

look like ‘natural’ features in the landscape. However, McLeod (2004) points out that the average duck pond, for example, is originally dug out, perhaps dammed and then planted and developed by humans; ‘natural processes’ then take over to produce a self-sufficient ecological system. The pond, however, must be regularly monitored and maintained by hunters to avoid unwanted plant or animal ‘pests’ and to ensure the water does not silt up. Duck ponds, therefore, which are created and managed by gun clubs in Ireland, are ‘built’ by humans, operated by nature, and maintained by humans. These features constitute a space where it is impossible to locate where ‘culture’ ends and ‘nature’ begins (McLeod, 2004).

The creation and management of ecological features by hunters also contrasts markedly with those constructions of nature that favour a ‘protectionist’ relationship between humans and the natural world, in which contact with nature is done visually and ideationally (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Insights from political ecology highlight the importance of ‘cultural’ ecosystem services that lead to the conservation and management of biodiversity. In comparison to preservation, Wilson (1992: 17) suggests that rather than “saving what’s left,” environmental politics should centre on “repairing” and “reconnecting” landscapes’ parts. This recognises that landscapes are, by definition, disturbed – “worked, lived on, meddled with, developed” (Wilson, 1992: 17). In reconnecting nature and culture, restoration offers a politics that encourages local processes of consumption that leads to the creation and management of ecological features (Katz, 1998).

This study also indicates that farmers, rural policy decision-makers and some rural policy documents construct hunters as responsible predators – expressing a competent natural relationship with the landscape and the animals within it. In this context, farmers positioned hunters as important actors in Irish rural space in terms of keeping specific animal populations at ‘naturally’ acceptable levels in a way that minimises damage to agriculture and ensures that game populations, pest species, and diseases are kept in balance. Specific animals constructed as ‘vermin’ and ‘pests’ by farmers were characterised, in one particular case, as ‘bastards’ that needed to be managed and controlled. This discourse by farmers

constructs hunters as responsible predators acting out the natural behaviour of an animal higher up the food chain (see also McLeod, 2004).

These findings encourage us to take a closer look at the connection between humans and animals. For example, Jones (2006) suggests that relations between farmers and their animals are important for the formation of identity and local farming culture; animals are a key element in rural economies; the politics of animal welfare and animal conservation (wild and domestic breeds) variously structures rural-urban relationships. However, the evidence presented in this study indicates that farmers' understandings of some animals (i.e. pests/non-farm animals) make no appearance on the moral entitlement scale. In fact, such consideration acts to dampen feelings of sympathy with these animals. As Emel (1998: 92) argues:

“If we are thought to believe or have ‘rationalised’ that an animal is ‘vermin’ and deserves to be killed, a feeling of sympathy can be suppressed or altogether replaced with hatred, rage, anger, or detachment”.

In line with Emel's (1998) point, it is evident that farmers construct hunters as active participants in nature who play an important part in managing ‘unnatural’ populations of ‘pest’ animals. This finding contrasts markedly with those constructions of nature that favour a romantic relationship between humans and the natural world that does not involve disrupting ‘natural’ processes (Macnaughten and Urry, 1998).

For farmers, hunters and rural people in general were constructed as having a better understanding of the cycle of life and death in the countryside and a more realistic understanding of the natural world in comparison to urban people. Tovey (2003) argues that the centrality of animals to economy and society, and the continuing sense among rural residents that they are organically embedded in a larger than human world, are among the main elements that continue to distinguish rural from urban life. In the farmers' view, it was evident that individual animals “come and go by *natural processes*, of which hunting is a part” [emphasis added] (Jones, 1991: 13) and hunting activities embody ‘natural’

activities found within nature (McLeod, 2004). On the other hand, non-farmers and non-hunters may “tend to think of animals as individuals, assigning them human emotions and qualities” (Jones, 1991: 13). In this context, nature/culture boundaries are transformed in a manner whereby hunting is conceptualised as an important tool for maintaining a healthy ecological balance within rural space. Specific animals are constructed as a threat to farmers requiring control (or at least management) by human agency. In this way, hunting is a prime example of humanity’s success in dominating and cultivating nature for human progress.

On the other hand, some areas where ‘nature’ appears ‘untouched’ by human interference have become increasingly regarded as precious and fragile landscapes that must be protected from human ‘contamination’. However, as Dizard (1999: 23) argues, the problem is that no part of the world is now ‘untouched’ or ‘pristine’: “humans have been around too long and had far too great an effect on nature to permit a return to some original state, whatever that might have been”. Although acknowledging that there are complex and difficult issues connected to this argument, Dizard (1999) urges that humans should see themselves not as separate from ‘nature’ in the role of passive “spectators”, but rather accept the responsibility of being “active stewards” of ‘nature’ (Dizard, 1999: 211).

From a wider policy perspective, the connection between hunting and the management of ecological features already exists in some regions. For example, in France, the ORGFSH (Regional Guidelines for the Management of Wildlife and its Habitats) clearly demonstrates the link between hunting and wildlife management:

Long-term management of the wildlife heritage and its habitats concerns us all. The practice of hunting, an activity with environmental, cultural, social and economic implications, is part of this management; it contributes to the balance between game species, habitats and human activities by ensuring a genuine balance between agriculture, forestry and hunting (Extract from the Code de l’Environnement 2000, article L420–1 cited in Alphandéry and Fortier, 2007).

Although the narratives that emerged from the farming and rural policy analysis appear to be clearly culturally and economically scripted, there was limited documented recognition within rural policy regarding the ecological presence of hunting in Ireland. In fact, the main reference in terms of promoting hunting from an ecological (and economic) perspective came from the two older rural policy documents which were published in the 1960s and 1970s (The Agricultural Institute, 1969; Kerry County Committee of Agriculture, 1972). From this perspective, it is useful to look at when the discourse of animal rights emerged. According to Yearly (1993: 61), the 1980s was a key period in the development of rights rhetoric:

“...during the late 1980s the vocabulary of animals rights and animal welfare rapidly entered everyday language, indicating a fundamental change in common ways of considering animals and signalling an expansion in the kinds of being held to have moral rights”.

Considering the ecological findings presented in this study, hunting in Ireland could be conceptualised as an important resource-use activity with the potential to offer incentive-based conservation. From a wider policy perspective, incentive-driven conservation is supported in a number of significant international agreements. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), for example, with consensus by nearly 190 countries, makes sustainable use one of its three pillars that link people and the natural world. CBD considers that sustainable use is about managing any use of wild species and ecosystems so that it falls within biologically sustainable limits. Section 9 of Ireland’s Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010 gives explicit expression to the Minister’s responsibilities in the context of Ireland’s ratification of the CBD in 1996. It states that it shall be a function of the Minister to secure the conservation of wildlife and to promote the conservation of biological diversity (Wildlife [Amendment] Act 2000, Section 9). The irony of this, as we will see in the next section, is that, although hunting contributes to creating the type of countryside which is encouraged in some national and international rural policies, it is an ethically contested activity within Irish rural policy.

6.3 Situating Hunting within Irish Rural Policy

A number of different themes emerged that highlighted the ways in which rural policy decision-makers construct the countryside and perceive of hunting activities in rural Ireland. Many of these narratives conceptualise hunting as a neglected activity or as a 'rural other' within Irish rural policy. More specifically, the insights from the rural policy analysis indicate that the construction of nature and rurality has increasingly become dominated by 'the visual'. The findings also suggest that hunting has become a contested term largely because its ambiguity allows the space for interpretations to be applied as required.

A range of specific cultural constructions of rurality emerged, which tended to exert a pervasive influence over the ability of rural policy to recognise or promote hunting in rural Ireland. The analysis suggests that, although rural policy adopts a wide conception of the leisure function of the countryside and of peoples' countryside needs, there was a narrow perception in terms of recognising hunting in the Irish countryside. In this context, rurality was constructed in line with broad cultural understandings involving naturalness as a setting for idyllic or individualistic lifestyles.

In terms of promoting rural recreation, there was significant emphasis placed on encouraging the passive consumption of the 'romantic' qualities of the Irish countryside. For example, there was greater focus on promoting quiet, non-consumptive recreation activities. In this regard, hunting was constructed as a recreation activity with the potential to threaten the beauty of the Irish countryside (see also Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Consequently, most rural policy decision-makers were reluctant to promote or integrate hunting into policy because it potentially involves inappropriate experiences with nature. This highlights that, within rural policy at least, ideal interactions with nature should involve non-violent and non-consumptive recreational experiences.

Some rural policy documents conceived the countryside as a space vulnerable to inappropriate and unsustainable hunting (e.g. Leave No Trace Ireland). Here also, Irish rural space was constructed as a space whereby 'nature' is represented as 'wildness' that should be left undisturbed, free from human interference and

where hunting is constructed as 'not belonging' in rural space. From this perspective, rural policy clearly privileges the aesthetic, passive and 'romantic' construction of the countryside and 'nature' (MacLeod, 2004).

Although the rural idyll should not be regarded as transferable to other rural geographical spaces (Cloke, 2000), the importance of distinctive imagined geographies based on particular sociocultural constructs of rurality play an important role regarding the place of hunting within Irish rural policy. This type of 'wilderness' vision, whereby humans and animals live in harmony, builds on an illusory ethics of distance where nature should be 'left alone' or idealised in a manner in which human interferences do not belong (Pardo and Prato, 2005). As such, while new ideologies and new understandings are represented in arguments over rural space for socio-natural reasons, Irish rural space has been subject to a set of increasing concerns about the treatment of nature and animals more generally.

One of the more significant outcomes of the cultural turn in rural studies has been the focus on what hitherto have been 'hidden' issues: otherness and outsiders in what are thought of as rural localities (Cloke *et al.*, 2000). Evidence of this expansion is illustrated in the key theoretical contributions of Philo (1992; 1993), Halfacree (1993) and Murdoch and Pratt (1994), as well as in collections of essays that direct attention to a range of hidden others in rural areas (e.g. see Cloke and Little, 1997; Milbourne, 1997; Cloke 2006a). For this study, it is useful to extend these concerns in order to understand the place of hunting in Irish rural policy.

This socio-cultural issue also points us to broader socio-spatial dialectics about rural space to inform the discussion of the place of hunting in Irish rural policy. A vigorous and useful debate has gone on over recent decades (Mormont, 1990; Cloke and Milbourne, 1992; Philo, 1992; Halfacree, 1993; Pratt, 1996; Lawrence, 1997; Murdoch and Pratt, 1997) which has served to differentiate between geographical spaces and social spaces of rurality. My interest, then, is in how spaces are socially constructed, and how social issues are influenced by space and vice versa. Accordingly, it is useful to turn to ideas from socio-spatial

dialectics to inform the discussion about the spacing and placing of hunting in rural Ireland. In this context, Cresswell (1996: 22) argues that:

“The occurrence of ‘out-of-place’ phenomena leads people to question behaviour and define what is and is not appropriate for a particular setting ... although ‘out-of-place’ is logically secondary to ‘in-place’, it may come first existentially. That is to say, we may have to experience some geographical transgression before we realise that a boundary even existed”.

Cresswell (1996) concludes that place is essentially implicated in the creation and maintenance of ideological beliefs, and that the taken-for-granted meanings of place are not natural, but have been socially and historically constructed (Cloke *et al.*, 2000). For example, in rural England, it has been possible to trace common imagined geographies of idyllic rural lifestyles, which present rural life as close to nature, enjoying the benefits of close-built community and free from the pollution, criminality, and social problems of the city (Cloke *et al.*, 2000).

In a similar way, this study presents a range of different and frequently contradictory social meanings of nature which are important for determining the place of hunting in rural Ireland. A social construction approach into the ways in which Irish rural policy ‘accounts for’ hunting would suggest that it has been strongly influenced by discourses about wider moral, ethical and welfare concerns. Based on the findings presented in the previous chapter, it is apparent that a range of societal changes have influenced Irish rural policy decision-makers’ understanding of hunting activities. The following section discusses some of the ways in which ethics and killing animals are constructed in relation to understandings of hunting in Irish rural policy.

6.3.1 The Problem with Killing Animals

One of the main barriers or problems associated with hunting is that it involves the killing of animals for sport/recreation. In particular, opposition within rural policy appears to be based on strongly-held emotion and on moral concerns. Hence, it is “the boundary encircling the area of the moral” (Thomas, 1983 cited in Winter and Cox, 1996), which hinders closer relationships between hunting

and rural policy. Chapter 2 highlighted numerous changes in our conceptualisations of human-animal relationships throughout history that have led to a particular mindset regarding how animals should be treated.

For example, one of the perceptions emerging from the rural policy analysis constructs hunters as people who practice ‘immoral’ acts and who are ‘persecutors of nature’. According to Franklin (1996) this puzzlement derives from a complex history of social change in human-animal relations, the end result being the establishment of a mass sentimentalisation of a widening range of animal categories. Furthermore, Franklin (1999) and Dizard (1999) argue that this view is becoming more widely accepted in Western societies. In this context, nature is (re)produced by rural policy decision-makers (Whatmore and Boucher, 1993: 167) and these social meanings of nature, at least in part, have been constituted through acts of representation involving both local and non-local geographies and practices (see Cloke *et al.*, 1996).

In a number of respects, these changes in human-animal relations can be observed in relation to wider international disputes in moral understandings around hunting, as seen in the UK (Milbourne, 2003a; Woods, 2005) and the USA (Herberlein, 1987; Dizard, 1999; 2003). Ireland’s proximity to the UK, where the hunting question is a fiercely contested one because of the moral dimension to the debate, may also play a role in understandings of nature and animals. Other themes that emerged during the analysis related to the different perception of nature between urban and rural people. This is not to say that the hunting debate can be understood simply as a matter of ‘urban versus rural’ or increasing sentiments towards nature, but rather that these notions are being invoked, and the sentiments surrounding them are being inflamed, within Irish rural policy (see also Woods, 1998a).

This thesis also illustrates that the traditional links between animals and humans are changing. This is supported in literature by Williams (1983), Tester (1992), Elias (1994) and Franklin (1999) who all argue that, over the past two hundred years, far-reaching changes such as urbanisation, industrialisation and the discursive ‘separation’ of the countryside from the city has led to widespread

changes towards seeing animals being killed (McLeod, 2004). Jasper and Nelkin (1992) connect the development of this discourse to three main social concepts: increasingly anthropomorphic attitudes towards animals and romantic notions about nature; the 'New Age' movement, and the growth of 'alternative' lifestyles; and the 'rhetoric of rights' philosophical position.

Work by Ryder (1998) and Bluhdorn (2000) similarly illustrate that issues regarding animal rights and animal welfare are increasingly part of the agenda of social movements, non-governmental organisations and other public actors. This type of construction of nature is highlighted by Rose (1998: 93) whereby it is "increasingly assumed that no sensitive caring person can be anything other than into animal rights". Woods (2005) also argues that these values are founded on a mixture of environmental philosophy, green ideology, scientific representation and lay discourses of benign nature.

Building on this, it is important to consider the wider political pressures placed on hunting in recent decades in the Republic of Ireland. This 'political pressure' was cited by a number of policy-makers as an important factor influencing their perceptions about hunting in Ireland. Throughout Irish history, many acts have been introduced to control and govern hunting activities. Some examples include the Game Act 1787, the Game Birds Ireland Act 1874, the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 and the Hares Preservation Act 1879. The Game Preservation Act 1930 was introduced to make better provision for the preservation of game and to control the actions of game dealers. The Wildlife Act 1976 and 2010 (Amended) is currently the primary legislation which regulates hunting activities in Ireland.

Although there are reports of hunting protests in Ireland during the Land War of 1881 (Curtis, 1987; Philpin, 2002), the first animal welfare organisation, the Dublin Auxiliary of the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals, (currently named the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) was established in 1840. This was the first organisation to solely campaign for animal welfare in Ireland. However, the main anti-hunting organisation is the Irish Council Against Blood Sports (ICABS). ICABS was originally established in 1966 as an anti-bullfighting campaign group but gradually grew to include

hunting. Currently, it is claimed that the organisation has over and 2,000 followers (Wright, *Pers. Comm.*). Other Irish anti-hunting organisations include Animal Rights Action Network (ARAN), Farmers Against Foxhunting and Trespass, and Animals Need a Voice in Legislation (ANVIL). Their campaigns are aimed at influencing public opinion and the government about the cruelty of hunting activities.

Although there have been no academic studies undertaken on perceptions towards hunting activities in Ireland, some opinion polls do exist. These are mainly found in lobby group leaflets, press releases, videos, membership magazines, web pages and newspaper articles and occur largely in accordance with lobby group organisations. In the majority of these studies, the pro-hunting lobby represents hunting as a fundamental part of country life, whilst the anti-hunting lobby highlights opposition to hunting in the countryside for ethical and moral reasons. The main hunting activities in the spotlight are fox hunting, stag hunting and coursing. For example, an opinion poll carried out in 2008 indicated that 54 percent of respondents supported a ban on hunting and 46 percent opposed a ban (Irish Times, 2008). Other local newspaper polls have shown opposite results. For example, in County Kilkenny, a regional newspaper poll indicated that 55 percent opposed a ban on hunting with hounds, while 45 percent supported a ban (Kilkenny People, 2008).

The most significant conflict involving hunting in Ireland emerged during 2010 when the Green Party proposed (and successfully introduced) a legislative ban (Wildlife Amendment Bill, 2010) on stag hunting with dogs, which affected Ireland's only stag hunt – the Ward Union Hunt (see Figure 6.1). Leading up to this ban, the Irish pro-hunting lobby formed a campaign called Rural Ireland Says Enough! (RISE) in response to the political pressure from the Green Party. RISE stated that the Green proposals: “represented part of a wider, fundamentalist Green agenda being foisted on people” (RISE, 2012). However, the anti-hunting lobby suggested that:

“Carted deer hunting is a cruel ‘sport’ which causes horrific suffering to defenceless red deer. It subjects the deer - captive bred specifically for the abuse - to a distressing ordeal, leaving them exhausted, injured and severely at risk of dying from heart failure” (Irish Council Against Blood Sports, 2011).



Figure 6.1 Green Party accomplishments in animal welfare issues during their term in Government. Source: Irish Election Literature (2010).

The terminology used by policy-makers (and by the anti-hunting lobby) illustrates that a form of value is attached to specific animals and that they are seen and valued in human terms (e.g. see Figure 6.2). This observation finds resonance in Tester’s (1992) claim that animals are a blank paper which can be inscribed with any message, and symbolic meaning, that the social wishes. Williams (1980) showed that claims about animals which ‘speak for’ nature are

typically less about nature and more about what kind of society those doing the speaking want to see.



Figure 6.2 Images used by the Irish Council Against Blood Sports following the ban on stag hunting in Ireland. Source: Irish Council Against Blood Sports (2011).

As such, in the name of ‘nature’, all manner of social restrictions can be placed on certain groups with no debate or redress (Harvey, 1996). From this perspective, this discourse can also be viewed through the Fitzsimmons’ (1989) lens of producing and reproducing nature through the social relations of production and through Whatmore and Boucher’s (1993) insights whereby social nature both conditions and reacts to human social relations, in particular time-space locations (see also Cloke *et al.*, 1996).

If we take a post-structural approach of the view of the “human being as a cultural agent and as a culturally formed subject of experience” (James *et al.*, 1996: 105), it can be reasonably argued that rural policy agencies are a product of their (and the perceived general public’s) different experiences of nature. From this perspective, it is important to conceptualise hunting as a contested cultural activity within Irish rural policy that exists in diverse forms in the activities of claims-making around nature. As a result of the specific constructions of rurality, nature and animals, hunting is positioned as being ‘out of place’ in Irish rural policy. Furthermore, the relative lack of attention to

hunting, including government publications and policy statements, suggests that hunting is not well thought-out in terms of compatibility with other uses and preferences in Irish rural space.

In view of the socio-cultural barriers and the changing relations between humans and animals, debates about the place of hunting in rural Ireland in the future are likely to be hindered and frustrated by the ambiguous way in which hunting is interpreted. Consequently, it is worth asking an interesting question: how can hunting persist at a time when animal rights discourses and broader anti-hunting views (which emphasise romanticism rather than pragmatism with regard to human-animal relationships) have grown increasingly dominant in Western societies such as Ireland?

In this context, some regions, which have attempted to integrate hunting activities into policy, have had to develop counter-discourses to promote hunting as a legitimate and ethically acceptable activity within rural spaces. For example, to support their efforts to promote hunting as an appropriate recreation activity, rural policy agencies in New Zealand attempted to emphasise hunting as a legitimate rural activity and, at the same time, counter the negative image that some urban people have of hunters (McLeod, 2004). In order to do this, New Zealand wildlife management and rural policy organisations distributed booklets, such as the examples below (Figure 6.3), which attempt to explain the motivations and justifications for contemporary hunting.

The pamphlet 'Fiction Verses Fact' from Fish and Game New Zealand presents hunting as a pragmatic exercise, focused around food-gathering and the appreciation of nature. It also promotes the contributions of hunters in relation to ecological management and conservation. The second pamphlet 'Hunting is a Fact of Life' features cartoon images of rural folk that are humorous and unthreatening, while simultaneously constructing the rural as a 'natural' space where 'natural' activities, such as hunting, take place. In both of these documents, rural policy agencies in New Zealand attempt to construct hunting and hunters in a manner which expresses hunters as 'realistic', 'competent'

(masculine) people, who enact morally-justifiable behaviours within nature and rural space (McLeod, 2004).

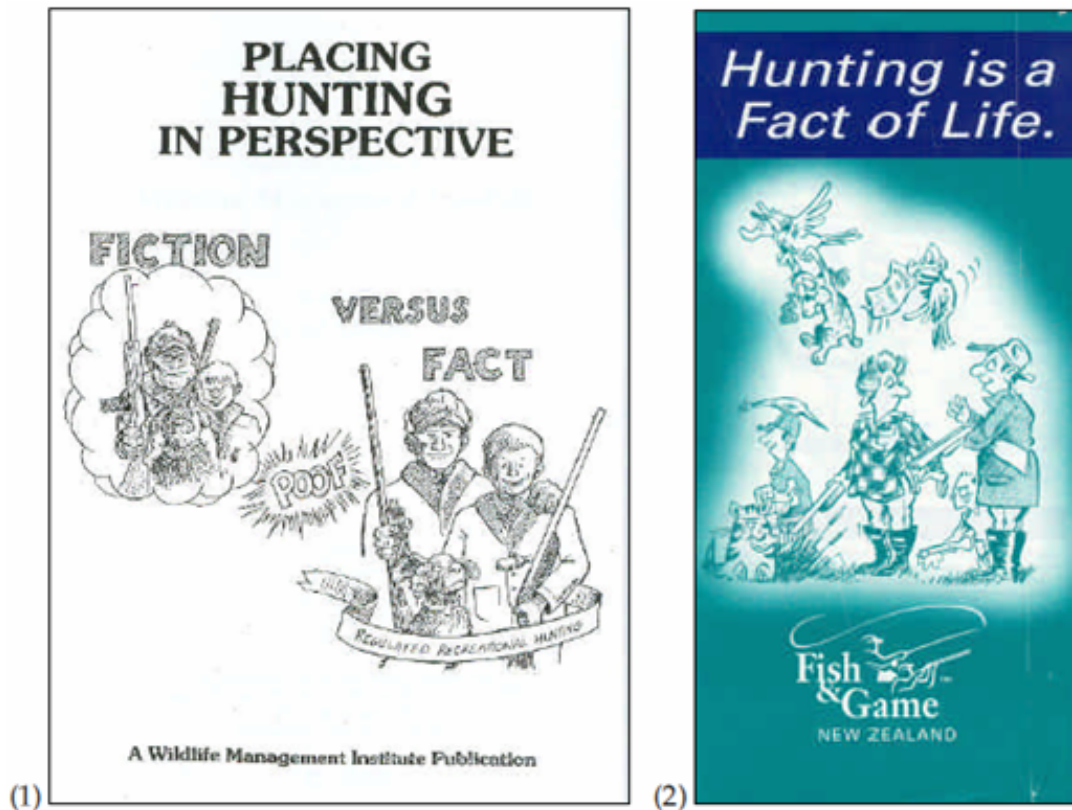


Figure 6.3 ‘Fiction Versus Fact’ and ‘Hunting is a Fact of Life’. Source: McLeod (2004)

A less obvious, but perhaps equally important standardisation regarding the place of hunting within rural policy relates to the failure of hunters to ‘get involved’ in the policy decision-making process. In this context, rural policy decision-makers positioned hunters as a ‘dormant’ group in terms of integrating their views and needs into the rural policy consultation process. In recent years, the increasing emphasis in public and bottom-up planning in rural development policy was highlighted through the LEADER process.

The objective of LEADER, the EU Community Initiative for rural development, is to foster the development of rural areas through the implementation of innovative, locally-based, bottom-up development strategies designed by local groups/bodies made up of a range of local actors (statutory and non-statutory).

This approach encourages people in rural areas to get active in managing rural development programmes, a process which hunters have largely failed to do.

6.4 Situating Hunting in Irish Rural Life

This thesis has illustrated that constructions of nature, rurality and animals appear to be manifest in a variety of different ways in Irish rural space. It has demonstrated that farmers and rural policy decision-makers have different understandings about what is natural, unnatural, ethical, and moral in relation to hunting activities. In comparison to the rural policy position, for example, farmers appear to construct nature in a deeply embedded moral framework that positions hunting as an important part of nature-society relations. This understanding highlights the role of animals in the social construction of rurality and the spatial relationships between people, animals and places.

In line with a point made by Fukuda (1997), there is also evidence to suggest that Irish farmers dislike the expansion of the urban mindset into the countryside, suggesting that urban people do not understand the appropriate processes which take place in the countryside. Jones (2006) argues that animal presences are bound up with the cultural/political construction of the rural as place. He points to work by Ridley (1998) who argues that animals represent one of the chief points of friction between urban and rural, due to the political resonances of animal presences in the countryside.

The perception from the farming community reminds us of Tapper's (1988) argument, which suggests that animals differ as metaphors in various production systems. Considering three basic animal economies (foraging, herding and village agriculture), Tapper (1988) adds a further category: urban people. These people, Tapper (1988) suggests, are locked to surplus agriculture, though their dependence on it is obscured from them. The meaning of animals for urban people is obviously different from that given to them by farmers (Parado and Prato, 2005). Clearly, some farmers see themselves as being closer to 'nature' than their urban counterparts and that they see hunting as a 'natural' way of maintaining the ecological balance in Irish agro-ecosystem.

6.4.1 Representing Rurality

It has been suggested that understandings of hunting depend, for example, on specific political economies as well as the historical and cultural circumstances in particular regions (Franklin, 1999; Jones, 2006). This thesis works with the assumption that, while there are certainly areas of commonality, hunting in contemporary ‘Western’ societies should not be assumed to be practised in a homogenous fashion with identical meanings and discourses across different cultures (McLeod, 2007).

The evidence presented in Chapter 5 highlighted the existence of a type of hunting ‘culture’ in rural Ireland that was widely recognised by farmers and to a lesser extent by rural policy decision-makers. The analysis also indicated that hunting is a socially embedded activity in rural Ireland. In this context, some farmers and some policy-makers referred to hunting’s strong social and cultural importance within rural Ireland. A number of farmers, in particular, highlighted the ways in which hunting is socially cohesive for those involved through their attendance at various hunting-related events and activities. The hunting organiser analysis also showed that a wide range of social events were organised by hunts in rural Ireland.

A similar construction of ‘community’ associated with hunting emerged in Milbourne’s (2003a) research on hunting culture in rural England and Wales. His study found that local life is closely connected to nature, that most local people are in favour of hunting, and that associations are formed through hunting. In effect, Milbourne (2003a; 2003b) argued that the ‘natural’ becomes a powerful symbol of the social, with hunting used by many local residents as an important signifier of particular social and economic forms located in rural space.

In this study, some farmers revealed that hunting’s historical roots and majority rural support invested the activity with a great deal of awareness and, in some cases, respect in rural Ireland. From a wider policy perspective, the Irish appreciation for traditional rural activities is recognised in Ireland’s White Paper ‘Ensuring the Future – a Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland’ (Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 1999: 53):

“Rural communities are closely associated with Irish traditions, heritage and culture which have been critical in shaping the national identity. The cultural heritage embraces the language, lifestyle and traditions, traditional music, song and dance, landscape, unique products, monuments, national games, the arts, etc... The preservation and enhancement of local culture is also a feature of rural areas which has potential for generating new kinds of economic activity”.

From a cultural perspective, the focus group discussions with farmers highlighted that some hunting activities in rural Ireland appear to be representative of Ireland’s nationalistic culture whereby the Irishness of today is largely fashioned by experiences over the last ninety or so years of independence from British influence. Here, the analysis indicates that the Irish hunting tradition appears to be linked with the struggle for land, which was an important part of the nationalist agenda and which is currently linked to Irish national identity. Consequently, some hunting activities in Ireland (most notably fox hunting) are clearly linked to British hunting traditions which were brought to Ireland during the plantations in the sixteenth century.

This was emphasised in the analysis whereby some farmers did not like to see their local hunts wearing the traditional red jackets associated with quintessential English-style fox hunting. From this perspective, hunting with hounds (specifically mounted fox hunting) in Ireland is, in some respects, constructed as an elitist activity wrapped up in wider historical class-based and land-lord symbolic relations within rural space. Consequently, the political history of Ireland links some hunting traditions to the situation in the rest of Europe whereby hunting is frequently expressed in terms of social class (Franklin, 1999).

Other discourses that emerged from the farming focus group analysis constructed hunting as ‘a way of life’, which is different to other recreation activities such as hill walking or cycling. Hunting was also positioned as being part of the traditional masculine family development ties whereby father-son relationships are fostered. In this context, the analysis revealed that hunting incorporates a wide variety of masculine performances and is constructed as a male-dominated activity, where males revert to natural masculine behaviours. This connection between masculinity and hunting appears to be a feature common in Western

societies, although not necessarily identical across, or even within, different societies. Dahles (1993) for instance, observed a particular kind of competitive masculinity in her research arguing that hunters in the Netherlands measure their power and abilities against strong, cunning and preferably male opponents. In general, the themes that emerged appeared to be associated with male bonding between close friends, fathers and sons. There was also evidence to suggest that there existed 'apprenticeship' and 'master-pupil' relationships within hunting cultures in rural Ireland.

The analysis also indicates that farmers expressed a range of concerns in relation to hunters not adhering to the acceptable codes of practice in Irish rural space. The issues raised drew on problems associated with trespass and damage to farm property, as well as the importance of hunters possessing public liability insurance (see Figure 6.4). Knowing the identity of hunters was also regarded as being very important by farmers with some farmers stressing the need for better communication between hunters and farmers.



Figure 6.4 Some hunting activities were perceived as being damaging to agricultural land. Photo: County Galway Hunt. Source: Darius Ivan.

These concerns by farmers are similar to concerns directed at other recreational users in the literature (e.g. Hynes *et al.*, 2007a). While the great majority of Irish landowners continue to facilitate recreational users, in recent times there has

been an increase in the closure of lands. With the increased demand and interest in recreation activities, it is recognised that there are legitimate concerns for both landowners and users (Hynes *et al.*, 2007a). In this context, a range of concerns were expressed about the potential costs farmers suffer from hunters using their land.

In terms of promoting hunting, the reactions by farmers were embedded in mistrust and a fear of top-down decision-making styles, which would not involve the support and participation of the farming community. Fears that the countryside would be overrun by hunters were also expressed by farmers. Furthermore, it was evident from the analysis that farmers remained sensitive about issues relating to tourist hunting. In this regard, a number of narratives emerged which stemmed from a variety of different representations about belonging and ethnicity in rural space. The main issues for farmers related to the treatment of non-game animals by tourist hunters and problems associated with access to land.

6.5 Conclusion

Despite attempts by some to do away with ‘the rural’ and the increasing recognition that both urban and rural areas are subject to the same global transitions in economic, political and social structures (e.g. Cloke, 1989), this chapter illustrates that wider understandings of nature, rurality and animals remain important for the everyday lives of farmers and rural policy decision-makers regarding the place of hunting in rural Ireland. This chapter has outlined that, amongst other dimensions, the ways in which nature and rurality are intertwined in debates about recreation, the historical legacy of land ownership, and changing human-animal relationships must be considered in order to contextualise hunting in rural Ireland.

This chapter has discussed the embeddedness of hunting within social, economic and ecological networks. Analysis of rural policy and farmer focus group data emphasise a range of social, cultural, nationalist and masculinist understandings of hunting in rural Ireland. The hunting organiser survey, in particular, positions hunters, as ‘stewards’ of nature that contribute to conserving biodiversity. In a

similar context, the hunter expenditure analysis positions hunting as a potential contributor to rural economies and wider economic interests.

These findings are important because from a wider rural policy perspective, recreation activities are likely to be increasingly on the mainstream rural policy agenda along with the growing recognition of the relative economics of various forms of outdoor recreation (Lorimer, 2000). Consequently, policy-makers may be increasingly in a position to remain open to harnessing a range of diverse rural activities which complement rural policy objectives. In the current rural development policy programming period (2007-2013), however, Macken-Walsh (2007) argues that there is a significant challenge for all EU member states to understand the barriers for successful engagement at the micro level.

On one hand, rural development initiatives in Ireland have been criticised for being reactive rather than proactive and while policies claim to be part of an integrated framework, they are, in practice, implemented in a fragmented and sector-specific way (McDonagh, 1998). For example, according to Ó Cinnéide (1996: 10 cited in McDonagh, 1998), the Irish government has traditionally appeared far “more at ease with an approach that focuses on supporting individual projects” rather than with the encouragement of community development and enterprise.

However, the rural policy analysis and focus group analysis has shown that very different constructions of nature and rurality exist in relation to understandings of hunting within rural policy and the farming community in Ireland. This work has highlighted that constructions of nature, rurality and animals are informed by dynamic and complex changes in social, political and cultural arenas in which new meanings evolve and acquire public support (Harrison and Burgess, 1994; Cloke *et al.*, 2000). These discourses consist of complex amalgams of natural, socio-cultural, political and economic components, and are characterised by a great deal of local and particular specificity (see Milbourne, 2003a).

Finally, this chapter has shown that the social construction of rurality, nature and animals plays a vital role not only in determining the rate of change in particular

spaces but also how different groups come to see the countryside and the activities which are practised in the countryside. These findings are significant because there have been very few works produced that have addressed the place of hunting from the point of view of the rural population and more generally in the socio-cultural context of the countryside.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Overview

The central purpose of this thesis was to explore the place of hunting in rural Ireland. In doing so, it used three corresponding research questions which attempted to gain insights into the ways in which: 1) hunting is present in Irish rural space; 2) hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy, and 3) hunting is constructed by the farming community in rural Ireland. The research questions were contextualised in response to the changing nature of rural areas and rural policy throughout the Western world (Chapter 1) whilst the theoretical framework (Chapter 2) relied on post-structural theory to conceptualise the various ways in which nature, rurality and animals are constructed in debates about hunting.

Although there are numerous commentaries (e.g. Costecalde and Gallagher, 2004; Butler, 2006) and some survey projects undertaken (e.g. Lewis, 1975; Burke *et al.*, 1992) on hunting activities, this study represents the first comprehensive assessment of hunting in Ireland. More specifically, this is the first study to assess hunters' expenditure patterns and impacts on ecological management in Ireland. Similarly, it is the first project to explore how hunting is constructed within rural policy and positioned within a rural community perspective.

This study relied on a novel mixed-method approach that incorporated hunters, hunting organisers, rural policy decision-makers and the Irish farming community into the overall analysis. Moreover, the main body of the thesis utilised a post-structural approach to situate the beliefs, understandings and meanings of hunting within rural policy and farming circles. The first objective relied on a more positivist approach to develop the economic and ecological hypothesis and to formulate the research design and interpretation of the data. This dual conceptual approach has shown how hunting can provide useful insights into nature-society relations (their uncertainties, ambiguities and

complexities) without losing sight of the specific impacts and agencies of human and non-human actors.

By placing hunting within a wider context of rural change and restructuring, this study contributes to a body of literature which suggests that rural development should be understood as a multi-level, multi-actor and multi-faceted process (see Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000; Macken-Walsh, 2009). This work recognises that the rural is no longer a monopoly of farmers and new forms of articulation need to be developed (Lowe *et al.*, 1995). Indeed, this study has acknowledged that rural policy decision-makers need to recognise and better understand rural communities and the various processes of economic and environmental development that occur within them (Brennan and Luloff, 2007). In this regard, this thesis broadens the remit of rural development rhetoric in Ireland by encouraging a wider focus on non-agricultural economic and environmental actors. This process strengthens further the notion of the rural as ‘space for consumption’ as opposed to simply a space for agricultural production (Marsden *et al.*, 1993).

More specifically, the ecological findings presented in this study contribute to literatures on community-based conservation (Mehta and Kellert, 1998), incentive-based conservation (Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003), whilst also encouraging debate on how biodiversity conservation strategies should be more inclusive of humans (Wilshusen *et al.*, 2002; Jones and Murphree, 2004). These data contribute to the premise of modern conservation and the cultural use of wild resources, which is primarily about reducing extinction risks, maintaining essential ecological processes, preserving genetic diversity and ensuring that the use of species and ecosystems is sustainable (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2002).

By using hunting as a lens, this thesis has also contributed to literatures in geography which have recognised that the boundary between nature and society is shifting and unstable. In this context, it adds to a large body of work which illustrates that nature can only be understood through social processes, making any conceptualisation of the natural world a social product (see Cronon, 1995;

Murdoch, 1997; Haraway, 1997; Castree and Braun, 2001; Demeritt, 2001; Whatmore, 2002; Nightingale, 2006). Emerging from this conceptual position, this thesis has illustrated how the culturally mediated character of nature and culture points to the importance of practices of involving animals in the configuration of particular subject positions. This work contributes to literature in animal geography, which illustrates that hunting involves competing social constructions of animals depending on people's economic, ecological and political standpoints and ideologies.

From this perspective, the evidence presented in this study illustrates that recreational hunting is entangled within broad sets of natural, socio-cultural and political processes operating within and beyond rural spaces (see Milbourne, 2003a). Not only has this synthesis contributed to literature in geography and the social sciences more widely, but the findings illustrate how geography can be used in understanding the broader meaning and constitution of recreational hunting in rural space.

This research also builds on international literature which illustrates that there are no stable and complete orders in the countryside, only tentative, factional orderings (Thrift, 1999). More specifically, it illustrates that the meaning of hunting as well as the institutions and knowledges that surround it are continuously shifting and incomplete. This work complements Mormount's (1990) and Cloke's (1996: 435) understanding of rurality suggesting that "there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area".

This concluding chapter attempts to bring together the main insights which emerged from this study to assess their wider implications for policy. The first part of the chapter positions hunting as a potential tool for rural development in Ireland. Here, it considers how the economic and ecological evidence presented in Chapter 4 complements contemporary rural policy objectives which seek to diversify the rural economy and conserve the rural landscape. However, in doing so, it also takes account of the various conceptual and practical issues associated

with hunting which may inhibit any meaningful integration of hunting into Irish rural policy.

The second part of this chapter draws on Ingold's (1993; 1995) notion of the taskscape in an attempt to encapsulate the various 'ensembles' of complex and divergent meanings to discuss how hunting informs broader nature-society-rurality connections. In this context, it can be argued that hunting must be conceptualised as an activity that encompasses a range of 'ensembles' of natures, ruralities and human-animal relationships within Irish rural space. The final part of the chapter highlights some useful avenues for future research.

7.2 Recreational Hunting: A Tool for Rural Development in Ireland?

This section does not aim to determine the place of hunting in rural Ireland by discussing its various pros and cons on a scale, such that the side that weighs heaviest determines recommendations regarding the political and policy implications of hunting. Instead, it revisits the relationship between hunting and the rural economy and between hunting the management of ecology whilst highlighting a number of potential implications for rural policy.

At the outset of this study, the various changes occurring in rural areas, which have led to the notion of a 'restructuring' process taking place in the countryside, were outlined. The continuing weakening role of agriculture highlights that the future of rural areas must rely on a range of non-agricultural activities and processes to stimulate the rural economy. The phrase employed by Marsden (1999) to emphasise the shift from 'landscapes of production' to 'landscapes of consumption' was used to appropriately summarise the various conceptual, practical and policy changes taking place in rural areas. It was argued that the countryside is increasingly constructed as a multifaceted environment capable of accommodating a wide range of uses, including outdoor recreation activities.

The evidence presented in Chapter 4 illustrates that hunters could, in some respects, be constructed as economic and ecological actors in Irish rural space that potentially contribute to contemporary rural policy objectives. The examination into the economic presence of hunting, for example, suggested that

hunters contribute financially to the Irish rural economy through their expenditure on a range of goods and services such as hunting equipment, hunting animals and hunting-related social activities. Constructions of hunting by some farmers and some policy-makers also suggested that the expenditure associated with hunting might contribute to local businesses, such as pubs and restaurants in rural areas, as well as the equestrian industry in Ireland.

Butler and Hall (1998) argue that sustaining rural areas has, at its core, the maintenance of an economically viable rural population, which is engaged in traditional or related rural activities. The expenditure associated with hunting activities complements contemporary EU and Irish rural development policy objectives that seek to diversify the non-farm rural economy. From this perspective, it seems reasonable to suggest that hunting might be constructed as a tool for socio-economic development in rural Ireland. For example, it could be proposed that specific hunting activities (e.g. driven shooting and/or hunting with hounds) could be promoted or integrated within rural policy as a means of diversifying local rural economies. This will become increasingly important as new forms of rural development activities emerge and different actors compete for access to opportunities and resources in new arenas such as rural tourism and nature and landscape conservation.

The analysis of the relationship between hunting and the management of ecology indicated that some hunts, gun clubs, driven shoots and coursing clubs were involved in the creation and management of specific habitats such as woodland, coverts, hedgerows, set-aside crops and field margins. Similar evidence illustrating the contribution of hunting to the management of ecological features in Irish rural space emerged during the focus group discussions with farmers. A number of studies (e.g. Evans, 1992; Tapper *et al.*, 1996; Newton, 1998; Bennett, 1999; Boatman *et al.*, 2000; Brickle *et al.*, 2000; Stoate, 2002; Newton, 2004) discussed in Chapter 4 also indicate that the specific ecological features managed by hunters are important habitats for biodiversity.

The ecological results suggest that Irish rural development policy could benefit from adopting sustainable-use and incentive-based conservations policies which

are encouraged in other regions. Dizard's (1999) approach to this has been to advocate that the way forward for human relationships with the 'natural world' lies in responsible 'stewardship', but he also concedes that this will not be an easy or uncontested route. In the interests of preserving the commonplace (but no less important) aspects of biodiversity, rural policy decision-makers who prescribe laws to conserve species or habitats (or laws which deal with the welfare of wild animals) may have to exercise some caution before disturbing traditional rural practices like hunting (see also Kenward *et al.*, 2009a).

Within current rural development policy objectives, there is significant emphasis directed at preserving and, where possible, enhancing the environment, biodiversity and the amenity value of the countryside. This is illustrated by the fact that 80 percent of expenditure under the Irish Rural Development Programme is set aside for this purpose. The ecological features managed by Irish hunters are similar to the mechanisms promoted within some agri-environment schemes (e.g. the Rural Environment Protection Scheme) dealing with hedgerows, field margins, tree planting and the environmental management of set-aside land.

It could be argued that rural policy decision-makers who design policies to conserve species or habitats should consider the cultural use of resources (such as hunting activities) which lead to incentive-based conservation measures. This type of approach to conservation is recognised within international policy frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and in specific agri-environmental schemes funded through the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It could be suggested, for example, that the ecological management work undertaken by hunters should be integrated into specific Irish agri-environmental policies such as the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Farm Plan Scheme or the Agri-Environmental Options Scheme (AEOS). Similarly, it could be suggested that, if there is inadequate funding for the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity (e.g. through agri-environment schemes), rural policy decision-makers might ask "how can we further encourage the ecological management work undertaken by hunters?"

From a wider rural policy perspective, these findings are important because there is currently very little protection extended to the vast majority of ecological features which exist on privately-owned land. In addition, few governments can afford to enforce or subsidise conservation of these habitats (Oldfield *et al.*, 2003). Harrop's (1999) analysis of the way in which rural policy deals with the conservation of species and habitats has the potential effect, in some cases, of frustrating the comprehensive preservation of biological diversity. Similarly, work in political ecology suggests that rigid protection tends to hinder the application of human resources, which helps maintain or promote biodiversity and promotes conflicts without benefiting biodiversity (Robbins, 2004; Kenward *et al.*, 2009b).

7.3 Barriers to Change: Conceptual and Practical Issues Associated with Hunting

Although the various policy implications discussed in the previous section may appear tangible, this study suggests that there are likely to be no easy ways of integrating hunting activities into existing rural policy structures in the belief that they will contribute to policy goals or to the overall wellbeing of rural areas. In fact, the reactions by some rural policy decision-makers and by some farmers suggest that there is likely to be considerable resistance towards the development of any policy plans to promote hunting activities in rural Ireland. In this context, Irish rural policy agencies would have to consider: 1) the range of conceptual issues associated with hunting and 2) the range of practical issues associated with hunting for farmers and landowners.

Chapter 5 highlighted that any move within rural policy to encourage hunting will, more than likely, face very significant discursive and political hurdles and will necessitate a considerable shift in the ways in which policy-makers construct nature, rurality and animals more generally. In this context, the idea of imposing new representations of nature-society interconnections on people at regional and local levels was fraught with sensitivities about the ethically contested place of hunting in rural Ireland. The analysis of rural policy material and interviews with rural policy decision-makers, for example, pointed to a range of discourses

relating to animal rights and animal welfare as well as concerns associated with the increasingly contested ethical and political nature of hunting activities.

Many of the representations that emerged during the interviews with rural policy decision-makers were similar to those which are frequently rooted in romanticised ideologies regarding the ways in which rural space should be consumed. In this context, rural space was constructed as offering a living, peaceful space in which both humans and animals should exist in harmonious relations. Concerns were also expressed about inappropriate and unsustainable tourist hunting activities and the difficulties therein in light of little or no research/guidance for policy-makers to deal with these matters.

It was evident from the rural policy and focus group analysis that the relationship between humans and animals is undergoing a more turbulent period than before. This evidence raises questions about the future of hunting particularly at a time when animal rights discourses and broader anti-hunting views (which emphasise romanticism rather than pragmatism with regard to human animal relationships) have grown increasingly dominant in Western societies such as Ireland (see also McLeod, 2004). This leads us to ask the question: What are the appropriate social expectations of nature and ethical human-animal relations that should guide policy decisions about hunting activities? Similarly, it encourages us to consider the kinds of understandings about nature and animals which produce the type of world we live in.

In general, this evidence suggests that any future policy response which seeks to use recreation activities as a mechanism to ameliorate the effects of rural restructuring should consider how specific social constructions are shaping policy directions and structures (such as rural development institutions). In this context, it is essential that decision-makers consider the conceptual linkages associated with any recreation activity prior to ensuring that the full range of rural development objectives can be met (Butler and Hall, 1998). For hunting activities, in particular, this should include taking account of the wider understandings of nature, rurality and animals which are manifest through local and non-local geographies.

Aside from the conceptual issues that emerged during this study, a number of practical implications appeared during the focus group discussions with farmers suggesting that hunting is associated with a range of problematic issues in Irish rural space. These mainly include the social and financial costs that hunting imposes on the farming community. In this context, some farmers professed a range of conflicts whereby hunters did not adhere to acceptable codes of practice in the Irish countryside. These consisted of hunters trespassing on land, damaging farm property, public liability insurance concerns and hunters disrupting farm animals. Issues regarding tourist hunting also emerged that involved conflicting representations about 'belonging' in Irish rural space coupled with fears that the countryside would be crowded with tourist hunters.

From a wider rural policy perspective, it is increasingly recognised that recreation activities should be compatible with other land use activities particularly if they are to be considered as potential tools for rural development (Butler and Hall, 1998). One of the major errors which policy-makers have often made with respect to recreation activities in rural areas is to treat them in isolation from the other factors which contribute to the social, environmental and economic fabric of rural regions (Roberts and Hall, 2001). As rural space continues to restructure and as new forms of rural development emerge, different actors are likely to be competing for access to opportunities and resources in rural space more frequently. This will undoubtedly increase the potential for conflicts to arise (Butler *et al.*, 1998) and consequently, rural development agencies in Ireland must take account of the potential factors and issues associated with recreation activities within future policy discussions. Furthermore, rural policy decision-makers will need to consider that different actors have different needs and requirements which must be expressed prior to integrating recreation activities into specific rural policy objectives.

7.4 Hunting: An 'Ensemble' of Meanings in Rural Ireland

By using the theoretical framework set out in this study, it was possible to approach the issue of hunting from a range of different perspectives, meanings, constructions, and experiences. In order to conceptualise the complex range of themes which emerged during this study, it is useful to revisit Ingold's (1993;

1995) notion of the ‘taskscape’ to highlight the diversity of ways in which nature, rurality and animals are constructed in relation to hunting (see also McLeod, 2004). The notion of taskscape allows us to conceive of the Irish rural landscape as a place within which is “perpetually under construction” (Ingold, 1993: 162) – by both humans and animals.

Ingold’s (1993; 1995) notion of the taskscape appropriately relates to the idea of hunting as a nature-culture ‘ensemble’. The term ‘ensemble’ is particularly useful in that it does not represent an essential or singular idea, but rather a configuration out of an enormous variety of complex social and natural experiences (McLeod, 2004). These experiences are embodied within particular places, over time, and encapsulate a range of society-nature relationships.

The multiple meanings generated through hunting – which relate to constructions of nature, human-animal relations, rurality, the rural economy, ecological conservation and so on – are assemblages of parts that, when taken together, create a kind of ‘*Gestalt*’ whole; an overall ‘general effect’ which is more than the sum of its parts (McLeod, 2004). This concept suggests why it is difficult to conceptualise hunting without a broad theoretical approach to encompass the multitude of meanings that are embedded in specific understandings and experiences associated with hunting. The following section attempts to capture the general overlay effect of the ensemble that encapsulates the variability of meanings to illustrate the place of hunting in rural Ireland.

This thesis has brought together post-structural work that has recognised how ‘ensembles’ of natures and cultures are discursively constructed and constituted through particular practices and discourses. This work contributes to literatures in animal geography which suggest that animals are sites of multiple and unstable meanings that are naturalised through every day practices and thinking. In addition, this study has shown that hunting encapsulates an ‘ensemble’ of ethical discourses within rural policy. The contested nature of hunting, coupled with its ambiguous position that is guided by ethical, political and moral discourses resulted in the positioning of hunting as a neglected ‘other’ within Irish rural policy. This work not only complements Philo’s (1992) call for greater

academic attention to be paid to ‘neglected’ groups in rural social research, but highlights the importance of the context in which meanings are formed (Demeritt, 2002).

In comparison to the rural policy analysis, some farmers constructed hunting as an ethically acceptable activity closely connected to ‘natural’, ‘real’, and ‘competent’ performances within rural spaces/places. More specifically, some farmers constructed hunters as having a more ‘realistic’ and ‘competent’ relationship with ‘nature’ in contrast to non-hunters and, in particular, urbanites (see also McLeod, 2004). The complex and contradictory nature of the ethics and moralities associated with hunting goes some way to suggesting why hunting is such a complex and contested activity. In addition, the various claims by farmers and rural policy decision-makers illustrate the necessity to critically challenge (or deconstruct) the apparent self-evidence of nature as a pre-given concept with certain fixed physical properties that can exist independently of, and apart from, social practices (Castree, 2001; Demeritt, 2001). This work also builds on the assumption that there is never any easy way to access, evaluate and affect nature that does not involve socially specific knowledges and practices (Demeritt 2001; 2002).

This thesis has also brought together work in animal geography that has recognised how ‘ensembles’ of human-animal relationships are discursively constructed and constituted through particular practices and discourses. The results of the hunter and hunting organiser surveys, for example, encourage us to think about the ways in which nature and society are separated through hunting. In addition, the reliance on specific animals during the hunting process, which emerged from the hunter surveys, illustrates the ways in which animals are socialised and, in some cases, used as labour (e.g. when horses are rented to hunters) to assist in the hunting process. In many ways, this ensemble of relationships between humans and animals defies the current ways in which nature and society are separated. Similarly, the role that hunters play in the development of ‘natural’ places/spaces through managing and creating ecological features in Irish rural space problematises the conventional dichotomy between ‘natural’ versus ‘cultural’ places. In this context, hunters literally create for

themselves ensembles of natures-cultures (McLeod, 2004) which blur human constructions and natural processes and reveal an intimate and embodied relationship with 'nature'.

Interestingly, some farmers and some rural policy decision-makers told similar stories about the need to actively manage nature in rural Ireland. However, specific constructions of hunting blurred the boundaries between nature and culture in terms of what is perceived as natural and unnatural in Irish rural space. For example, some farmers constructed hunters as hybrid human-animals that play an important 'pest control' function, which contributes to maintaining a healthy/natural ecological balance in Irish rural space.

In this context, specific animals were vilified as 'pests' or 'vermin' that needed to be controlled. These 'pests' were also constructed as being 'unnatural' and 'problematic' animals that affected the financial viability of farms and, in some cases, spread diseases to other animals. Rather than constructing rural nature as an aesthetic space, there was evidence to suggest that some farmers and some rural policy decision-makers configured hunting as a positive and necessary 'hands-on' approach to maintaining a healthy ecological balance within Irish rural space. Here, hunting was constructed as a necessary rural service (see also Woods, 2000). In a number of ways, this evidence penetrates the notion of hunters as 'moral predators' (or as a kind of human-animal hybrid killer).

This society-nature relationship involving hunters and moral predators has important implications for the place of hunting in rural Ireland. For example, it highlights that hunting plays a role beyond its existence as a recreational activity. From a policy perspective, this 'rural service' function associated with hunting has been recently recognised by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht whereby a bounty scheme was introduced in January 2012 on North American mink, a non-native Irish mammal, which was considered by some farmers in this study to be a pest species. The scheme is to be delivered through the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), Ireland largest game shooting organisation (Irish Times, 2012).

This study has also brought together an ensemble of work in rural studies, which has recognised a range of dominant images of rurality that are central to the place of hunting in Ireland. Within the rural policy analysis, understandings of rurality relied on the construction of rural space as a 'natural environment' and a setting for idyllic lifestyles. More specifically, some interviewees and some rural policy documents drew on a range of common imagined geographies dominated by romantic notions about how the countryside should be consumed. In this context, the countryside has increasingly come to be constructed as a recreational space dominated by a 'closeness to nature' whereby hunting activities were cast as being 'out of place'. Some farmers, however, rejected an increasingly dominant (idyllic) discourse which framed 'nature' and humans in a dichotomous relationship, and with an increasing 'hegemony of vision' and corresponding 'romantic gaze' (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998).

This evidence illustrates that specific constructions of rurality are embedded in the structural properties of everyday life contexts. This work challenges the monotone discourses of rurality advocated by some policy-makers, media pundits and lobbyists in their discussion of rural spaces and places. The view of 'Mr. Average' (Philo, 1992), for example, the typical image of rurality, defines just one of a multitude of possible ways of conceptualising the rural. Hence, the approach taken in this study raises the question: What constructions of rurality should guide our decisions about the place of hunting in Ireland? Any attempt to answer this question will require an understanding that it is impossible to attach an uncomplicated label of 'rural' to many geographical spaces.

This research makes a valid contribution to the literature in rural studies which calls for a greater understanding into the importance of redefining the rural as not just a physical space but also as a social construction made up of a whole set of different political, social and cultural meanings (McDonagh, 2001). This is particularly important when dealing with recreation activities as the bulk of research on recreation has missed understanding the means by which the rural image is constructed and negotiated in rural space (Butler and Hall, 2001). This study also highlighted an ensemble of intertwined understandings of hunting which were historically generated and embedded in the specific Irish cultural

context. Some understandings of hunting, for example, were intrinsically linked to an Irish colonial past, whereby contemporary involvement in some hunting activities (e.g. hunting with hounds) was constructed as being ‘anti-Irish’ or ‘unnaturally’ connected to British hunting traditions. This perception highlights the importance of considering any hunting study within the context of the specific “national discourses relating to the natural world and human-animal relations” (Franklin 1999: 117). While there are certainly areas of commonality, hunting in contemporary ‘Western’ societies should not be assumed to be practised in a homogenous fashion with identical meanings and discourses across different cultures.

Evidence from the farmer focus group discussions also highlighted the socially embedded natures of hunting within Irish rural life. For some farmers, local cultures of hunting appear to be well-developed and widespread in rural Ireland. In addition, a variety of themes emerged which constructed hunting as being socially cohesive through people attending various hunting events and providing opportunities for participants to socialise in rural settings. Hunting was rarely referred to as a recreation activity but as a ‘way of life’ for the participants involved. This demonstrates that ideas about hunting, which are embedded in social life, are primed by geography and contribute to filling gaps in our knowledge regarding the socio-cultural role of hunting in rural Ireland (see Milbourne, 2003b).

There was also some evidence to suggest that hunting was constructed as a masculine activity by farmers, which is positively connected to the essential healthiness of the outdoors and, in some respects, to Irish manhood. These gendered constructions of hunting are inextricable from ideas about nature and where men and women fit into both natural and unnatural landscapes. In general, the themes that emerged appeared to be associated with male bonding between close friends, fathers and sons. This work illustrates that particular forms of hunting have become interwoven with specific social and cultural structures to produce some dominant localised nature–society relations in Irish rural space.

In terms of conceptualising the place of hunting in rural Ireland, it is better for us not to dispense with a binary nature/culture framework, but think instead of complex ensembles of ‘natures’, ‘ruralities’, and ‘cultures’ (see also McLeod, 2004). This idea of an ‘ensemble’ encapsulates a number of particular meanings which help illustrate: 1) why hunting is such a complex and contested activity, and 2) why recreational hunting still ‘works’, or succeeds, as a cultural activity at a time when human-animal relations are increasingly dominated (at least at the idealised level) by affectionate and ‘non-violent’ relationships (McLeod, 2007) – particularly when areas constructed as ‘wild’ have become viewed as areas where humans should not intrude or disturb the pristine conditions (see also Cronon, 1995).

The focus on hunting in this study has also provided a lens to explore the ways in which nature, rurality and animals are constructed in debates about rural land use, conservation, ethics and rural development. This work illustrates that constructions of nature and rurality must become an integral part of sustainable rural development particularly when recreation activities are considered as a mechanism to ameliorate the effects of rural restructuring. Furthermore, this thesis highlights that the situatedness of hunting, knowledges and institutions is always contextual and incomplete. This involves recognition that the place of hunting in rural Ireland is always in the making, rather than some *a priori* order of rural life (Norton, 1999).

This thesis is very much in accordance with the spirit that has characterised rural research, which is aimed, as Milbourne (1997: 2) notes, to “uncover the experiences of a range of groups and individuals using rural space whose views have remained largely softened, deflected or silent within mainstream writing on the rural”. However, it is important to note that the hunting natures, human-animal relationships and ruralities explored within this study consist of complex amalgams of natural, socio-cultural, political and economic/ecological components, and are characterised by a great deal of local and global particular specificity. Consequently, we need to be cautious about generalising about hunting activities and remain sensitive to the local geographies and particular experiences of nature-society relations in rural spaces (Milbourne, 2003a).

Since no other research in Ireland has examined hunting from the same standpoint as this research, I would argue that this analysis makes a distinct contribution to the literature in this area. Finally, in support of this study, I would agree with the statement by Brown *et al.* (2000: 4), which highlights the complexity of the topic for researchers:

“Of all the recreation activities social scientists have studied, hunting may be the most multifaceted in terms of its diverse implications to society and the related dilemmas managers face in regulating it”.

7.5 Future Research on Hunting

Chapter 1 highlighted that there exists a limited amount of research on hunting in Ireland and in many other regions of the Western world. The existing research-based knowledge is, to a large degree, based on statistical information about hunters and game species. The main goal has been to gather knowledge about peoples’ access to hunting, motives for participating in hunting and hunters’ willingness to pay (Brottveit and Agedal, 1999). Generally speaking, research on the cultural perspective of hunting is limited apart from a number of studies conducted in the UK (e.g. Woods, 1998a; Norton, 1999; Milbourne, 2003a; 2003b).

Despite attempts by some to do away with ‘the rural’ and the increasing recognition that both urban and rural areas are subject to the same global transitions in economic, political and social structures (e.g. Cloke, 1989), this study highlights that specific understandings of nature, rurality and animals connect in rather uneven ways by different groups and at different levels. The social construction of these concepts plays a vital role not only in determining the rate of change in particular spaces but also how different groups come to see the countryside and how rural communities see themselves.

One of the approaches taken in this study attempted to provide insights into the ways in which different groups of people (i.e. rural policy decision-makers and farmers) construct hunting. Given the historical trajectory of changing human-animal relations, as set out by Thomas (1983) almost thirty years ago, it would be fruitful to study the place of hunting at other levels in Ireland, for example, by

exploring lay people's perceptions of hunting. Research of this kind would improve our understanding of hunting in the context of a generalised increase in ethical sentiments towards nature and animals.

Additionally, it would be worthwhile exploring hunting from the hunters' perspective. In this context, it has been taken for granted that the act of hunting provides an exciting, self-contained contest similar to other sports (Franklin, 1999). It would be fruitful to explore, in detail, hunters' relationship with nature or natural spaces, their reasons for their enthusiasms with nature and their relations with the species they pursue. With further localised in-depth studies of this nature, it should be possible to tease out more of these intricate local and non-local geographies of hunting, thereby improving our understanding of the place of hunting in the wider European countryside.

This study has highlighted that different hunting activities have different meanings that are culturally context-specific. This introduces the point about carrying out research on a range of different types of hunting within one single study. For example, in this study, I used the term 'recreational hunting' to describe a variety of different types of hunting. However, it would be interesting to investigate whether there are in fact significant variations in understandings about the different types of hunting in rural Ireland. A possible future research approach in this regard could consider examining, in detail, individual hunting activities instead of attempting to incorporate all hunting activities within one study.

For policy-makers, one of the problematic aspects associated with hunting related to the lack of information about the sustainability of hunting activities in rural Ireland. It is widely recognised that one of the fundamental aspects of sustainable wildlife use is the biological capacity of species to be used sustainably: if species are over-hunted then there is no scope for sustainable use (Freese, 1997). Ensuring that hunting is sustainable is important both for the long-term benefits people receive from wildlife and for the conservation of species and ecosystems (Swanson and Barbier, 1992). In order to appropriately discuss the issue of sustainable hunting in Ireland, future research should be

conducted to measure the sustainability of hunting activities on specific game species. This would go some way towards providing information that could address concerns regarding the potential of hunting (particularly tourist hunting) to contribute to the overexploitation of game species in Irish rural space.

Finally, it must be a continuing priority to provide critical deconstructive study on how and why hunting activities become and remain outside of specific policy environments in particular regions. Anything less merely reinforces academic and other discourses which emphasise incompatibility between rural policy and responses to rural issues. Understanding the construction of rurality, nature and animals must therefore become an integrated part of future discussions and research about hunting in rural areas. This study highlights that constructions of nature and rurality must become an essential part of sustainable rural development, particularly when recreational activities are considered as a mechanism to ameliorate the effects of rural restructuring (Butler and Hall, 2001). Future research on hunting should encompass the emergence of new uses for rural space, and the new societal demands in relation to the construction of nature and rurality as well as the treatment of animals.

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Appendix 1

Recreational Hunting in Ireland

For the purpose of this thesis, the term hunting is used to describe a range of activities that involve the pursuit of specific animals (or quarry) in a rural setting. The term quarry is frequently given to animals and birds that can be legally hunted and shot and which typically have a specified open hunting season⁴⁴. In general, hunting activities in Ireland can be divided into four categories: hunting with hounds, game shooting, coursing and falconry. The main legislation affecting hunting in Ireland is the Wildlife Act of 1976 and 2010 (Amended). The following sections define relevant terms, clarify concepts and provide a background into recreational hunting activities in Ireland.

Hunting with Hounds

Hunting with hounds is defined as the pursuit of an animal (typically foxes, hares, mink and to a lesser extent stags) by a pack of hounds that follows its scent. The term hound is given to the type of dog used in hunting. Different breeds of hunting dogs are used for the different types of quarry that are hunted. Hunting with hounds can be broken down into six distinct activities in Ireland: fox hunting, mounted hunting with harrier hounds, foot hunting with harrier hounds, beagling, mink hunting and stag hunting.

Fox Hunting

Fox hunting is a form of hunting for foxes using a pack of scent hounds. In the majority of cases, the pack is followed by riders on horses. Fox hounds (of the fox hound or harrier breed) are specifically bred and trained for the purpose of fox hunting. During the course of a hunt, hounds are directed towards areas of cover deemed likely to contain foxes. If the hounds manage to pick up the scent of a fox, they will follow it by the most direct route possible. The hunt continues until the fox evades the hounds or is overtaken and killed by the hounds. In 2007,

⁴⁴ A number mammal species can be hunted (and shot) at any time of year (e.g. fox and mink). The Irish government also obtains derogations under the European Commission 79/409 Birds Directive to allow for the control of certain bird species throughout the year (e.g. magpie, hooded crow and pigeon).

there were thirty-six fox hunts in the Republic of Ireland. Each hunt was affiliated to the Irish Masters of Fox hounds Association (IMFHA) which governs fox hunting in Ireland. The hunting season runs from September to March.

Mounted Hunting with Harrier Hounds

Mounted hunting with harrier hounds is the hunting of foxes and, to a lesser extent, hares whilst mounted on horseback with a pack of harrier hounds. Harrier hunting takes its name from the type of hound used. The activity is governed by the Irish Masters of Harriers Association (IMHA) which, in 2007, represented forty-four hunts. The hunting season runs from September to March. A small number of packs also drag hunt. Drag hunting is a form of hunting where an artificial scent has been laid (dragged) over a terrain before the hunt. The scent, usually a combination of aniseed oils, is then chased by the hounds for any distance up to several miles to a designated end point.

Foot Hunting with Hounds

Foot hunting with hounds is the hunting of foxes and hares with a pack of hounds (typically harrier hounds) that is followed by participants on foot (walking). The activity is governed by the Irish Foot Harriers Association (IFHA). The IFHA has a large membership with seventy hunts in the Republic of Ireland. The vast majority of these are in Munster, with nearly fifty packs registered in County Cork alone. The hunting season runs from August to March.

Beagling

Beagling involves the hunting of hares on foot with a pack of beagle hounds. It extends throughout the winter months (September to February), usually one or two days a week and as many as twenty-five beagles would be brought out on a days hunting. In Ireland, beagling is regulated by the Irish Masters of Beagles Association (IMBA) which, in 2007, represented eighteen hunts, three of which are in Northern Ireland. The IMBA has two main objectives; first, to foster and promote beagling and second, to encourage the breeding of the pure-bred hunt beagle in Ireland.

Mink Hunting

Mink hunting is a relatively recent activity in Ireland, as the mink itself is a recent addition to the Irish fauna. Originally, mink were farmed in Ireland for fur, but many escaped when the fur trade declined in the 1970s and since then, they have established as a successful species throughout the Irish countryside. The activity has replaced otter hunting now that the otter is a protected species. Mink hunting in Ireland is governed by the Mink Hounds Association (MHA). In 2007, there were only three registered packs, all of which are in Munster and they all hunt on foot. Unlike the other hunting activities, they hunt in the summer, from May until September.

Ward Union Stag Hunt

In 2007, the Ward Union hunt was the only stag hunt in the Republic of Ireland. The hunt has a long history dating from the nineteenth century. The hunting area comprises of north County Dublin together with the lands of south and east Meath. Hunting typically took place two days a week during the season from November to March each year. The Ward Union maintain their own herd of Irish red deer. They only hunt stags, which are not (normally) killed, but are recaptured and returned to the herd. Up until 2010, the Ward Union hunt was required to apply for a licence to hunt deer on an annual basis from the Minister for Wildlife. In June 2010, stag hunting (i.e. the Ward Union hunt) was made illegal under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010.

Coursing

Coursing involves the testing of two greyhounds against each other for speed and skill in pursuit of a hare. It may take place in open countryside or in an enclosed field or park. Coursing in Ireland is governed by the Irish Coursing Club (ICC). The ICC was founded in 1916 and re-constituted under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958. The ICC lays down rules regarding the conduct of coursing which must be followed by the clubs under its affiliation. These are reinforced by the ICC's officials and control stewards who attend all coursing meetings. In 2007, there were ninety coursing clubs in Ireland, most of which were in Munster. Coursing takes place between the months of October and February. As the hare is a protected species under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010, the ICC must

apply for a licence to trap and course hares on an annual basis from the Minister for Wildlife.

Falconry

Falconry is the hunting of wild quarry in its natural state or habitat using trained hawks or falcons. The main quarry species include pigeon, magpies and grey crows. In 2007, approximately 100 people had a licence to hunt with birds of prey in Ireland. According to Titterington (1984), falconry in Ireland has not experienced the same revival as it has in America and Europe for two reasons. First, because falconry carries such a romantic history, it receives a very disproportionate amount of media coverage when viewed in the context of other hunting activities. Second, the legislation has not yet been reviewed to cope with its demands and there is also great difficulty in acquiring specialised birds of prey. In this context, all birds of prey are protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010 and native birds can only be obtained under a special licence. Falconry in Ireland is governed by the Irish Hawking Club.

Game Shooting: Rough

For this study, the term game shooting is divided into two categories; rough shooting which is carried out by members of gun clubs and driven shooting. Rough shooting is the most popular type of game shooting in Ireland. It is mainly organised through the structure of the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC). The NARGC represents the interests of Regional Game Councils (RGC) which are organised on a county basis (with the exception of Co. Leitrim and Co. Tipperary which both have two RGC's) and gun clubs which are organised at local level. In 2007, the organisation had 27,000 members spread throughout 930 gun clubs (NARGC, 2007). The NARGC operates a compensation fund, which provides insurance for its members during the course of their shooting activities.

Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) also represents the interests of participants involved in game shooting activities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In 2007, the organisation has 10,400 members of which 6,300 were involved in game shooting activities. However, the number of members involved

in game shooting in the Republic of Ireland is relatively small (3,800) in comparison to the NARGC membership of 27,000 (CAI, *Pers. Comm.*).

The majority of rough shooting participants that are members of gun clubs walk up to game birds which are flushed by trained gun dogs. The gun clubs obtain permission from local landowners to access land and, in the majority of cases, they do not pay for shooting rights. Much of the shooting is carried out on an informal basis and includes the hunting of game species and pest species under Section 24 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010. Pest species include animals or birds which are considered by some people to be nuisances (often termed vermin). They are usually not afforded any protection by an open season in Ireland and include species such as mink, fox, grey crow, magpie, rat and grey squirrel.

Game Shooting: Driven

Driven shooting involves the rearing and release of game birds and their subsequent driving over standing guns. The idea of stationary guns and driven game was probably introduced to Britain and Ireland from the continent during the eighteenth century. The quarry is mainly pheasant but also applies, to a much lesser extent, to duck and partridge. Typically, the shooters stand at numbered pegs and beaters walk towards them, flushing game birds as they travel. The guns then move on to the next area known as a drive and the process is repeated. There are generally between four and six drives in a day's driven shooting. Historically, driven shooting has grown purely as a social activity, where a landowner would rear some game and invite a number of friends over for a days shooting in the November through January (open season) part of the year. The costs may be borne by the landowner or, as is now usually the case, by the participants who each pay a syndicate membership. In an effort to keep syndicate fees down in shoots the practice of selling individual days shooting developed and is now commonly practised by many driven shoots in Ireland. In addition, there are now a number of shoots which are totally commercial; i.e. all shooting is paid for on a daily basis.

In 2007, there were thirty driven shoots in Ireland. These shoots typically operate on enclosed estates where the shooting rights or lands themselves are owned by individuals or shooting syndicates. Driven shooting is represented by the Irish Game Protection Association (IGPA). The majority of these shoots employ one or more gamekeepers, whose job is to maintain and establish habitats as well as rear, feed and look after the game on the shoot. They also control predators such as foxes, grey crows, magpies and rats as well as organise shooting days.

Deer Stalking

Deer stalking involves the stalking and shooting of deer species with a high-powered rifle. The main species include fallow deer, red deer and sika deer. Other species such as muntjac deer and roe deer are hunted to a much lesser extent. In 2007, there were in the region of 3,200 participants licensed to shoot deer in the Republic of Ireland. Deer stalking is regulated by the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) under Section 29(1) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010. There are also a small number of deer stalking organisations such as the Irish Deer Society (IDS) and the Wild Deer Association of Ireland (WDAI) which represent the interests of deer shooters. The open season in Ireland also varies from year to year depending on the location and species of deer. In 2007/2008 for example, the season ran from September 1st to February 28th. Outside of the open hunting season, landowners can apply for a Section 42 license to control deer on their lands if damage is being caused.

Appendix 2



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
National University of Ireland, Galway

Questionnaire for Game Shooting Participants in Ireland

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than five minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) Which of the following sorts of shooting did you participate in during 2007?
(Please tick appropriate boxes)

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Rough shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wildfowling | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Driven shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grouse shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deer stalking | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vermin shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2) Are you a member of any Gun Club(s)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how many? _____

4) How involved in shooting do you consider yourself to be? (Tick one)

- a) More than the average follower ☐
- b) About the same as the average follower ☐
- c) Less than the average follower ☐

5) Shooting in 2007?

- a) Roughly how many days did you go shooting in 2007: _____
- b) Average distance travelled by car per day shooting: (round trip): _____km
- c) Typical number of hunters per car: (tick relevant box) 1 ☐, 2 ☐, 3 ☐, 4 ☐
- d) Average number of cartridges used per day: _____

6) Approximately estimate your expenditure during the year on the following items?

Purchase of cartridges, ammunition, shotguns, sporting rifles and gun repairs	€
Firearms certificates / shotguns and game licences	€
Purchase of special clothing (<i>footwear, game bags, cartridge belts</i>)	€
Expenditure related to gun dogs	€
Accommodation, food and drink (<i>on shooting trips</i>)	€
Vehicle expenditure attributed to shooting	€
Spending on shooting related recreational activities (<i>e.g. pub, fund raiser events, club balls, etc.</i>)	€
Purchase of shooting days	€
Other expenditure (<i>please specify</i>)	€

7) Please estimate what percentage of this total expenditure was made:

- a) in a city/large town _____%
- b) in a country town _____%
- c) in rural areas _____%
- d) by mail order _____%

8) How many gundogs do you keep for shooting? _____

9) What is your occupation? _____

10) How old are you? _____ years

11) Male / Female (*please circle*)

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Please return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided to: **David Scallan, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway.**

Appendix 3



Questionnaire for Deer Stalkers in Ireland

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) Which of the following sorts of shooting did you participate in during 2007?
(Please tick appropriate boxes)

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Rough shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wildfowling | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Driven shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grouse shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deer stalking | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vermin shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2) How involved in deer stalking do you consider yourself to be? (Tick one)

- a) More than the average follower ☐
- b) About the same as the average follower ☐
- c) Less than the average follower ☐

4) Frequency of deer stalking in 2007

- a) Approximately how many days did you go stalking in the season? _____
- b) Average distance travelled by car, per day stalking: (round trip) _____ km
- c) Typical number of people per car: (tick relevant box)
1 ☐, 2 ☐, 3 ☐, 4 ☐
- d) Average number of shots fired per day: _____

5) Deer Stalking in 2007

- a) In which county did you do the majority of your deer stalking? _____
- b) How much land is available to you for deer stalking? _____ acres
- c) Did you pay for any lease / stalking rights? Yes ☐ No ☐

6) In the past decade has the population of deer in your stalking area increased, decreased or remained the same? (Circle the correct answer)

INCREASED

DECREASED

SAME

7) How many deer did you shoot in 2007?

Fallow: _____

Sika: _____

Red: _____

8) Approximately estimate your expenditure during the year on the following items?

Purchase of ammunition, sporting rifles and gun repairs	€
Firearms certificates and deer shooting licences	€
Purchase of sporting rights (land rents, Coillte leasing)	€
Insurance	€
Travel and expenditure (<i>on stalking trips</i>)	€
Travel and expenditure on special stalking trips (<i>e.g. Scotland</i>)	€
Carcass fees	€
Trophy mounting	€
Purchase of special clothing and equipment (<i>footwear, tools, etc.</i>)	€
Spending on deer shooting related recreational activities	€
Expenditure related to dogs for deer shooting	€
Vehicle expenditure attributed to deer shooting	€
Purchase of stalking days	€
Other expenditure (<i>please specify</i>)	€

9) Please estimate what percentage of this total expenditure was made:

a) in a city/large town _____%

b) in a country town _____%

c) in rural areas _____%

d) by mail order _____%

10) What is your occupation? _____

11) How old are you? _____ years

12) Male / Female (please circle)

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Please return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided to: **David Scallan, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway.**

Appendix 4



Questionnaire for Mounted Hunt Followers

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

- 1) What types of hunting with hounds do you participate in? (Tick as many as apply in the first column and tick main one in second column)

	Tick as many as apply	If more than one, tick main one
Mounted Harrier Hunting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mounted Fox Hunting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ward Union Hunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beagling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foot Hunting with hounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mink Hunting with hounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 2) What is the main means by which you follow the hunt? (Tick one)

Mounted	<input type="checkbox"/>
On foot	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 3) Are you a hunt subscriber / member or simply a hunt supporter?

Subscriber / member ☐ Supporter ☐

- 4) What is the name of the main Hunt that you follow? _____

- 5) And how many people in your family follow the Hunt? _____

- 6) How many different Hunts have you followed over the past 12 months?
(Write in number, ensuring it refers to the number of Hunts and **not** the number of meetings they attended) _____

7) How involved in hunting do you consider yourself to be? (Tick one)

- a) More than the average follower ☐
- b) About the same as the average follower ☐
- c) Less than the average follower ☐

8) Approximately estimate your expenditure during the year on the following items?

Payments to hunts (<i>cap fees, subscriptions</i>)	€
Spending on hunt-related social and recreational activities (<i>Hunt ball, point-to-point, pub, etc.</i>)	€
Travel (<i>on hunting trips</i>)	€
Stabling / livery fees (<i>including horse feed and bedding</i>)	€
Vets bills	€
Tack and riding clothes	€
Horse transport	€
Farriers	€
Other (<i>specify</i>)	€

9) Please estimate what percentage of this total expenditure was made:

- a) in a city/large town _____%
- b) in a country town _____%
- c) in rural areas _____%
- d) by mail order _____%

10) How many horses do you keep for hunting? _____
(write in number *including zero*)

11) For each horse you keep for hunting could you give me the following information (One line per horse)

- a) the date it was purchased
- b) where it was purchased
- c) the cost of the horse

(a) Year purchased	(b) Where bought	(c) Cost of horse
1)		€
2)		€
3)		€
4)		€
5)		€
6)		€
7)		€

12) What is your occupation? _____

13) How old are you? _____ years

14) Male / Female (please circle)

Appendix 5



Questionnaire for Foot Hunting Followers

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

-
- 1) What types of hunting with hounds do you participate in? (Tick as many as apply in the first column and tick main one in second column)

	Tick as many as apply	If more than one, tick main one
Beagling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foot Hunting with hounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mink Hunting with hounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mounted Harrier Hunting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mounted Fox Hunting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ward Union Hunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 2) Are you a hunt subscriber / member or a hunt supporter? (Tick one)

Subscriber / member ☐ Supporter ☐

- 3) What is the name of the main Hunt that you follow? _____

- 4) And how many people in your family follow the Hunt? _____

- 5) How many different Hunts have you followed over the past 12 months?
(Write in number, ensuring it refers to the number of Hunts and *not* the number of meetings they attended) _____

6) How involved in hunting do you consider yourself to be? (Tick one)

- a) More than the average follower ☐
b) About the same as the average follower ☐
c) Less than the average follower ☐

7) Approximately estimate your expenditure during the year on the following items?

Payments to hunts (<i>cap fees, subscriptions</i>)	€
Spending on hunt-related social and recreational activities (<i>Hunt ball, pub socials, etc.</i>)	€
Travel (<i>on hunting trips</i>)	€
Hunting clothing	€
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	€

8) Please estimate what percentage of this total expenditure was made:

- a) in a city/large town _____ %
b) in a country town _____ %
c) in rural areas _____ %

9) What is your occupation? _____

10) How old are you? _____ years

11) Male / Female (please circle)

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Please return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided to: **David Scallan, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway.**

Appendix 6



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
National University of Ireland, Galway

Questionnaire for Coursing Participants

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) Which of the following types of coursing did you participate in during 2007? (Please tick appropriate box)

Open coursing ☐ Park coursing ☐ Both ☐

2) Are you a member of any coursing club? Yes ☐ No ☐

3) What is the name of the main coursing club that you follow? _____

4) How many different coursing clubs are you affiliated to? _____

5) How involved in coursing do you consider yourself to be? (Tick one)

- a) More than the average follower ☐
- b) About the same as the average follower ☐
- c) Less than the average follower ☐

6) Coursing during 2007?

- a) Roughly how many days did you go coursing in the season: _____
- b) Average distance travelled by car per day coursing: (round trip)
_____km
- c) Typical number of people per car: (tick relevant box)
1 ☐, 2 ☐, 3 ☐, 4 ☐

7) Approximately estimate your expenditure during the year on the following items?

Subscriptions to clubs, ICC, etc.	€
Spending on betting at coursing events	€
Spending on coursing related social and recreational activities (<i>Club socials, pub, draw – fund raisers etc.</i>)	€
Accommodation and travel expenses (<i>on coursing trips</i>)	€
Subscriptions to specialist magazines / newspapers	€
Weatherproof clothing	€
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	€

8) How many dogs do you keep for coursing? _____

9) Of these, how many are home bred? _____ and purchased? _____

10) How much prize money did your dogs win in 2007? €_____

11) How many coursing dogs did you sell during 2007? _____

12) Approximately estimate your expenditure on your dog(s) during the year on the following items?

Dog equipment (<i>bedding, leads, brushes, freezer, etc.</i>)	€
Dog Food	€
Kennel fees	€
Dog Licences	€
Care equipment (<i>medication, therapy equipment</i>)	€
Training aids (<i>use of gallops & coursing trials, etc.</i>)	€
Coursing entry fees	€
Veterinary charges	€
Additional labour (<i>dog sitters, walkers, etc</i>)	€
ICC registration fees	€
Vehicle costs	€
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	€

13) Please estimate what percentage of this total expenditure was made:

- a) in a city/large town _____%
- b) in a country town _____%
- c) in rural areas _____%
- d) by mail order _____%

14) What is your occupation? _____

15) How old are you? _____ years

16) Male / Female (*please circle*)

Appendix 7



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
National University of Ireland, Galway

Questionnaire for Falconry Participants

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) **Did you fly your bird(s) of prey at live quarry in 2007?** (*Tick appropriate box*)

Yes ☐ No ☐

2) **How involved in falconry do you consider yourself to be?** (*Tick one*)

- a) More than the average follower ☐
- b) About the same as the average follower ☐
- c) Less than the average follower ☐

3) **Falconry in the 2007 season?**

- a) Roughly how many days did you hunt with birds of prey in 2007: ____
- b) Average distance travelled by car per day's hunting: ____km

4) **How many birds of prey you keep for falconry?** ____

(*Write in number including zero*)

Please specify the breed(s):

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

5) **For each bird you keep for falconry could you give me the following information?** (*One line per bird*)

- a. the date it was purchased
- b. where it was purchased
- c. the cost of the bird

(a) Year purchased	(b) Where bought	(c) Cost of bird
1)		€
2)		€
3)		€
4)		€
5)		

6) Approximately estimate your expenditure during the year on the following items?

Subscriptions to IHC, etc.	€
Sporting rights (land rental)	€
Spending on falconry related social and recreational activities (<i>Club socials, pub, etc.</i>)	€
Travel expenses (<i>on regular sporting trips</i>)	€
Accommodation and travel (<i>on special sporting trips</i>)	€
Subscriptions to specialist magazines	€
Special clothing	€
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	€

7) Approximately estimate your expenditure on your bird(s) during the year on the following items?

Food	€
Housing (<i>aviaries</i>)	€
Tools	€
Falconer's equipment	€
Telemetry (<i>radio tracking</i>)	€
Hawking dogs (<i>food, etc.</i>)	€
Veterinary charges	€
Insurance	€
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	€

8) Please estimate what percentage of this total expenditure was made:

- a) in a city/large town _____%
- b) in a country town _____%
- c) in rural areas _____%
- d) by mail order _____%

9) What is your occupation? _____

10) How old are you? _____ years

11) Male / Female (*please circle*)

Appendix 8



Questionnaire for Gun Clubs in Ireland

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) How many members are registered with your gun club?

- a) Male _____
- b) Female _____

2) Of these, how many are?

- a) Active (*shooting*): _____
- b) Dormant (*non-shooting*): _____
- c) Junior: _____

3) Cost of Membership (*Excluding NARGC insurance*)

- a) How much is the annual subscription fee per member? € _____
- b) How much is the annual subscription fee per junior? € _____
- c) How much is the annual subscription fee per OAP? € _____

4) Number of birds released by your gun club in 2007 by species?

- Pheasant: _____ @ Cost per poult: € _____
- Duck: _____ @ Cost per duckling: € _____
- Partridge: _____ @ Cost per poult: € _____
- Other (*specify*) _____ @ Cost per poult: € _____

5) Organised Events by your Gun Club

	Rough Shooting	Driven Shooting	Clay Shooting
Number of days organised by club per year?			
Average number of participants per day?			
Average number of cars per event?			
Average number of non-club members per day?			

6) Gun Club Income

a) What was the total income of your club in the last year for which you have completed accounts? € _____

b) Roughly how much of that **income** came from the following sources?

Enter figure here

Membership subscriptions	€
Fund raiser events (<i>raffles, club balls, dinners etc.</i>)	€
NARGC grants	€
Other income (<i>please specify</i>)	€

7) Gun Club Expenditure

a) What was the total expenditure of your club in the last year for which you have completed accounts? € _____

b) Roughly how was your **expenditure** broken down?

Enter figure here

Land rents (<i>Coillte lettings, Property costs, buildings</i>)	€
Goods purchased (<i>e.g. raffle prizes, manufactured goods</i>)	€
Game rearing (<i>including cost of poults and feed</i>)	€
Upkeep of shooting facilities (<i>pheasant pens, fences, etc.</i>)	€
N.A.R.G.C. Compensation Fund payment (<i>i.e. members insurance</i>)	€
Services purchased (<i>e.g. accountancy, legal, banking</i>)	€
Habitat development (<i>woodland management, ponds etc.</i>)	€
Other Expenditure (<i>please specify</i>)	€
Surpluses	€

8) Administrative Activities

a) Number of administrative meetings in 2007: _____

b) Average attendance per meeting: _____

9) Shooting and Habitat Conservation

a) Roughly how much land is available to your gun club for shooting?
_____ acres

b) What acreage if any, of cover crops was planted by your club or its members in 2007 for shooting?
_____ acres

- c) In 2007, how did your gun club manage these types of habitats to improve shooting? *(Please tick the relevant boxes provided)*

Habitat Type	Removed	<i>Encouraged</i>		Left alone	Not present
Hedgerows		Created	Managed		
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ⁴⁵					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ⁴⁶					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ⁴⁷					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

Please use this space to provide any additional comments about your gun club and habitat management: _____

Name of Club: _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Please return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided to: **David Scallan, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway.**

⁴⁵ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

⁴⁶ Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

⁴⁷ A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 9



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
National University of Ireland, Galway

Questionnaire for Regional Game Councils in Ireland

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) Name of Regional Game Council (RGC): _____

2) How many Gun Clubs are in your RGC: _____

3) Approximately how many of these Gun Clubs:

- Release pheasants: _____
- Provide supplementary feeding for pheasants: _____
- Plant crops for pheasants: _____
- Manage duck ponds: _____
- Manage heather for grouse: _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Please return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided to: **David Scallan, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway.**

Appendix 10



Questionnaire for Driven Shoots in Ireland

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 15 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

- 1) **Is your shoot run specifically as a driven shoot, a rough shoot or both?** (*Circle correct answer*)

DRIVEN SHOOT

ROUGH SHOOT

BOTH

- 2) **Are the lands of your shoot private i.e. shot by paying clients and members only?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please provide the following information separately for organised shooting days and for days rough shooting took place.

3) Driven shooting days in the 2007 season

- a) Number of driven shooting days in the season? _____
- b) Average number of **non-paying** guns per day? _____
- c) Average number of **paying** guns per day? _____
- d) Total number of different non-paying guns per season? _____
- e) Total number of different paying guns per season? _____

4) Rough shooting days in the 2007 season

- a) Number of rough shooting days in the season? _____
- b) Average number of **non-paying** guns per day? _____
- c) Average number of **paying** guns per day? _____
- d) Total number of different non-paying guns per season? _____
- e) Total number of different paying guns per season? _____

5) Shoot Employment

- a) **Did your shoot employ any gamekeepers in 2007?** Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please give the number employed and state whether they were part or full time. Part time _____ Full time _____

b) **Did your shoot employ any beaters / pickers in 2007?** Yes ☐ No ☐

Number of beaters employed? _____

Number of pickers employed? _____

6) Shooting Income and Expenditure 2007

Please estimate your shoot's **income** from the following sources for 2007 (excluding VAT)

- a) Income from selling shooting days € _____
- b) Income from tenancies / leases for shooting € _____
- c) Income from sale of poults or other game birds € _____
- d) Income from sale of game € _____
- e) Other income (*please specify*) € _____

Total income from Shoot € _____

Please estimate your shoot's **expenditure** from the following sources for 2007 (excluding VAT)

- a) Sporting rates € _____
- b) Gamekeeper wages € _____
- c) Gamekeeper accommodation € _____
- d) Gamekeeper travel costs € _____
- e) Other relevant wages (*including beaters & pickers*) € _____
- f) Pheasant rearing (*including feed*) € _____
- g) Upkeep of shooting facilities (*pheasant pens, fencing etc*) € _____
- h) Habitat development (*woodland management, ponds etc*) € _____
- i) Entertainment costs € _____
- j) Cost of crop cultivation € _____
- k) Other expenditure (*please specify*) € _____

Total expenditure from Shoot € _____

7) Cost of shooting

- a) What is the average cost per gun for a day of driven shooting? € _____
- b) What is the average cost per gun for a day of rough shooting? € _____

Habitat Management

8) **Please specify the acreage of the shoot?** _____ *acres*

9) **Please state the following acreages of the shoot**

- a) Arable and grass _____ acres
- b) Woodland _____ acres
- c) Scrubland _____ acres
- d) Water and marsh _____ acres
- e) Other (*please specify*) _____ acres

Total _____ **acres**

10) What acreage if any, of cover crops were planted for game in 2007?

_____acres

11) Please state the following types of woodland management you carry out in order to improve your shoot?

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) Coppicing | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Ride management | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Choice of tree species | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Planting shrubs | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Other (please specify) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

12) In 2007, how did your shoot manage these types of habitats?

(Please tick the relevant boxes in the table provided)

Habitat Type	Removed	Encouraged		Left alone	Not present
		Created	Managed		
Hedgerows					
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ⁴⁸					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ⁴⁹					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ⁵⁰					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

13) Please specify any other habitat management methods used to encourage game on your shoot?

14) Shoot Details

Name of Shoot: _____

⁴⁸ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

⁴⁹ Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

⁵⁰ A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 11



Questionnaire for Mounted Hunts

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) How many members are registered with your hunt?

- a) Male _____
- b) Female _____

2) Of these, how many are:

- a) Active (*hunting*) _____
- b) Dormant (*non-hunting*) _____

3) What is the average attendance per hunt meet, of:

- a) Mounted followers (*those who ride to hounds*) _____
- b) Non-mounted followers (*foot followers*) _____
- c) Other followers (*car, quad bike etc.*) _____
- d) Visitors (*who participate in the hunt*) _____

4) Frequency of Hunting

- a) Average number of days hunting per week? _____
- b) Total number of days hunting in the season? _____
- c) Average number of horses hired per hunt meet? _____
- d) Average cost to hire a horse per day for hunting? € _____

5) Administrative Activities

- b) Number of administrative meetings in 2007: _____
- c) Average attendance per meeting: _____

6) Collection of Fallen Stock

- a) Does your hunt assist in the collection and disposal of fallen stock?
- Yes ☐ No ☐
- b) If yes, could you confirm the total annual **cost** of your flesh collection service? (*Including labour, vehicles, fuel and waste disposal*)
- Total Expenditure:** € _____

- c) What would you estimate to be the total annual **income** from your flesh collection services? **Total Income:** € _____

7) Hunt Income

- a) What was the total income of your hunt in the last year for which you have completed accounts? € _____

- b) Approximately how much of that income came from the following sources?

(Insert an 'x' if any of the activities are **not** participated by your hunt)

	Enter figure here	Insert (X) here
Subscriptions, caps or donations	€	
Point to points	€	
Hunter trials	€	
Sponsored or cross country rides	€	
Team chases	€	
Gymkhanas or shows	€	
Other equestrian events	€	
Puppy shows	€	
Hunt balls	€	
Hunt or supporters dances	€	
Dinners, race nights or socials	€	
Any other social / fund raising	€	
Habitat conservation	€	
Other income (<i>describe</i>)	€	

8) Hunt Expenditure

- a) What was your hunt's expenditure in the last financial year? € _____

- b) Approximately how was your **expenditure** broken down?

Staff costs (<i>wages, salaries, etc.</i>)	€
Property costs (<i>rents, rates, building maintenance</i>)	€
Utilities and communications (<i>fuel, gas, electricity, water, phone, etc.</i>)	€
Goods purchased (<i>e.g. dog and horse feed, manufactured goods</i>)	€
Machinery and Equipment	€
Vehicles	€
Services purchased (<i>e.g. vets fees, farrier, accountancy, legal, banking</i>)	€
Surpluses	€

9) Hunt Employment

- a) Number of people directly employed by your hunt: _____
- b) Number of full-time employees: _____
- c) Number of seasonal (*part-time*) employees: _____

For each employee can you give me their job title, gender and the average number of hours per week and months per year they are employed? (*One line per employee*)

Job Title	Gender	Hours Per Week	Months Per Year
1)			
2)			
3)			

10) Hunt Social Events (*e.g. pub socials, annual dinners, etc.*)

- a) Number of social events in 2007? _____
- b) Average attendance per event? _____

11) Hunting and Habitat Conservation

- a) Roughly how much land is available to your hunt for hunting? _____ acres

- b) Does your hunt incur any expenditure in relation to habitat development?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, how much: €_____, and describe habitat: _____

- c) In 2007, how did your hunt manage these types of habitats to improve hunting? (*Please tick the relevant boxes in the table provided*)

Habitat Type	Removed	<i>Encouraged</i>		Left alone	Not present
		Created	Managed		
Hedgerows					
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ⁵¹					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ⁵²					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ⁵³					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

Please use this space to provide any additional comments about your hunt and habitat management: _____

12) Name of Hunt: _____

⁵¹ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

⁵² Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

⁵³ A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 12



Questionnaire for Foot Hunts

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) How many members are registered with your hunt?

- a) Male _____
- b) Female _____

2) Of these, how many are?

- a) Active (*hunting*) _____
- b) Dormant (*non-hunting*) _____

3) Frequency of Hunting (2007)

- a) Average number of days hunting per week? _____
- b) Total number of days hunting in the season? _____
- c) Average attendance per hunt meet? _____

5) Hunt Income

- a) What was the total income of your Hunt for the 2007 year?
€ _____
- b) Approximately how much of that income came from the following sources? (*Insert an 'x' if any of the activities are **not** participated by your hunt*)

	Enter figure here	Insert (X) here
Subscriptions, caps or donations	€	
Puppy shows	€	
Hunt balls	€	
Hunt or supporters dances	€	
Dinners, race nights or socials	€	
Any other social / fund raising	€	
Other income (<i>please specify</i>)	€	

6) Hunt Expenditure

a) What was your Hunts operating expenditure for the 2007 year? € _____

b) Approximately how was your **expenditure** broken down?

Goods purchased (<i>e.g. raffle prizes, manufactured goods</i>)	€
Services purchased (<i>e.g. vets fees, accountancy, legal, banking</i>)	€
Habitat development	€
Hound Costs (<i>food, maintenance & housing</i>)	€
Insurance	€
Licences	€
Other expenditure (<i>please specify</i>)	€

7) Administrative Activities

a) Number of administrative meetings in 2007? _____

b) Average attendance per meeting? _____

8) Hunt Social Events (*e.g. pub socials, annual dinners, etc.*)

a) Number of social events in 2007? _____

b) Average attendance per meeting? _____

9) Roughly how much land is available to your hunt for hunting? _____ acres

10) Hunting and Habitat Conservation

In 2007, how did your hunt manage these types of habitats to improve hunting?
(Please tick the relevant boxes in the table provided)

Habitat Type	Removed	Encouraged Created	Managed	Left alone	Not present
Hedgerows					
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ⁵⁴					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ⁵⁵					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ⁵⁶					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

Please use this space to provide any additional comments about your hunt and habitat management: _____

⁵⁴ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

⁵⁵ Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

⁵⁶ A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 13



Questionnaire for the Ward Union Hunt

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) How many members are registered with your hunt?

- a) Male _____
- b) Female _____

2) Of these, how many are:

- a) Active (*hunting*) _____
- b) Dormant (*non-hunting*) _____

3) What is the average attendance per hunt meet, of:

- a) Mounted followers (*those who ride to hounds*) _____
- b) Non-mounted followers (*foot followers*) _____
- c) Other followers (*car, quad bike etc.*) _____
- d) Visitors (*who participate in the hunt*) _____

4) Frequency of Hunting

- a) Average number of days hunting per week? _____
- b) Total number of days hunting in the season? _____
- c) Average number of horses hired per hunt meet? _____
- d) Average cost to hire a horse per day for hunting? € _____

5) Administrative Activities

- a) Number of administrative meetings in 2007: _____
- b) Average attendance per meeting: _____

6) Hunt Social Events (*e.g. pub socials, annual dinners, etc.*)

- a) Number of social events in 2007? _____
- b) Average attendance per event? _____

7) Collection of Fallen Stock

- a) Does your hunt assist in the collection and disposal of fallen stock?
- Yes ☐ No ☐

- b) If yes, could you confirm the total annual **cost** of your flesh collection service? *(Including labour, vehicles, fuel and waste disposal)*
Total Expenditure: € _____
- c) What would you estimate to be the total annual **income** from your flesh collection service?
Total Income: € _____

8) Hunt Income

- a) What was the total income of your hunt in the last year for which you have completed accounts? € _____
- b) Approximately how much of that income came from the following sources?
*(Insert an 'x' if any of the activities are **not** participated by your hunt)*

	Enter figure here	Insert (X) here
Subscriptions, caps or donations	€	
Point to points	€	
Hunter trials	€	
Sponsored or cross country rides	€	
Team chases	€	
Gymkhanas or shows	€	
Other equestrian events	€	
Puppy shows	€	
Hunt balls	€	
Hunt or supporters dances	€	
Dinners, race nights or socials	€	
Any other social / fund raising	€	
Habitat conservation	€	
Other income <i>(describe)</i>	€	

9) Hunt Expenditure

- a) What was your hunt's expenditure in the last financial year? € _____
- b) Approximately how was your **expenditure** broken down?

Staff costs <i>(wages, salaries, etc.)</i>	€
Expenditure related to maintaining deer heard	€
Property costs <i>(rents, rates, building maintenance)</i>	€
Utilities and communications <i>(fuel, gas, electricity, water, phone, etc.)</i>	€
Goods purchased <i>(e.g. dog and horse feed, manufactured goods)</i>	€
Machinery and Equipment	€
Vehicles	€
Services purchased <i>(e.g. vets fees, farrier, accountancy, legal, banking)</i>	€
Surpluses	€

10) Hunt Employment

- a) Number of people directly employed by your hunt: _____
- b) Number of full-time employees: _____
- c) Number of seasonal (*part-time*) employees: _____

For each employee can you give me their job title, gender and the average number of hours per week and months per year they are employed? (*One line per employee*)

Job Title	Gender	Hours Per Week	Months Per Year
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			
5)			
6)			
7)			
8)			
9)			
10)			

11) Hunting and Habitat Conservation

- a) Approximately how much land is available to your hunt for hunting?
_____ *acres*
- b) In 2007, how did your hunt manage these types of habitats to improve hunting? (*Please tick the relevant boxes in the table provided*)

Habitat Type	Removed	Encouraged Created	Managed	Left alone	Not present
Hedgerows					
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ⁵⁷					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ⁵⁸					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ⁵⁹					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

Please use this space to provide any additional comments about your hunt and habitat management: _____

⁵⁷ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

⁵⁸ Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

⁵⁹ A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 14



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
National University of Ireland, Galway

Questionnaire for Coursing Clubs

All information supplied in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. No names or references to you or your Hunt will appear in any of the research. It should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any comments or questions regarding this questionnaire.

All answers should relate to the year 2007

1) How many members are registered with your coursing club?

- a) Male _____
- b) Female _____

2) Of these, how many are:

- a) Active (coursing) _____
- b) Dormant (non-coursing) _____
- c) Junior _____

3) Administrative Meetings

- a) Number of administrative meetings in 2007? _____
- b) Average attendance per meeting? _____

4) Club Sporting Activities

- a) Average number of days coursing per week? _____
- b) How many coursing meets did your club hold in 2007 year? _____
Of these how many were:
 - one-day meets? _____
 - two-day meets? _____
 - three-day meets? _____
- c) What was the average attendance per coursing meet? _____
- d) On average how many greyhounds would be entered per meet? _____

5) Club Income by Source

- a) How much is the annual subscription fee per member? € _____
- b) How much is the annual subscription fee per junior? € _____
- c) How much is the annual subscription fee per OAP? € _____
- d) Which is the last year for which you have completed accounts?
Year ending: month: _____ year: _____

- e) What was the total income of your club in the last year for which you have completed accounts? € _____
- f) Approximately how much of that income came from the following sources? (*Insert an 'x' if any of the activities are **not** participated by your club*)

	Enter figure here	Insert (X) here
Membership subscriptions	€	
Income from gate receipts	€	
Social events	€	
Income from programme sales at sporting events	€	
Sponsorship from business	€	
Grants from Bord na gCon and the ICC	€	
Dinners, race nights or socials	€	
Any other social / fund raising	€	
Other income (<i>describe</i>)	€	

6) Club Expenditure

- a) What was the total expenditure of your club in the last year for which you have completed accounts? € _____
- b) Approximately how was your **expenditure** broken down?

Staff costs (<i>Wages, salaries, etc.</i>)	€
Property costs (<i>rents, rates, building maintenance</i>)	€
Habitat development	
Utilities and communications (<i>fuel, gas, electricity, water, phone, etc.</i>)	€
Goods purchased (<i>e.g. manufactured goods</i>)	€
Services purchased (<i>e.g. accountancy, legal, banking</i>)	€
Other Expenditure (<i>describe</i>)	€

7) Club Employment

- a) Number of people directly employed by your coursing club: _____
- b) Number of full-time employees: _____
- c) Number of seasonal (*part-time*) employees: _____

For each employee can you give me their job title, gender and the average number of hours per week and months per year they are employed?

(<i>One line per employee</i>) Job Title	Gender	Hours Per Week	Months Per Year
1)			
2)			
3)			

8) Club Social Events (*e.g. pub socials, annual dinners, etc.*)

- a) Number of social events in 2007? _____
- b) Average attendance per event? _____

9) Coursing and Habitat Conservation

a) Roughly how much land is available to your club for coursing? _____ acres

b) Does your club incur any expenditure in relation to habitat development?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how much: €_____, and describe habitat: _____

10) In 2007, did your coursing club undertake in the following activities:

Management Activity

Actively patrol preserves Yes ☐ No ☐

Predator control work in preserves Yes ☐ No ☐

Walk fields before silage cutting in preserves Yes ☐ No ☐

Delayed cutting of silage in preserves Yes ☐ No ☐

Providing feed for hares in preserves Yes ☐ No ☐

11) In 2007, how did your club manage these types of habitats to improve hare populations? (Please tick the relevant boxes in the table provided)

Habitat Type	Removed	Encouraged		Left alone	Not present
		Created	Managed		
Hedgerows					
Field margins					
Field corner spinneys ⁶⁰					
Woodland					
Scrubland and coverts ⁶¹					
Water and marshland					
Reed Beds					
Copses ⁶²					
Arable and grassland					
Upland habitats					
Bogland					
Other Habitat					

Please use this space to provide any additional comments about your coursing club and habitat management: _____

Name of Coursing Club: _____

⁶⁰ A small thicket of hedge/scrub or a growth of bushes.

⁶¹ Thick underbrush or woodland affording cover for game/foxes.

⁶² A thicket of small trees or shrubs usually maintained by periodic cutting or pruning to encourage growth.

Appendix 15



Interview schedule for rural policy decision-makers

General Function

- To explore how hunting is constructed within Irish rural policy.
- 1. Within current Irish rural policy, how are hunting activities perceived?
 - Urban/rural issues?
 - Ethical Issues?
 - Land Access Issues?
 - Is hunting considered as a rural pastime?
 - Administration of hunting?
 - Public opinion?
- 2. Does your agency consider hunting activities as playing a role in terms of rural development in Ireland?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why?
- 3. Does your agency consider hunting activities as having an economic presence in rural Ireland?
 - A viable option for farm diversification?
- 4. Does your agency consider hunting activities as having an ecological presence in rural Ireland?
 - Other environmental/conservation issues?
- 5. Does your agency consider hunting activities as playing a social role in rural Ireland?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why?
- 6. Would your agency be in favour of further integrating hunting activities into Irish rural policy?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why?
- 7. What are the main factors preventing hunting activities from inclusion within current rural policy objectives?

8. How are recreation activities perceived more generally within rural development policy?
9. Other issues surrounding hunting in Ireland:

Appendix 16



Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
National University of Ireland, Galway

Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Within the farming community, how are hunting activities perceived?
 - Urban/rural issues?
 - Ethical issues?
 - Is hunting a rural pastime?
 - Public opinion?
 - Comparison with other recreation activities?
2. Do you consider hunting activities as playing a role in terms of rural development in Ireland?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why?
3. Do you consider hunting activities as having an economic presence in rural Ireland?
 - A means of stimulating the rural economy?
 - A viable option for farm diversification?
4. Do you consider hunting activities as having an ecological presence in rural Ireland?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why?
5. Do you consider hunting activities as playing a social role in rural Ireland?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why?
6. Would you be in favour of seeing hunting activities further integrated within Irish rural policy?
 - If so why?
 - If not why?
7. Do you have any issues/concerns with people hunting/shooting on your land?
8. What are the main factors preventing you from allowing people from hunting on your land?

Appendix 17

Hunting Expenditure Estimates

This appendix outlines the participation levels and the mean individual expenditure estimates associated with each hunting activity considered in this study.

Game Shooting

Estimating the number of people involved in game shooting in Ireland is a difficult task. Official firearms ownership statistics from An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) reveal that there were 86,000 people with a game hunting licence in 2007 (Garda Síochána, 2008). However, only 35,800 of these were registered with game shooting organisations in the Republic of Ireland (i.e. the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC), Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) and Irish Farmer's Association Countryside (IFA Countryside)). Therefore, it is unknown whether the remaining 50,200 (86,000-35,800) individuals were actively involved in game shooting during 2007. It is possible that a large number of these individuals may be farmers who keep a firearm and may not be actively involved in game shooting.

In any case, membership data from hunting organisations and from An Garda Síochána indicates that participation in game shooting appears to be increasing over the last two decades. Figure 17.1 and Figure 17.2 illustrate the increase in membership of the NARGC and the increase in the number of game hunting licences in the Republic of Ireland.

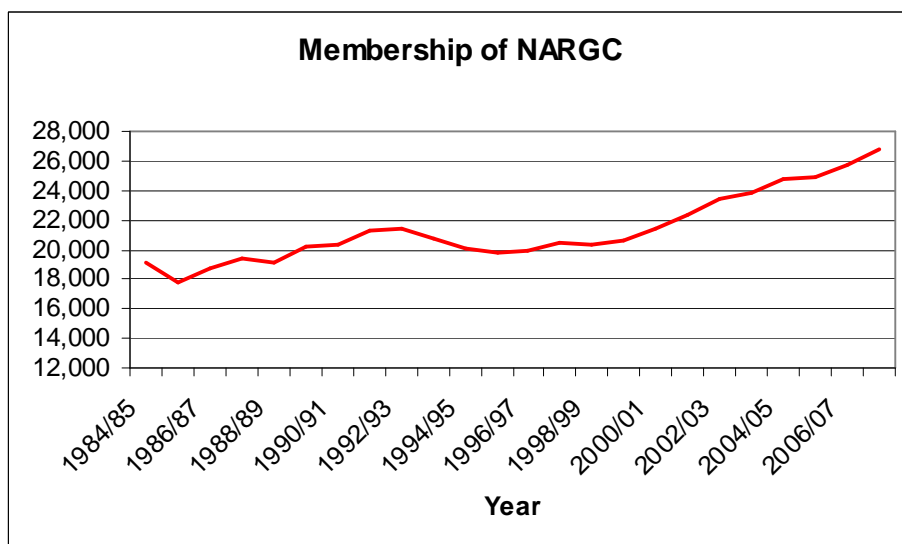


Figure 17.1 Membership data from the NARGC (NARGC, 2008)

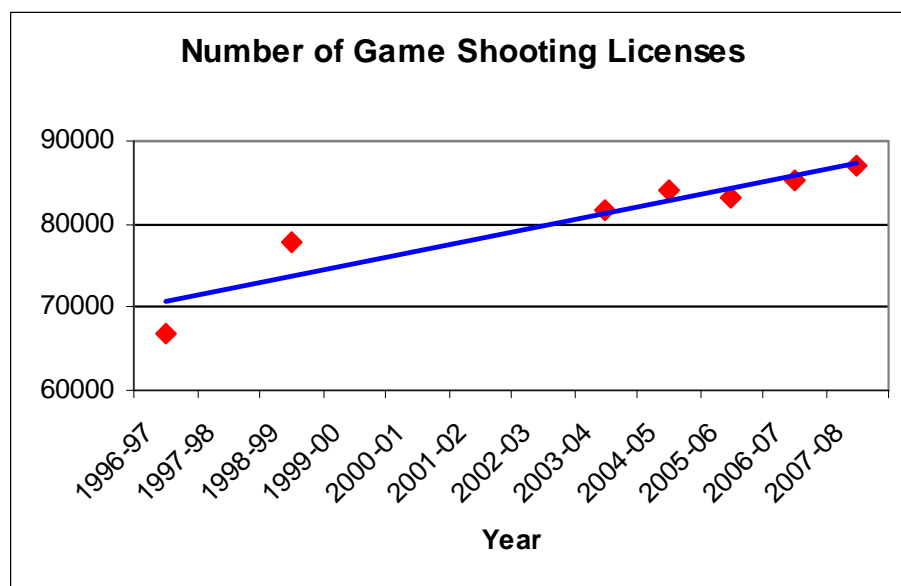
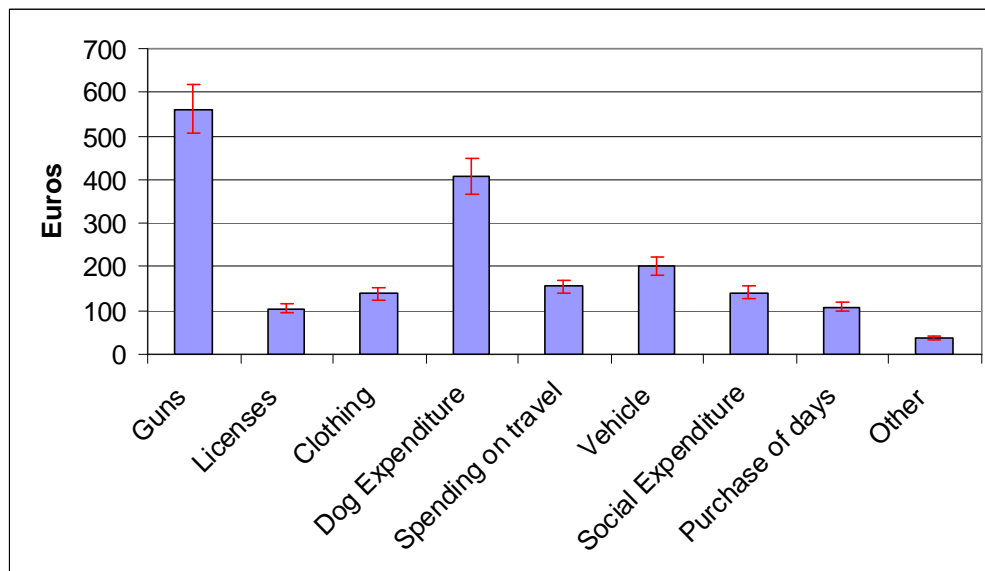


Figure 17.2 Numbers of game shooting licences in the Republic of Ireland (Garda Síochána, 2008)

The mean participant expenditure for the 362 game shooting participants that returned questionnaires is outlined in Table 17.1 and Figure 17.3.

Table 17.1 Mean expenditure of participants involved in game shooting

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean	Standard Error \pm
Purchase of cartridges, ammunition, shotguns, sporting rifles and gun repairs	€561	€56.0
Firearms certificates, insurance and gun clubs fees	€105	€21.0
Purchase of special clothing	€139	€8.8
Expenditure related to gun dogs	€407	€28.7
Accommodation, food and drink (on shooting trips)	€155	€19.8
Vehicle expenditure attributed to shooting	€202	€15.8
Spending on shooting related social activities	€142	€12.8
Purchase of shooting	€108	€23.1
Other expenditure	€37	€6.4
Total	€1,856	€108.8

**Figure 17.3 Mean expenditure of participants involved in game shooting**

According to Table 17.1, the mean individual expenditure on game shooting was estimated to be €1,856 (SE: €109) in 2007. The highest expenditure category was the purchase of cartridges, ammunition, shotguns, sporting rifles and gun repairs at €561 (SE: €56). The second highest expenditure category related to expenditure on gun dogs. The data also suggests that the average individual kept 2.1 dogs (SE: 0.08) specifically for game shooting. Other significant categories were vehicle expenditure attributed to game shooting and expenditure on shooting-related social activities.

Deer Stalking

In recent decades, there has been a considerable increase in participation in deer stalking in the Republic of Ireland. For example, in 1992 there were 687 deer shooting licences issued; in 1997 there were 1,352 and in 2007 there were 3,200 deer shooting licences issued (NPWS, 2008). The mean expenditure for the 138 deer stalkers that returned questionnaires is presented in Table 17.2 and Figure 17.4.

Table 17.2 Mean expenditure of participants involved in deer stalking

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean in euros	Standard Error \pm
Purchase of ammunition, sporting rifles and gun repairs	€1,040	€144.4
Firearms certificates	€86	€9.5
Insurance and club fees	€66	€3.7
Travel and expenditure (on regular deer stalking trips)	€554	€67.9
Travel and expenditure (on special stalking trips)	€376	€68.4
Carcass fees	€39	€16.4
Trophy mounting	€132	€61.5
Purchase of special clothing and equipment	€260	€17.7
Spending on deer shooting related social activities	€119	€14.2
Expenditure relating to dogs for deer stalking	€283	€28.6
Vehicle expenditure attributed to deer stalking	€459	€80.8
Purchase or lease of deer stalking	€107	€34.9
Other expenditure	€188	€64.4
Total	€3,709	€328.1

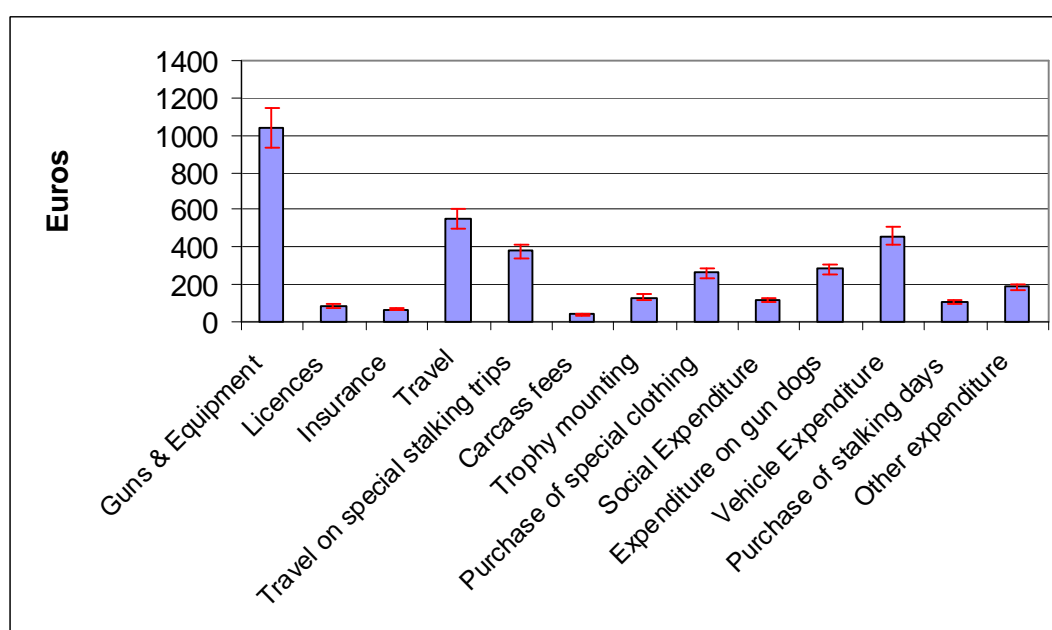


Figure 17.4 Mean expenditure of participants involved in deer stalking

The mean expenditure by the participants involved in deer stalking was €3,709 (SE: €328). This figure is considerably higher than the mean expenditure for the participants involved in game shooting (€1,856 SE: €109). In addition, the standard errors are higher for deer stalkers mainly because there was more variation in the expenditure data and there was a smaller sample size.

Similar to the participants involved in game shooting, the expenditure on equipment for deer stalkers (i.e. the purchase of cartridges, ammunition, sporting rifles and gun repairs) represented the highest expenditure category with an average of €1,040 (SE: €144) spent per person in 2007. Expenditures relating to travel on deer stalking trips and travel on special deer stalking trips were also substantial expenditure categories. Other significant expenditure categories included vehicle expenditure (€459 SE: €81), dog expenditure (€283 SE: €27) and expenditure on special clothing (€260 SE: €18).

Hunting with Hounds

Table 17.3 outlines the membership details of the various hunts in the Republic of Ireland. The total membership is grossed-up taking into account non-response rates. It should be emphasised that it was assumed that the hunts which did not respond were similar in their membership structure to the hunts that did respond.

Table 17.3 Mean hunt membership and grossed-up total hunt membership

	Male	Female	Mean (per hunt)	Total (grossed-up)
Fox hunts	62	40	102	3,672
Mounted harrier hunts	32	17	49	2,156
Ward Union hunt	181	65	246	246
Foot (inc. mink) hunts	20	6	26	1,924
Beagle hunts	18	8	26	390
Total	-	-	-	8,388

In 2007, there were approximately 300 hunts in the Republic of Ireland (Hunting Association of Ireland *Pers. Comm.*). However, only 169 (or 56 percent) of these were registered with Ireland's respective hunting organisations. From this perspective, it is likely that there are in excess of 8,338 people involved in hunting with hounds in Ireland. In addition, some individuals involved in hunting

with hounds might subscribe to more than one hunt, so there remains a risk of overstating its extent. There is also the opposite problem; individuals can participate in hunting with hounds without being members of hunts.

However, it is probable that some hunt members were not actively hunting during 2007. In order to estimate the number of active hunting participants, hunt secretaries were requested to estimate the number of members that were active (hunting) and dormant (non-hunting) in 2007. Table 17.4 indicates that the mounted hunts had a substantially larger membership structure than the foot hunts.

Table 17.4 Estimated number of active hunting with hounds participants in 2007

	Mean num. of active members	Grossed-up active hunt members
Fox hunts	78	2,808
Mounted harrier hunts	39	1,716
Ward Union hunt	197	197
Foot (inc. mink) hunts	19	1,387
Beagle hunts	19	285
Total	-	6,393

Table 17.5 shows the average number of meets per week (during the hunting season), the average number of meets per year, the total number of meets per year and the average attendance per meet. It also shows the total number of caps⁶³ paid or the total number of times people followed the course of hunts during 2007. Cap fees ranged from €20 to €40 for hunt members and €60 to €150 for non-hunt members.

⁶³ Cap fees are paid by each hunt member before a day's hunting as a financial contribution to the hunt.

Table 17.5 Hunt meeting frequency and attendance

Activity	Av. num. of meets per week	Av. num. of meets per year	Total num. of meets	Av. num. present per meet	Total num. of caps paid
Fox hunts	2	38	1,368	63	86,184
Mounted harrier hunts	1.2	27	1,188	59	70,029
Ward Union hunt	2	36	36	152	5,472
Foot hunts	1.5	37	2,738	15	41,070
Beagle hunts	1	28	420	17	7,140
Total	-	-	5,750	-	209,895

As Table 17.5 indicates, all hunts met at least once per week during the hunting season. The fox hunts and the Ward Union hunt met on average twice per week. The mounted hunts (i.e. the fox hunts, mounted harrier hunts and the Ward Union hunt) had a larger following than the foot hunts.

When examining hunting with hounds participant expenditure, the mounted followers were surveyed separately to the foot followers. Consequently, the questionnaires differed in relation to the various expenditure categories. The breakdown of expenditure by the participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds can be seen in Table 17.6 and Figure 17.5.

Table 17.6 Mean expenditure of participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean in euros	Standard Error
Payments to hunts	€1,054	€87.7
Hunt-related social activities	€1,008	€103.6
Travel (on hunting trips)	€560	€79.5
Stabling/livery fees	€1,930	€158.9
Veterinary costs	€568	€62.7
Tack and riding equipment	€509	€45.2
Horse transport	€584	€96.6
Farriers	€595	€59.5
Other	€124	€32.3
Total	€6,931	€410.3

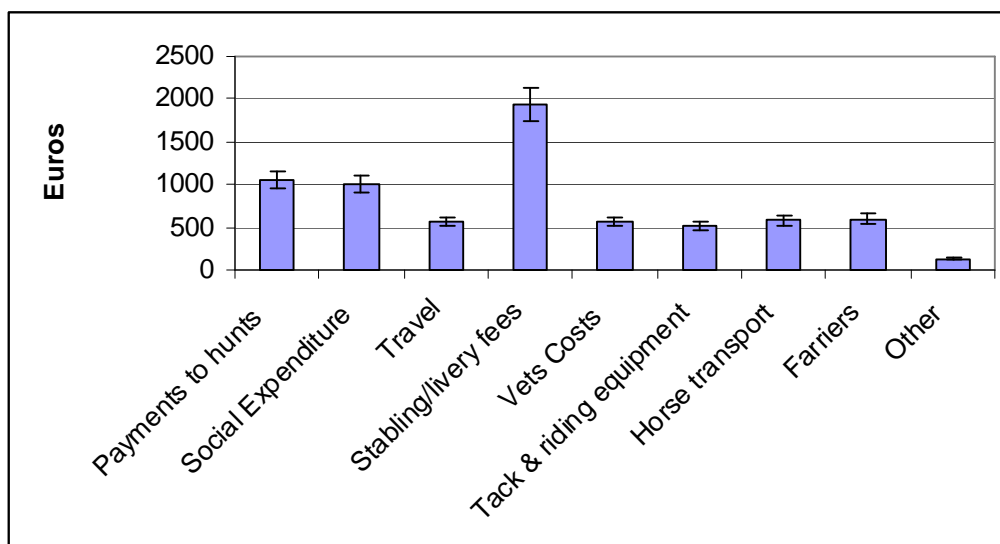


Figure 17.5 Mean expenditure of participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds

The expenditure relating to stabling and livery fees for maintaining horses for hunting was the largest expenditure category at €1,930 (SE: €159) by the participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds. This expenditure would include costs relating to horse feed, stabling fees as well as grooming fees. Information about hunting horse ownership was also gathered on a per-hunter basis. The results indicate that the average mounted hunting with hounds participant kept 2.6 (SE: 0.1) horses specifically for hunting at an average cost of €4,125 (SE: €216) per horse. Other significant horse-related expenditures included veterinary costs (€568 SE: €63), farrier costs (€595 SE: €60), horse transport (€584 SE: €97) as well as tack and riding equipment (€509 SE: €45).

Aside from horse-related expenditure, payments to hunts in the form of cap fees and subscriptions were a significant expenditure category at €1,054 (SE: €88) by the participants involved in mounted hunting with hounds. Hunt-related social and recreational expenditure also proved to be substantial at €1,008 (SE: €104) per participant. This expenditure would include attending and participating in functions such as equestrian events and hunt balls.

Table 17.7 and Figure 17.6 describe the mean expenditure breakdown by the foot hunting followers in Ireland. The survey in this regard incorporated members of the foot harrier hunts, the beagle hunts and the mink hunts.

Table 17.7 Mean expenditure of participants involved in foot hunting with hounds

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean	Standard Error
Payments to hunts	€176	€41.9
Hunt-related social activities	€356	€111.0
Travel (on hunting trips)	€233	€44.5
Clothing	€83	€15.1
Other	€45	€12.9
Total	€891	€157.4

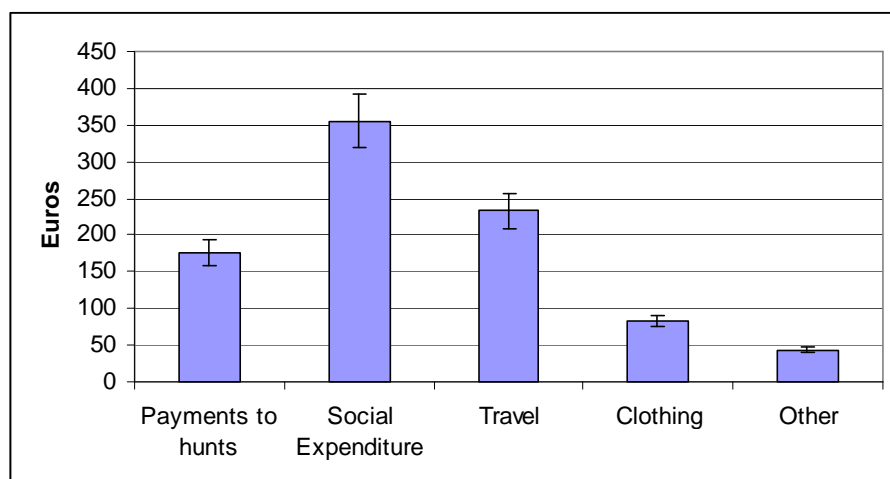


Figure 17.6 Mean expenditure of participants involved in foot hunting with hounds

The mean expenditure by the participants involved in foot hunting with hounds during 2007 was €891 (SE: €157). This figure was significantly less than the mean expenditure by the individuals involved in mounted hunting with hounds (€6,931 SE: €410). The largest expenditure category by the participants involved in foot hunting with hounds related to social activities at €356 (SE: €111). This was followed by expenditure relating to travel (€223 SE: €45) and payments to hunts in the form of subscriptions and caps fees (€176 SE: €42).

Coursing

In order to estimate the participation levels in coursing, all coursing club secretaries were asked to specify the number of active (coursing) and dormant (non-coursing) members within each coursing club (see Table 17.8). In total, secretaries from 46 out of the 90 coursing clubs returned the questionnaire.

Table 17.8 Mean number of people registered with coursing clubs

	Male	Female	Total
Mean membership per club	59	11	70
Grossed-up membership	5,310	990	6,300

The total membership was grossed-up taking into account non-response rates. It should be emphasised that it was assumed that the coursing clubs which did not respond were similar in their membership structure to the coursing clubs that did respond. For illustrative purposes, the coursing participant expenditure results are divided into two main parts. The first part describes the general expenditure on coursing while the second part focuses on greyhound expenditure. The mean expenditure for the 183 participants that returned questionnaires is presented in Table 17.9, Table 17.10, Figure 17.7 and Figure 17.8.

Table 17.9 Mean expenditure of participants involved in coursing

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean	Standard Error
Subscriptions to clubs and ICC	€346	€38.2
Spending on betting at coursing events	€438	€56.6
Social expenditure related to coursing	€600	€80.8
Accommodation and travel expenses	€547	€58.4
Specialist magazines/newspapers	€140	€11.4
Special clothing	€120	€9.2
Other	€17	€5.5
Total	€2,208	€159.7

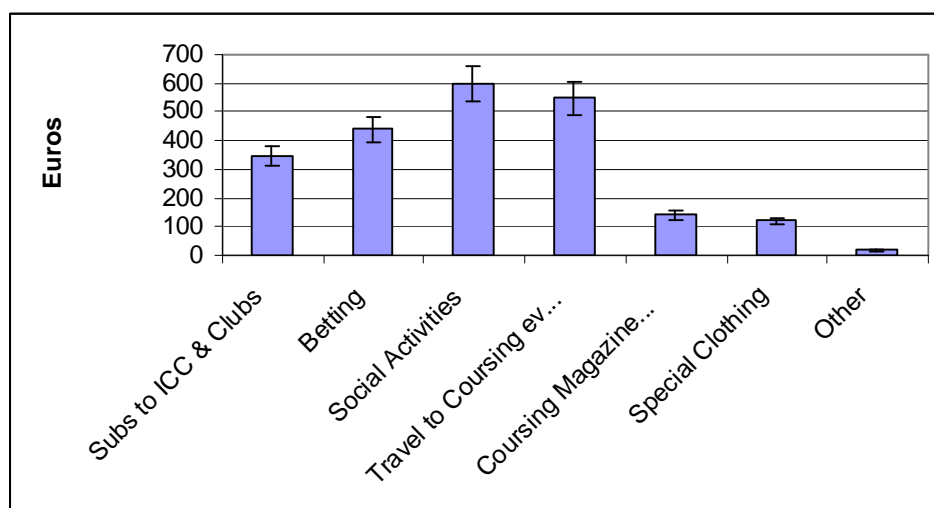


Figure 17.7 Mean expenditure of participants involved in coursing

The most significant expenditure categories by the individuals involved in coursing were social expenditure (€600 SE: €81), accommodation and travel expenses (€547 SE: €58) and betting at coursing events (€438 SE: €57). Other significant expenditure categories were subscriptions to the ICC and membership fees for coursing clubs at €346 (SE: €38). Table 17.10 and Figure 17.8 present the expenditure by the participants involved in coursing on keeping greyhounds.

Table 17.10 Mean greyhound expenditure of participants involved in coursing

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean	Standard Error
Dog equipment	€267	€32.4
Dog food	€1,184	€117.7
Kennel fees	€500	€96.6
Dog licences	€83	€14.4
Care equipment	€316	€43.5
Training aids	€348	€75.1
Coursing entry fees	€408	€39.7
Veterinary charges	€299	€26.3
Additional labour	€189	€39.8
ICC registration fees	€126	€18.1
Vehicle costs	€641	€88.0
Other	€64	€19.7
Total	€4,425	€328.1

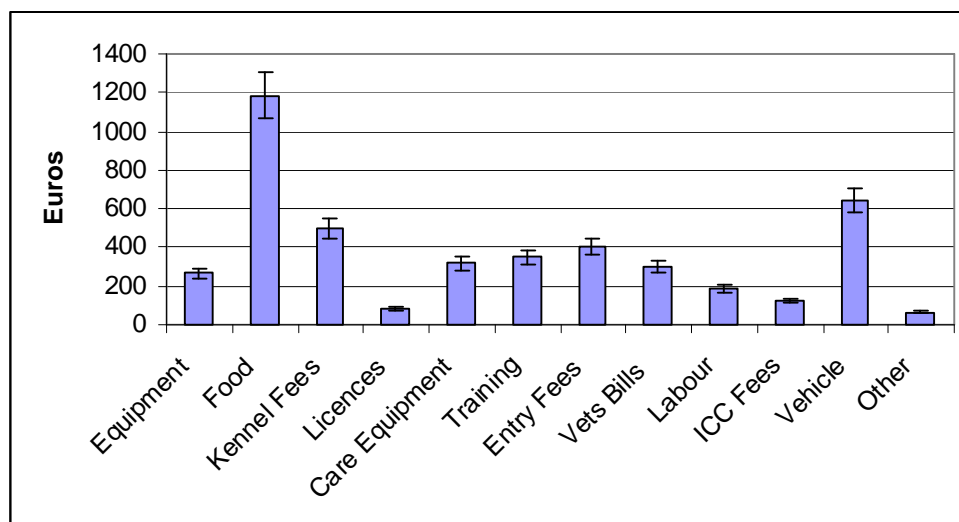


Figure 17.8 Mean greyhound expenditure of participants involved in coursing

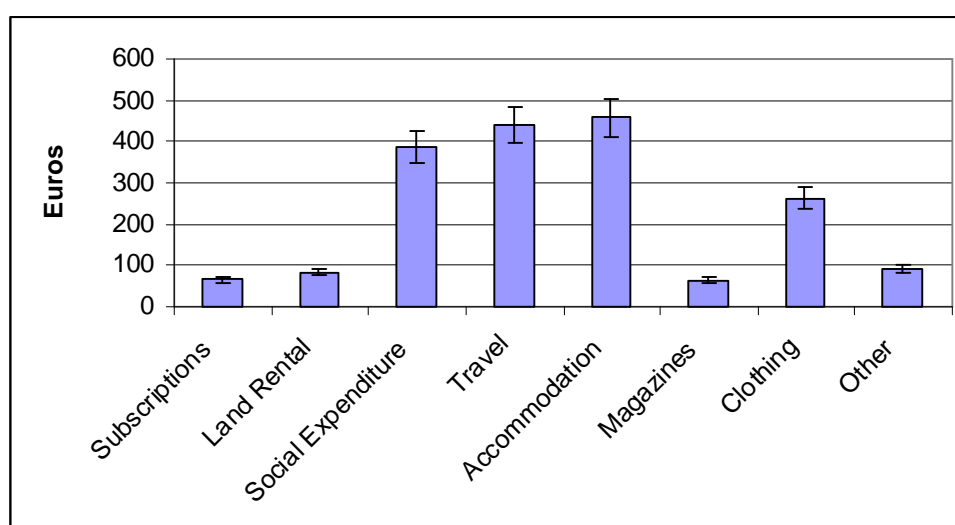
The overall mean participant expenditure on maintaining greyhounds for coursing was €4,425 (SE: €328) during 2007. Of this figure, the largest expenditure item was dog food at €1,184 (SE: €118) which was followed by greyhound related vehicle costs at €641 (SE: €88) and coursing entry fees at €408 (SE: €40). Other significant expenditure costs included training aids, care equipment and veterinary charges. The survey also attempted to estimate the mean number of greyhounds kept by coursing participants in Ireland during 2007. The results indicate that each participant kept a mean of 3.8 (SE: 0.3) greyhounds for coursing.

Falconry

In 2007, there were 100 individuals with a licence to keep birds of prey for falconry (NPWS, 2008). During the same year, there were 100 members registered with the Irish Hawking Club (IHC). Similar to the coursing survey, it was decided to divide the falconry expenditure estimates into two sections. The first part presents the general expenditure on falconry and the second part focuses on the bird of prey expenditure. The mean expenditure estimates for the 34 participants are presented in Table 17.11, Figure 17.9, Table 17.12 and Figure 17.10.

Table 17.11 Mean expenditure of participants involved in falconry

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean in euros	Standard error
Subscriptions to IHC	€67	€10.9
Purchase of hunting (including land rental costs)	€83	€39.7
Social expenditure	€386	€133.9
Travel expenses (on regular sporting trips)	€440	€96.8
Accommodation and travel (on special sporting trips)	€458	€134.0
Subscriptions to specialist magazines	€65	€15.5
Special clothing	€263	€66.9
Other	€90	€65.6
Total	€1,852	€390.0

**Figure 17.9 Mean expenditure of participants involved in falconry**

The largest expenditure categories by the participants involved in falconry were accommodation and travel on special sporting trips (€458 SE: €143), regular travel (€440 SE: €97) and social expenditure (€386 SE: €143). It should be noted that the standard errors are very high. This is mainly because of the small sample size and the degree of variation in the expenditure data. Table 17.12 and Figure 17.10 present the mean bird of prey expenditures by the participants involved in falconry.

Table 17.12 Mean bird expenditure of participants involved in falconry

Expenditure Breakdown	Mean in euros	Standard Error
Food	€278	€66.7
Housing (aviaries)	€510	€161.4
Tools	€61	€19.6
Falconer's equipment	€213	€56.0
Telemetry (radio tracking)	€463	€130.5
Hawking dogs	€291	€69.8
Veterinary charges	€177	€70.4
Insurance	€29	€10.5
Other	€287	€199.8
Total	€2,309	€488.5

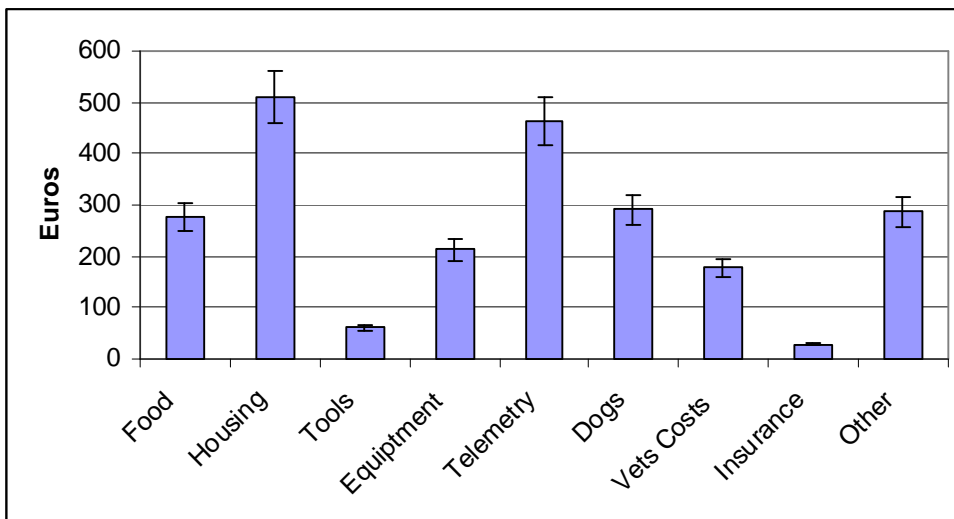


Figure 17.10 Mean bird expenditure of participants involved in falconry

Table 17.12 indicates that the mean bird of prey expenditure by the participants involved in falconry was €2,309 (SE: €488). Of this figure, the costs involved in bird housing (€510 SE: €161) and telemetry equipment (€463 SE: €131) were the highest expenditure categories. Other significant expenditure costs included expenditure relating to hawking dogs (€291 SE: €70) and bird food (€278 SE: €67) which was followed to a lesser extent by equipment and veterinary costs.