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Coralie Mounet

EDITOR'S NOTE

Translation: Brian Keogh

- 1 While everyone seems to agree on the need to preserve or manage the environment in a sustainable way (Lascoumes, 1994), there is no such consensus over the methods to be used to achieve this. The difficulties relate, in particular, to dealing with a category of wild fauna whose role has been the subject of re-examination, that of “problem” animals (Micoud and Bobbé, 2006). This new category corresponds to animals that are potentially harmful to certain human activities but enjoy an environmental, social and legal context that is favourable to their preservation. It mainly concerns large wild fauna (Mauz, 2006) that, thanks to the affects of an environmental protection policy, are spreading and colonising new territories. Those territories that have recently been occupied are thus the theatre of confrontation between men and animals not used to living together under modern conditions, but also of confrontation between actors with differing interests. Apart from causing damage to property, which needs to be managed, the animals also generate social conflicts. The management of “problem” animals must address questions of how to deal with both the animals and the conflict between human groups. This is particularly the case of the wolf and the boar in rural areas of the French Alps (cf. inset). These animals call into question the way in which wild fauna are currently managed and constitute, in our opinion, a motor for management change (Mounet, 2007). They belong to a category of “problem” animals for two reasons: on the one hand, they cause damage to agricultural domestic property and, on the other, they generate conflicts, creating two opposing camps of critics and supporters. Rural and mountain areas are particularly concerned by such problems in that they represent both potential zones of friction between cultivated and wild spaces, and thus between men and animals, and are also areas that are receiving increasing numbers of actors from diverse origins, with different and sometimes conflicting

interests. For this reason, it seems clear that these areas constitute the current stage for experimenting with management measures for “problem” animals.

Context: the wolf and the boar in France

Since its return in 1992, following its eradication from France at the end of the 1930s, the wolf has been re-colonising the French Alps, benefiting from efforts in recent decades to protect the environment as well as from a strict legal protection for the animal. As for the boar, its population has considerably increased over the past twenty years thanks to the conservation efforts of hunters, so much so that it has spread to new territory, including mountain areas (Baubet, 1998). But the spatial and numerical expansion of these two animals has not occurred without damage to agricultural property. Wolves attack domestic herds to obtain a certain part of their food and boars dig up fields and meadows in search of cereals and earthworms. The management of these two animals is governed by different legal statuses: the wolf benefits from the status of a strictly protected species, while the boar is classed as a huntable, potentially harmful species of game. Decisions concerning the management of wolves are made at the national level while those concerning boar are taken at the departmental level. While the status of the wolf considerable curtails room for manoeuvre at the local level, the cynegetic management of the boar is relatively free in the areas studied. Despite the animals' different statuses, their management shows numerous similarities. The agricultural community receives compensation for damage and benefits from protective measures against these predators and plunderers: in the case of the wolf, the financing of costs is the responsibility of the State, while for the boar, costs are met by the departmental hunters' federation. In exceptional cases, when certain animals cause too much damage, the rules conferred by the status of these two species may be waived and provision made for removal of the offending animals.

A micro-geographic look at the organisation of the cohabitation programme

- 2 What interests us here is to understand how local areas subjected to the disruption caused by such animals manage to deal with the problem. In other words, to use the terms employed by M. Callon (1986), we examine the way that groups of men and animals live alongside each other socially and spatially, with the actors coming to a common understanding for “living together”. Whether the situations studied tend more towards conflict or cooperation, our attention is focused on the nature of the socio-spatial links between the actors and on the way in which these material or non-material links are combined together: analysis of cohabitation therefore consists of understanding “what links us together” (Micoud; Peroni, 2000) and how we are linked. Our approach is thus in some ways similar to that used by B. Latour (2006) in his theory of the network actor or to that adopted by Thévenot (2004, p. 126) who considers that sociology, “the science of life together in the world”, consists in studying “devices shaped by human beings to equip their life together” in order to stabilise, in a more or less precarious manner, the “life together” they are building.
- 3 When looking at the question of “problem” animals, the analytical perspective used until now has been at the macro level and has identified certain regularities in the construction of cohabitation projects. Thus, whether in areas of conflict or more peaceful situations, local actors confronted with problems arising from wolves or boars tend to divide into two distinct groups: those for and those against the animal (supporters and critics). With regard to the wolf, the lycophiles, comprising people essentially from the world of nature protection, are opposed to the lycophobes,

represented by actors from the farming community and hunters (Mauz, 2005). Similarly, the conflict surrounding the boar plays off the *suscrophiles*¹, comprising mainly boar hunters, against the *suscrophobes*, represented by farmers and hunters of game other than boars (Mounet, 2007). In both cases, each camp develops arguments aimed at denouncing the practices of the opposing players. Such a situation in the organisation of cohabitation projects clearly shows that the impact of the local area seems to have no influence on these so-called macrosocial positions. Macrosocial processes correspond in fact to an affirmation by the actors of their belonging to a group. However, even if identification of such macrosocial regularities is necessary to understand the organisation of cohabitation programmes, it is not sufficient. The originality of our position is to provide a necessary complement with a detailed analysis of relations between the human actors and the animals. Conducting a microgeographic² examination of local situations³ provides us with valuable insights into the “variety in the types of commitment” of the different actors (Thévenot, 2004). Changing the focal distance of our analytical camera gives us access to actors’ positions that were invisible when the focus was limited to isolating social regularities.

- 4 Parallel to their macrosocial positions, actors also exhibit microsocial reasoning or logic specific to their area: this is the result of individual interactions and belongs to the domain of close proximity relations. In other words, the microsocial scale is that of the individualisation of individuals present within the same area and may result in different courses of action: other motives for action may thus take over from stereotyped macrosocial positions.
- 5 The microsocial positions are in part determined by specific territorial operators (Lussault, 2007), whether human or non-human. Territorial or spatial operators are entities that possess “a capacity to act effectively in the geographic space of the societies concerned (translation)” (Lussault, *ibid.*, p. 19) and are thus instrumental in bringing about changes at the local level. In our opinion, it is the presence and activation of certain operators that confers on a particular area its specificity and likely character. Thus, although the wolf and the boar are the main operators at the local level, given that they are the root cause for the reorganisation of the cohabitation programme and the reconstitution of areas around their management, other spatial operators are also at work and may be identified. These operators influence the positions of actors and contribute to variability in the local organisation of cohabitation programmes.
- 6 Beyond the macrosocial aspects, what we are therefore concerned with is examining the specific character of the operators in action in each of the local areas and identifying both the role of the unpredictable and that of local innovation in the organisation of cohabitation programmes. In addition, the choice of animals with very different legal statuses (cf. insert) enables questions to be asked concerning the impact of the organisational and legal framework on the construction of these cohabitation programmes.
- 7 To answer these questions, this article uses data from a 2005 survey of six areas⁴ in the French departments of Isère and Drôme, both selected largely because of the degree of confrontation supposedly existing there, with a view to comparing areas with different levels of conflict. More than 70 interviews were carried out among the actors concerned by management of the wolf and boar populations in these areas and chosen according to two criteria: on the one hand, their belonging to a social group concerned

by the conflict surrounding the wolf or the boar and, on the other, their individual role in the local scene under study. The body of data collected during these interviews was analysed first interview by interview, then by means of a thematic analysis.

Territorial variations

- 8 Three types of local variations may be identified. The first concerns the specific character of the territorial operators involved in the cohabitation programme, the second relates to individual variability among humans and animals, and the third to the balance in the role of actors between the mobilisation of macrosocial and microsocial positions.

Key actors or non-human agents

- 9 Firstly, the presence or absence of key individuals strongly influence the situation (peaceful or conflictual) in the cohabitation programme under consideration. Thus, the presence of an actor playing a mediating role constitutes an important element. In peaceful areas, certain actors play a central role in negotiations involved in reconstructing a cohabitation programme. These key individuals may be mediators who, during procedures to identify the specific local characteristics of the problem posed by the wolf or the boar, involve (Callon, 1986) the actors together in a working group aimed at redefining the problem in a way that is intelligible for all.
- 10 This is the case, for example, of an administrative official of the departmental hunters' federation who, in dealing with the problems raised by boars, has a certain legitimacy both with hunters and farmers. Although he belongs to the hunting world because of his function, this actor, now retired, has had numerous relations with farmers in the context of his professional activity: the experience of such collaboration in the past has built up a climate of trust which is indispensable in successful mediation. In his role as mediator, this actor reformulated the problem of the boar in such a way that it was acceptable to the majority of people. Rather than reducing the problem of damage to a question of financing, he integrated its psychological and human aspect. In particular, he attributes the origin of the conflicts to a lack of understanding between hunters and farmers⁵: among some hunters, the denial of the inconvenience suffered by farmers and the lack of recognition of the value of farm work contribute, according to him, to a rupture in dialogue.

In fact, the conflict came from perhaps a sort of contempt on the part of hunters for the work of farmers: under the pretext that they are compensated, it was reasoned that “they get enough compensation so they’ve no need to complain”. But, in fact, often people didn’t realise that, although compensation is of course important, there’s something more than that. There’s a certain shock when one morning a farmer finds his field devastated. It’s all very well, but it’s a break-in, if you like; it’s like a burglary.

- 11 The work of mediation carried out by the administrative official, formulating the need for recognition, contributed to developing good neighbourly microsocial relations. Such relations translate into systems with a mutual exchange of services, more or less formalised, allowing conflicts to be settled.

- 12 While the presence of mediators is capable of calming down the situation relating to cohabitation programmes, certain non-human agents or actors may, on the other hand, encourage conflict. Actors or institutions then take on the role of scapegoat and channel all the opposition of local actors against them. This was the case, for example, in the Valbonnais sector of the Ecrins National Park regarding the management of boar. Their presence led to the formation of a rather original association of actors: despite belonging to opposing sides, the farmers and the hunters joined together against the Park, accusing it of creating a refuge zone for boars and thereby contributing to crop damage. This coalition called into question the very objective of the National Park, that of protecting the natural environment within its borders, and lobbied for a battue within the sanctuary of the park, the aim being to drive out the boar causing the problems. The local actors thus joined forces here against the protection authorities, guardians of national values of preservation but viewed in this case as being imposed on the local social fabric. The microsocial process at work, enabling this alliance, was that of a common local identity which replaced the macrosocial division focused on the animal.
- 13 Other territorial operators, however, may also affect microsocial processes: the history of an area and particularly the memory of past relations between actors, the belonging of actors to other scenes, involving other stakes and other groups of actors, the spatial configuration resulting in varying levels of vulnerability among herds and fields to attacks from wolves or boars.

Individual characteristics sometimes meaningful among men...

- 14 Apart from the official role that actors and institutions may have, a second type of variability affects the organisation of local areas: the personality of individuals. Thus some individuals behave in a manner that is too upsetting to enable more peaceful situations to be reached. In many of the conflictual cohabitation programmes studied, actors who are not really involved in the conflicts, because they are from outside the local area or adopt a more moderate discourse, believe that the conflicts are related to people problems, that is to the incompatibility of the representatives of the lycophile and lycophobe groups or the suscrophile and suscrophobe groups. The success of cohabitation programmes depends largely on the aptitude of actors to accept compromise, and some actors, with strong personalities, seem to limit themselves to a rigid macrosocial position.
- 15 An engineer from the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (Hunting and Wildlife National Office), speaking about the problem of wolves, considers this personality factor to be largely responsible for determining whether a cohabitation programme creates a conflictual or peaceful situation.
- I think you have to go below the local level. [...] It doesn't solve anything saying this but I think you have to go to the level of the individual. There are individuals who will manage the problem with a certain amount of detachment. And then there are those individuals who will continue to make life difficult for themselves, for example shepherds and stock breeders who take all sorts of action to protect themselves to a point where their life becomes completely crazy. And it's not their fault; I mean the main factor is the wolf that's there.
- 16 This is also what identifies another actor, still in relation to the problem of wolves. According to him, those actors who persist with the conflict have found their life's

combat. The protectors of Nature see themselves as the reference for the problem and thus become Mr or Mrs Wolf. As for the stock breeders, they participate in all the demonstrations and show themselves in front of every camera. It seems that actors like this are so involved in the conflict that no solution will ever be possible.

- 17 These problems of the individual also very frequently affect the question of the boar and any chance of compromise is blocked by animosity between the representatives of the two opposing groups, the farmers and the hunters. Thus, according to this actor, behind the problems caused by the boar, the opposing groups play out other types of conflicts based on resentment between individuals.

You know, the problem of the boars is very simple. The beast itself is very simple. It's one of the easiest animals to manage. Game is the easiest to manage from a technical point of view. [...] But in the middle, there is man. And this poor boar ... if you knew what we blamed it for. From the grandfather who killed a hare in front of another hunter who was after it, the guy who screwed so-and-so's wife ... Now hang on there... It's unimaginable, unimaginable what you see. So it's more a problem of men than of boars.

- 18 Another actor demonstrates the complexity of the conflicts surrounding the boar by comparing them with the story of Manon des sources.
- 19 Finally, some of these actors seem to revel in conflict and try to reactivate it when it seems to be running out of steam. For example, this hunter explains how a farmer, by inventing problems, causes a conflict that, according to him, should never have been.

There have been things; X telephones the DDAF (Farming and Fisheries Departmental Directorate). [The technician from the DDAF] calls me to tell me we'll have to have some night-time shoots. We call a meeting. And then I realise that in fact X was talking about winter damage. I say to him 'we've already spoken about that!' and he replies 'Yes, but in any case it's going to happen'. In their head, from time to time, they have toif they spend a month or two without having anything to say, they have the impression of losing ground (laughs). It's exactly that. So, from time to time, they have to do something, even if there's nothing new (a hunter).

... And among the animals

- 20 While individuals among the human population cause problems, certain individuals among the animal population can also considerably complicate the situation. The latter can show a particular liking for causing damage. Despite all the measures put in place to protect domestic property, some animals continue to get round the protective measures and seem to persist in causing damage to a given herd or field. These individuals can be easily identified by the actors concerned. Thus a farmer complains about a boar that systematically knocks down the fences around his corn fields. But although this particular animal is well known by everyone, it doesn't seem worried, the hunters not really wanting to kill it.

There's a large male, an old loner that comes round our way. The hunters don't want to kill it because it's a good reproducer; so they keep it. It's a boar that jumps over the fences, that does everything ...so you have to keep one like that! (laughs). No, but you can see the problem. [...] They want to keep it and even if they say they missed it, in truth they don't really want to shoot it, and they won't shoot it (a farmer).

- 21 Often, the actors who suffer regular damage can therefore identify the individual animals that cause the damage. It is based on this principle that night-time local

authority shoots are organised to warn off animals. Knowing that the groups of boars causing damage are always the same, local wolf hunt rangers (*lieutenants de louveterie*) attempt to help them understand the danger of taking their food in open spaces such as fields by firing warning shots at night. But this learning process can sometimes backfire: although the boars realise the danger, they learn how to get round it and adopt a behaviour that avoids the officials but not the crop area. Thus, the groups of boars targeted at night quickly get to know the noise of the car of the official responsible for the area and flee as soon as it approaches.

And these large groups, when you have, as we say, "set them off" (meaning we have fired at them) once or twice, I say to my colleague you should change your vehicle because they recognise the noise of your motor. [...] We were [in municipality X], the lucerne had been cut so there were plenty of large open spaces. So, with a little experience, "Ah, they're up there, 200m from here, they're there!" We dimmed the headlights, put the foot down on the accelerator, and raced towards them. But before we got there they had already gone. [...]. They had heard the noise of the C15. (a lieutenant of the wolf hunt rangers)

- 22 Such variations among individual animals can also be found with wolves. The predators present in the alpine pastures of the Allevard district (Isère) are particularly unrelenting. Here, a herd is guarded day and night, using night pens as well as night time lighting since 2001, and is the best guarded in all the Belledonne massif according to the stockbreeder. But it is still the target of numerous attacks. The wolves do not adapt their behaviour for the stockbreeder and since they do not respect the implicit *contrat sauvage*⁶ (wildlife contract) (Mounet, 2007), they drag the stockbreeder and his friends into a conflictual cohabitation situation. Such "determination" by the wolves brings the Director of the DDAF to the conclusion that this herd must be situated right in the heart of the pack of wolves present on the massif. A real struggle is therefore being waged by the stockbreeder against the wolves that he knows and recognises. Thus he talks about a large white wolf that used to regularly attack his herd. It seems that in this struggle a sort of appropriation took place where the large white wolf became his enemy. The following extract of the interview with the stockbreeder is very revealing:

Yes, because they (the wolf hunt rangers) killed the large white wolf [in the trap set for this purpose]. It's a pity it's forbidden to take photos. Because, me, when they killed it, I jokingly called out "I'd like to see the body to know whether it's mine or not".

Because you manage to distinguish between the wolves?

We'd been seeing them for some 3 or 4 years. He must have received some lead shot because friends of mine had fired at him. I would have liked to know, if they did an autopsy, whether there was any buckshot.

- 23 Although some animals do not seem to respect protective measures, others clearly do. In the case of the Natural Reserve of the Hauts Plateaux du Vercors, the wolves gradually reduced their attacks as the stockbreeders began protecting their herds. Acting in this way, the wolves thus vindicated the choice of the stockbreeders. The more admissible conduct of these predators, because in some ways it's tempered, contributes to an appeasement of the problems surrounding the cohabitation programme. Then again, these "virtuous" animals are known by certain transhumant farmers and are attributed individual identities. One transhumant farmer not only knew the wolf that had been taking his sheep but seemed, in his discourse, to plead in favour of the animal.

For us, it's an old wolf up there; he's taken more than one from us. He doesn't play around. He doesn't mess up the sheep (a stockbreeder).

The role of actors: variability in commitment

- 24 Finally, a third aspect is intrinsically linked to the role of the actors. Depending on the situation, and particularly the "scenes" in which they are involved, the actors alternate between microsocial logic and macrosocial logic, that is between individual commitment and the commitment of a group to which they belong. The following naturalist clearly demonstrates the alternation between the two types of logic or reasoning that the same actor can use depending on whether he or she is involved as an individual or as a representative of a group. While in private conversation the actor in question adopts an individual position, enabling dialogue with the person he is speaking with, when he is speaking on behalf of his group or profession, he displays stereotyped positions such as the refusal of any protective measures, as was advocated at one time by the Fédération des Alpagnes de l'Isère⁷, cited by way of example in the following interview extract:

Me, I remember very well having a discussion with a guy in Lyon [a stockbreeder] in the doorway [...]. The guy had a well-thought out position ... and me too, you know. And this same guy took the floor in public later and I was sick, really sick. I couldn't believe it was the same guy I had spoken to 10 minutes before. Because, in fact, he repeated the position of the Fédération des Alpagnes. It was...staggering!

- 25 Depending on the degree of actors' recourse to macrosocial positions, the cohabitation programme can generate varying levels of conflict. When actors find themselves in more conflictual territory, they most often tend to display their macrosocial position while those participating in more harmonious cohabitation programmes tend to use the microsocial position more often. In addition, actors caught up in conflictual cohabitation situations tend to mobilise upper hierarchical levels more often. On the other hand, in more harmonious situations actors tend to settle conflicts internally and only resort very rarely to using upper hierarchical levels in an offensive strategy.

Conclusion

- 26 The diversity observed in the spatial expression of the cohabitation or "living together" programmes set up to manage the wolf and the boar clearly show that the organisational and legal framework is really no more than a basis on which the roles of the different actors are built. In a context where society is becoming individualised, the role of individual choice in effect becomes increasingly important and weakens the influence of the formal framework. In a globalising vision, the uniformity of macrosocial processes makes it possible to understand more easily the logic of actors in terms of their membership of different interest groups. On the other hand, detailed analysis of the reality of local situations provides valuable insights into the logic behind action (Amblard et al., 1996), taking into account the diversity of different contexts. The heterogeneity of local situations mainly reflects the expression of diverse microsocial processes and makes the management of problem animals considerably more complex by introducing an element of unpredictability specific to the local area. To gain a better understanding of the cohabitation programme associated with such animals, it thus appears crucial to complete the macrosocial approach that is usually

used with a microsocial approach, taking into account the diversity of the interactions between the individuals present, both human and non-human. Ignored by the "sociology of the social" (Latour, 2006), new associations, arising from the construction of systems composed of humans and non-humans, scientists and lay persons, can then be revealed.

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NOTES

1. In reference to the Latin name of the species: *Sus scrofa* sp.
2. Following the example of microhistory (Revel, 1996).
3. We have borrowed the notion of “local scene” from G. Decrop, C. Dourlens and P.-A. Vidal-Naquet (2001, p. 218) who define “local risk scenes” as “formal and informal places where social actors meet up with a view to managing risk (translation)” or as the equivalent of hybrid forums (Callon et Rip, 1991). This notion has also been applied by F. Pinton, P. Alphandéry, J.-P. Billaud, C. Deverre, A. Fortier, G. Geniaux (2006) with respect to Natura 2000: the processes of consultation surrounding the question of biodiversity generated by the choices of sites enabled the creation of “collectives”, combining “issues relating to knowledge of Nature and those relating to living together (translation)” (Pinton et al., *ibid.*, 2006, p. 96).
4. The areas surveyed on the subject of the wolf correspond to legal and administrative divisions or protection zones (protected areas) concerned by the presence of the predator: the Vercors regional natural park and natural reserve as well as the municipality of Allevard. As for the boar, the department studied, Isère, is entirely divided into a network of “management units” for the animal. The survey on the boar in these areas was therefore based on these management units that include several municipalities: the units of Trièves, Valbonnais, Matheysine and Vif-Gua.
5. With the increasing rift between hunters and farmers (Darbon, 1997), and the consequent decrease in the number of farmers practising hunting, the conflict over the boar is pitting two groups of actors against one another in a battle where opinions concerning wild fauna are becoming increasingly divergent.
6. Following the example of the “domestic contract” implicitly established between domestic animals and breeders (Larrère C and Larrère R, 1997b), a “wildlife contract” implicitly constrains the wolf and the boar to admissible behaviour and to adopting suitable spatial distributions, respecting the borders between cultivated areas and wild areas. Adopting such behaviour is encouraged by protective measures giving material form to these limits, but also by deterrents or feeding them grain to lure them away in the case of boars. When, despite all these means, some animals continue to contravene the contract, the transgressors are then killed.
7. The Fédération des Alpagnes de l’Isère is an association that brings together actors in the agricultural community, owners of alpine pastures and local and regional authorities and receives financial support from the Conseil Général de l’Isère (Departmental General Council) and the Conseil Régional Rhône-Alpes: it acts as a study unit for those groups involved in land use.

ABSTRACTS

The presence and recent spread of the wolf and the boar in the mountains of the French Alps are upsetting the organisation of territorial “vivre ensemble” (cohabitation) projects. This article examines how this new situation is being dealt with at the local level and attempts to redefine local life between men and animals. The macro-social approach often adopted in analysing

conflicts surrounding “problem” animals is considered to be insufficient and the article attempts to complement this by proposing a micro-geographical perspective that seeks to determine the logic underpinning actors’ behaviour, which until now has been inaccessible. It thus focuses on the role of variability in local situations.

La présence ou le développement récent du loup et du sanglier dans les montagnes des Alpes françaises viennent bouleverser l’organisation des « vivre ensemble » territoriaux. Cet article s’intéresse à l’intégration de cette nouvelle donne dans les territoires et à la redéfinition de la vie locale, entre hommes et animaux. L’approche macrosociale qui a souvent été retenue dans l’analyse des conflits autour des animaux « à problème » est considérée comme insuffisante et l’article tente de la compléter par un regard microgéographique, mettant en lumière des logiques d’acteurs inaccessibles jusqu’à présent. Il porte ainsi son attention sur la part de variabilité des situations locales.

INDEX

Keywords: boar, cohabitation, conflicts, wild fauna, wolf

Geographical index: France, Isère, Vercors

Mots-clés: conflits, faune sauvage, loup, sanglier, vivre ensemble

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