

A wolf at the border

Media frames for the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands



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Master Thesis Forest and Nature Conservation

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Master Thesis Report

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I. SUMMARY

In recent years the wolf (*Canis lupus*) has appeared regularly in the Dutch news media. The story of “the Little Red Riding Hood syndrome” (“Roodkapjesyndroom” in Dutch), the potential impact of the wolf on the Dutch ecosystem and even its comeback have been broadly discussed. “*The wolf is coming to the Netherlands*” headed the Spits, a Dutch newspaper (“De wolf komt naar Nederland”, 2009). “*German wolves are sniffing on our border*” mentioned the Dagblad van het Noorden (“Duitse wolf snuffelt aan onze grens”, 2011). Publications on the topic of the wolf peaked over the last years and a real internet hype on the wolf was also reported by different media. But is the wolf in fact heading towards our border? Do we know for sure which impact the wolf will have on our ecosystem? Or are these just constructed interpretations shaped in our social environment?

Given the attention paid to and the popularity of the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands, it can be seen as a good moment to broaden and strengthen the scientific basis on which policy makers and conservationists base their plans and strategies. Conceptualisations in the news media can, according to Dewulf *et al.*, (2009) be seen as “*perspective-based co-constructions of the meaning of the social world which can be helpful for the receiver to structure and define reality*”. Conceptualisations of the wolf in the mass media may affect public interpretation, the perception of the issue or even potential action (Jacobson *et al.*, 2012). Although news stories in the media can influence people’s perception of human wildlife interactions, few studies however have attempted to understand and describe news coverage of wildlife related issues and their influence on public opinion (Sakurai, Jacobson & Carlton, 2013). In the ecological field many scientific articles on topic of the wolf have been published, but only knowledge about wolf ecology is certainly not sufficient. When the wolf will make its comeback in one of the most densely populated European countries, the social aspect cannot be ignored and deserves some serious attention. Scientific studies in the social field can potentially increase the understanding of public perceptions of risk, policy preferences, tolerance of management interventions, as well as providing guidance in responding and contributing effectively to the news media coverage on the topic of the wolf (Jacobson *et al.*, 2012). The main research aim of this master thesis is therefore to investigate stories on the wolf and its possible comeback in the Dutch news media, by describing and understanding the conceptualisation of the wolf.

Wolves can be described as charismatic but at the same time also as controversial animals. For some people they are the symbol of the wild and untamed nature, mysterious and impressive, while to others they are vicious killers of livestock and a threat for human safety. Conceptualisations of the wolf and its role in the landscape vary across space and time. The existence of different social groups and stakeholders, all often with divergent interests, contributes to the complexity of the issue (Bisi *et al.*, 2010). According to Nie (2001) the debate likely also illustrates how different understandings of ‘landscape’ and ‘nature’ compete. What type of nature is being talked about? Is that nature in harmony with the wolf and its perceived status? Whose territory is dealt with? These different understandings also came forward during focus group sessions in a study of Figari and Skogen (2011). Results showed that different focus groups had diametrically opposed representations of the same natural environment along with different views as to whether wolves belonged to it or not.

For this master thesis an interactional approach to framing has been applied. Frames according to this approach are built up piece by piece and constitute of a number of elements, merged in the ongoing process of interaction between different parties or groups (DeWulf *et al.*, 2009). According to Buijs, Mattijssen & Kamphorst (2013) can each frame be seen as a different story which tells the reader what is at stake, which facts should be taken into account and which arguments, events or experiences are of interest for understanding the issue. The focus of this thesis was however not placed on the construction side of frames but on the existing and established frames for wolves in the Dutch news media. For this master thesis frames have been appointed and identified and the content of these frames has been constructed and described with the use of framing and reasoning devices.

An inductive research strategy has been applied for this master thesis. Literature, theories and predefined frames do not guide and direct a study with an inductive approach, but become an aid once categories or patterns have been defined from the collect data (Creswell, 2003). An inductive research follows a systematic and stepwise analysis of which the basis can be found in the principle of constant comparison method developed by Glaser & Strauss (2009). The simultaneously ongoing process of comparing, analysing and coding provides a counterbalance for the inevitable involvement and subjectivity of the researcher with the data. An overview of this data analysis process is shown in Figure



3. Dutch news media articles concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands have been traced by making use of LexisNexis[®]. The manner of collection of units of analysis for this thesis has been a deliberate choice, this taking into account the main research aim of this thesis. In order to get a good impression of the broader field of discussion, next to Dutch newspaper articles also news coverage of a number of specific groups or parties have been taken into account. This since it could be expected that specific groups or parties apply a specific frame (or frames) for certain persuasive reasons. An overview of the selected news sources can be found in Appendices A.

Through the conduction of this research some interesting themes and frames have come forward. Examples of broadly discussed themes in Dutch newspaper articles were '*Place for wolves in the Netherlands*', '*Comeback to the Netherlands*', '*Risks and uncertainties*' and '*How to act*'. Six different frames came forward of which the most important frames were '*Wolf as a missing link*', '*Suffering from a negative image*' and '*Focus on uncertainties*'. Each of the six frames providing a different perspective on the wolf and its possible return to the Netherlands. Frames with a positive as well as with a negative view were found. A striking result was that there was clearly a greater variety of frames with a negative than with a positive view. The question was therefore also raised whether the negative aspects concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands do indeed dominate the debate or that these stories may have found a broader support within society and were therefore mentioned more often. Another remarkable result that emerged was that in a number of articles it seemed that it was not just about the wolf itself, but that the article referred to a much wider context. The wolf seemed to be considered in these articles as a sort of symbol for something else happening or about to happen. In some articles the wolf for example appeared to be the symbol for the good state in which Dutch nature is thriving, while in other articles the wolf seemed to symbolize possible upcoming changes in the livestock sector. It is important to note that a possible wolf on its return can therefore be much more than just an animal that is approaching our borders.

Practically, the gained insights could be used to obtain a better insight and understanding of the possible reactions which can be expected when there is spoken about the wolf and its possible comeback. These obtained insights could for example be used to respond to or anticipate on expressed concerns or uncertainties and in this way possibly preparing society even better on a possible comeback of this animal species. Diversity in communication is hereby seen as an important focal. In addition the obtained insights could also be an important source of information for the possible return of other wildlife species on Dutch grounds, for example the wild cat (*Felis silvestris*). An animal of which recently it is claimed to have reproduced a first litter on Dutch grounds (December 2014). If we look at the usability of the obtained results, for example governments, stakeholders and other relevant organizations, lessons can already be considered by considering how they should and will respond to this already now or in the future. Adopting a pro-active attitude is considered to be important here. The results of this study should make everyone aware of what is happening around this topic and therefore this study should definitively be considered as a starting point for further in-depth research.



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1. INTRODUCTION

To some people they are the symbol of the wild and untamed nature, mysterious and impressive, while to others they are vicious killers of livestock and a threat for human safety. In recent years the wolf (*Canis lupus*) has appeared regularly in the Dutch news media. The story of 'the Little Red Riding Hood syndrome' ("Roodkapjesyndroom" in Dutch), the potential impact of the wolf on the Dutch ecosystem and even its comeback have been broadly discussed. "*The wolf is coming to the Netherlands*" headed the Spits, a Dutch newspaper ("De wolf komt naar Nederland", 2009). "*German wolves are sniffing on our border*" mentioned the Dagblad van het Noorden ("Duitse wolf snuffelt aan onze grens", 2011). "*Hikers have now spotted the wolf on the Veluwe*" the Trouw headed a few months later ("Wandelaars hebben de wolf gespot op de Veluwe", 2011). According to the mentioned newspapers there is no doubt, the wolf is coming back to the Netherlands since it was last spotted in 1897. Questions were even raised in the governmental Chamber of representatives. Representatives were wondering what course of action the Dutch government would take, if wolves would re-enter the Netherlands. The platform '*Wolves in the Netherlands*' was established, an informative website where the Dutch population can find all the latest news and facts concerning the arrival of the wolves ("Wolven in Nederland": www.wolveninnederland.nl). Shortly after the establishment of the platform the Alterra Research Institute published a wolf protection plan in which responsibilities, risks and communication concerning the possible comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands was addressed. Publications on the topic of the wolf peaked over the last years and a real internet hype on the wolf was also reported by different media. But is the wolf in fact heading towards our border? Do we know for sure which impact the wolf will have on our ecosystem? Or are these just constructed interpretations shaped in our social environment?

Recently an international team of biologists concluded that large European predators like the lynx (*Lynx lynx*), the bear (*Ursus arctos arctos*), large mustelids (*Mustelidae*) and the wolf are thriving well (NRC Science, 2014). Their range is increasing and species are returning to areas where they once were exterminated or have disappeared. In all European countries now at least one large predator can be found, with the exception of Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. In these countries however the species can also be found near the borders. Since 1990 the wolf recolonized Poland, followed by Germany. Currently in Europe live twice as many wolves (± 12.000 wolves in 28 European countries) as in the USA, this while Europe is half the size of the USA. Where wolves in the USA often merely live in reserves, wolves and human kind will have to live side by side in Europe. Since the last wolf was shot in the Netherlands in 1857, several reports were made of sightings of a wolf on Dutch grounds (Duiven and the Veluwe). In Meppen (NL), close to the border with Germany, a wolf was captured on camera in March 2013. A fair chance exists that the wolf will show up in the Netherlands within the coming years. An event which can be, after a period of long absence, very controversial due to differences in interest, direct or indirect experiences and differences in value orientations. The wolf and its possible comeback will likely provoke a wide range of reactions within society, varying from a chance for recreation, a threat for livestock until fauna management and human safety (Groot Bruinderink *et al.*, 2012). Especially in a country as the Netherlands, densely inhabited, nature areas shared among citizens and serving multiple functions, the possible return of the wolf is not only an ecological matter but also a social one (Stikvoort, 2012).

The wolf is considered as a member of a group of undomesticated animals which can elicit extreme and often intense attitudes and emotions, positive or negative (Groot Bruinderink *et al.*, 2012). According to Kellert (1985) negative attitudes towards large predators are often associated with fears about its presumed danger to us humans, threat to human property, the association with the wild or views rooted within culture. On the other hand, also positive voices are heard, pointing at the aesthetic beauty of the animal and their ecological importance for habitat balance and stability for the natural system (Kellert, 1985). In 2011 and 2012 researchers of the Wageningen University and Bureau Intomart concluded that half of the Dutch population views the possible comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands in a positive way (Intomart GfK, 2012). At the same time however, one third of the Dutch population fears or is opposed to the possible comeback of the wolf. Wolves, according to this part of the population, can form a potential threat or nuisance for humans as well as animals. Positive, negative or ambivalent, almost every Dutch inhabitant has a different attitude, perception or value orientation towards the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. These value orientations, attitudes and perceptions are not learned reflexively and are within the Netherlands neither based on previous experiences with the wolf. They are largely determined by innate and cultural factors (Groot Bruinderink *et al.*, 2012), media however are also recognised to have the power to affect interpretation of information. According to



Bengston *et al.* (2005) the news media play an important role in both the shaping as well as the reflection of public opinion in a wide array of social issues. The way in which a certain issue is discussed by the news media, partially determines how the public will define a specific issue or event.

Within the news media, the wolf and its possible comeback have become popular items to which increasing attention is paid: “*One wolf does not make a pack*” (“Één wolf maakt nog geen roedel”, Leeuwarder Courant, 2011), “*Wolf gets the status ‘protected’*” headed the Volkskrant (“Wolf krijgt beschermde status”, 2014) and “*A walk through the forest will be exciting again*” mentioned the Gelderlander (“Een boswandeling wordt weer spannend”, 2012). Media nowadays can reach a broad audience and newspapers are no longer the primary providers of information. Media are recognised to have the power to affect interpretation of the information and can therefore be considered as powerful tools in shaping people’s attitude and beliefs (Bhatia *et al.*, 2013). According to Golding & Roper (2002) the role of media in forming public opinion about wildlife related issues has even become an important consideration for a wide array of wildlife management programmes. The way in which media present an issue, determines often how the public will define an issue and how different actors can be viewed with regard to the subject. It is therefore also possible that the way in which the Dutch news media write about the wolf has an effect on the way the Dutch inhabitants conceptualise the wolf and its possible comeback.

Given the attention paid to and the popularity of the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands, it can be seen as a good moment to broaden and strengthen the scientific basis on which policy makers and conservationists base their plans and strategies. On the ecological and biological terrain lots of articles have been published and knowledge can even be used from surrounding countries. However, when looking at the social side, the Netherlands can be considered as a unique case. As a densely populated country and with more than a century in absence of the wolf, it can be said the current generation is hardly familiar with the wolf (Stikvoort, 2012). A wolf on its return can certainly not be considered looking only at ecological or biological aspects, social aspects are important as well. We are therefore interested in the different conceptualisations of the wolf and its possible comeback within the Dutch news media, because a successful conceptualisation can function as an interpretive lens which steers the attention towards those parts of the issue which are considered to be important. Next to the different conceptualisations of the wolf, we are also interested in the different arguments used in the discussion and the coherent stories that can be distinguished. It is reasoned that the Dutch news media, by serving as a direct forum for the debate on wolves, can provide us with a good reflection of the national debate on wolves and their possible existence in the Netherlands.

1.1 PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

In the last few decades the wolf has started on a comeback throughout Europe and with that also coming closer and closer towards the Dutch border. A fair chance exists that the wolf will show up on Dutch grounds within the coming years. These developments are likely to provoke a wide range of reactions among different organisations and groups within the Dutch society. “*What to do if the wolf crosses our Dutch border?*”, “*What effects will wolves have on Dutch nature?*” and “*Is there enough space for wolves to live alongside with humans?*” were often raised questions in a research among the Dutch public for attitudes towards the possible comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands (Intomart GfK, 2012). Even in advance of its possible return to the Netherlands, the wolf has already been the starting point of a broad social and political discussion. Publications on the topic of the wolf peaked over the last years and a real internet hype on the wolf was also reported by different media. Since the wolf and its possible existence can have different consequences for a wide range of actors, the interests of each of these actors will therefore influence the type of lens by which they view the wolf and the possible existence of the animal in the Netherlands.

The news media, according to Bengston *et al.* (2005) play an important role in both the shaping as well as the reflection of public opinion in a wide array of social issues. Communication sources, such as the news media, rely on conceptualisation to organize the presentation of messages. Conceptualisations in the news media can, according to Dewulf *et al.* (2009) be seen as “*perspective-based co-constructions of the meaning of the social world which can be helpful for the receiver to structure and define reality*”. Through the process of conceptualisation a battle is waged over the meaning and interpretation of an issue. According to Buijs, Mattijsen & Kamphorst (2013) this battle is being waged in various fields of society and with the involvement of different actors. Conceptualisations in the news media can help ‘shape’ perceptions or preferences by encouraging an certain way of thought or action. In news media coverage conceptualisations of animals have for example already contributed to a shift in public attitudes towards predators (Messmer *et al.*, 1999) and positive news media coverage has also already shown to



be an important part of efforts undertaken to conserve or protect animals (Gusset *et al.*, 2008). It is therefore important to consider the Dutch news media not solely as a provider of information, but certainly also as a source through which the interpretation of information and people's perception on the topic of the wolf can be affected.

Although news stories in the media can influence people's perception of human wildlife interactions, few studies however have attempted to understand and describe news coverage of wildlife related issues and their influence on public opinion (Sakurai, Jacobson & Carlton, 2013). In the ecological field many scientific articles on topic of the wolf have been published, but only knowledge about wolf ecology is certainly not sufficient. When the wolf will make its comeback in one of the most densely populated European countries, the social aspect cannot be ignored and deserves some serious attention. According to Jacobson *et al.* (2012) scientific studies in the social field can potentially increase the understanding of public perceptions of preferences in policy, tolerance of management interventions, risk, as well as providing guidance in responding and contributing effectively to news media coverage on the topic of the wolf.



1.2 RESEARCH AIM

Within the broader discussion on the topic of the wolf, a lot of different actors are involved with each having a diverse range of visions and interests. In the public debate arguments are used from the human, animal and ecosystem point of view, this making understanding and alignment among different actors quite difficult. The wolf, above all is somehow a mythical icon, which evokes a wide range of emotions. We are therefore interested in the different conceptualizations of the wolf and its possible existence in the Netherlands, because a successful conceptualization can function as an interpretive lens which steers the attention of the reader to certain aspects of the issue at stake and which are considered to be important. The main research aim of this master thesis is to investigate stories on the wolf and its possible comeback in the Dutch news media, by describing and understanding the conceptualisation of the wolf. The role of the news media is considered as important, since it is likely that the way in which the wolf and its possible comeback are conceptualised in the news media, will partially determine the way in which the wolf will be conceptualised among Dutch inhabitants. For this thesis a framing perspective will be adopted in order to analyse and identify the different conceptualizations of the wolf and its possible comeback in the Dutch news media. Frames are commonly used as analytical concepts in literature concerning social conflicts, including those relating to nature and the environment (Buijs, Mattijsen & Kamphorst, 2013).

Identifying, describing and understanding different conceptualisations from the news media, used for the wolf and its possible existence in the Netherlands, can be regarded as important for a number of reasons:

- Provides us with an overview of what meanings are given to the wolf and its possible existence in the Netherlands
- News media reach a broad audience and can therefore potentially be powerful tools in shaping people's attitudes and beliefs.
- News media articles, in which conceptualisations can be found, are one of the principal arenas in which issues come to the attention of decision makers, interest groups and the public. Conceptualisations used in the news media can therefore have an influence on attitudes, values and beliefs towards or the management of the wolf (In the Netherlands).

The aim of this research is therefore basically two-fold:

To investigate how the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback is conceptualised in the Dutch news media

The main question of this master thesis will be formulated as following:

Which conceptualisations for the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback can be identified in the Dutch news media?

Sub questions:

1. Which themes can be identified in the Dutch news media?
2. Which central core ideas can be identified in the Dutch news media?
3. Which framing and reasoning devices can be identified in the Dutch news media?
4. Which support enhancing features can be identified in the Dutch news media?



2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 FRAMING, TWO APPROACHES

The theory of framing has been applied to wide range of issues (e.g. Benford & Snow, 2000; Gamson *et al.*, 1992) and has according to Gamson *et al.* (1992) “a focus on understanding the negotiation and production of socio-political issues, and the discursive framing of such issues in social processes”. The concept of framing is used in multiple disciplines, a common definition therefore is rare. Very often the concept is defined in terms of the own discipline or the scope of application. According to Reese *et al.*, (2001) are frames “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.” Shmueli (2008) defines a frame as “a interpretative lens through which we see and make sense of a situation in ways internally consistent with our world views”. The two definitions which already differ according to the level of localisation of the frame. Two major approaches within the localisation can be distinguished; according to the first approach frames can be seen as individual cognitive structures of the human mind (Dewulf *et al.*, 2009). Frames are, according to this approach stored in the memory and then retrieved and applied to in new situations. According to this approach frames do not exist independently of the individual and are therefore not constructed in the social environment. This approach focuses more on cognitive frames as a mental structure. This mental structure facilitates the organisation and interpretation of new incoming perceptual information by fitting it into already learned frames about reality. Minsky (1975) explicitly formulated this as follows:

“When one encounters a new situation, one selects from memory a structure called a ‘frame’. This structure is a remembered framework to be adapted to fit reality by changing details as necessary”.

A frame however, can also be evaluated from a more social and interactive approach in which a frame can be seen as a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and what is at issue (Dewulf *et al.*, 2009; Goffman, 1981). Frames exist, according to this approach, independently of the individual and are constructed in the social environment. According to this view frames are ‘built up piece by piece’ and ‘constituted of an innumerable number of elements, merged during the ongoing process of interaction between different parties or groups’ (Gonos, 1977). Interpretations are shared by multiple persons and influenced by the presence of common stimuli. Through non-verbal cues or indirect messages, participants signal each other as to how a situation can be understood. Frames can be seen as communicative devices that individuals and actors use to interpret and negotiate interactions. Through the process of framing different actors try to broaden the acceptance of their story about an issue. In this process the public is seen as a group of active readers, which as an actor in the communication process, selectively and critically handle the different stories. An increase in support for a specific frame can be found in a linkage with beliefs or values that are culturally accepted as important or true. Cultural resonance for example, can increase the appeal of a frame by making it appear natural or familiar (Buijs, 2009).

Summarizing, the most important difference between the two approaches to framing is that the cognitive approach considers frames to be structures which are stored in the individual memory and where framing is defined as the process of applying cognitive frames to situations (Figure 1). From a more interactional approach frames are seen as communication structures, which can exist independently of the individual and framing is here considered as the dynamic shaping of meaning in social interactions.

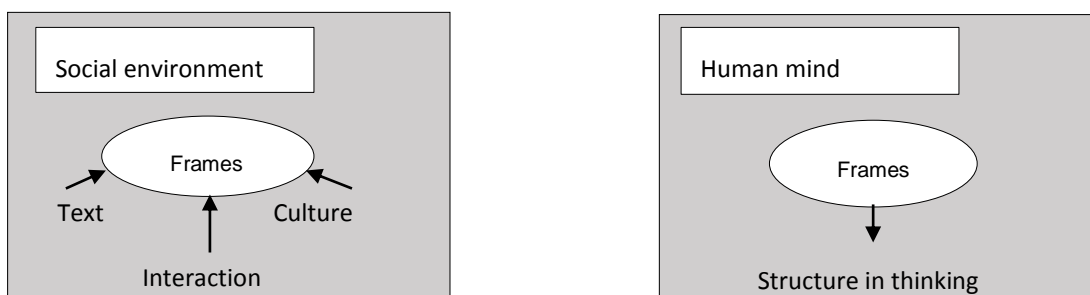
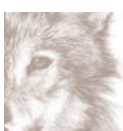


Figure 1: Localisation of the concept ‘frame’ following the two approaches of Dewulf *et al.* (2009)



For this thesis the concept of Goffman (1981) is followed who places the frame more independently of the individual and places emphasis on the connection with culture: *"Frames form a central part of a culture and have been institutionalised in different ways"*. As mentioned earlier common definitions of the concept framing are rare, mostly definitions are formulated applicable to a specific field of research. From the interactional approach to framing, a frame is often defined as:

"A central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (Gamson et al., 1992).

Within this interactional approach a lot of attention is paid to the dynamic of framing processes and the possibilities which actors can have to promote certain interpretations and with that influence the conceptualisation and understanding of a certain issue (Dewulf et al., 2009). According to Buijs, Mattijssen & Kamphorst (2013) can each frame be seen as a different story which tells the reader what is at stake, which facts should be taken into account and which arguments, events and experiences are of interest for the understanding the issue. The frame functions as a sort of lens which steers the attention to certain aspects of the issue at stake which are ought to be relevant. Frames provide us with labels to typify social interactions or political concerns and hereby also allow us to choose from a repertoire of interpretations (Mattijssen et al., 2013). By emphasizing different aspects of an issue, media coverage may affect public interpretation of the issue. De Kort & d'Haenens (2005) formulate the role of the media as: *"By explicitly choosing a certain frame, media can contribute to the construction of a certain issue or problem"*.

Frames are not inextricably linked with a particular topic, different frames can be identified covering the same topic. Each defining an identical situation in a different way (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001). For example, as an increasing number of European countries are confronted with the re-establishment of wolf populations, journalists can cover the re-establishment of these populations by applying a range of different frames. Within the news media this event for example could be framed a crown on the work of European nature policy or as an opportunity for restoring the balance within nature. One frame can thus be applied to multiple topics and one topic can be framed in multiple ways (Van Gorp, 2006a). The framing process can be described as making an interpretation of what is going on whereby authors or journalists un- or intentionally apply frames. The interpretation of framing by Van Gorp (2006a) places emphasis on the choice aspect of news production; there are always alternative ways to report about the same event. The alternative ways of reporting can be influenced by so called sponsors of a specific frame, interest groups or advertisers for example. These sponsors can try to convince the media to cover a specific situation in accordance with 'their' frame (Entman, 2004).

A frame is also characterised by a meta-communicative message, which indicates how a frame should be understood. The meta-communicative message of a frame specifies the actual message but also communicates how a messages should be understood. A meta-communicative message can thereby help the audience with structuring and defining reality (Van Gorp, 2006a). The concept of meta-communicative messages recognizes that news articles contain more than just concrete information, also messages are present that can be read 'between the lines' and which can influence the meaning that readers attach to a news article. A perfect example of a meta communicative message was given in the essay *A theory of Play and Fantasy* by Bateson (1955). Meta communication can, according to Bateson be seen as *"Exchanging cues that indicate how a situation should be understood"*. For his essay Bateson studied two monkeys who were biting each other. For Bateson and for the monkeys it was clear that this was not a fight, but just a simple game. According to Bateson this playing could only take place if both monkeys were capable of meta communicating with each other, namely giving signals that this was just a game. Normally biting means hurting someone, but in this case it seemed to mean just playing. The monkeys and Bateson were able to think about a subject (biting) in at least two different ways, being a game or being a fight. Coming back to the news media, the media thus not only provide the reader with information of a specific event or issue on, but also how this should be interpreted. It can therefore also be said that next to the manifest message with a certain content, there is also a frame present in the same text which indicates how the message should be understood (Van Gorp, 2007).



2.1.2 THE PROCESS OF FRAMING

Frames are developed through the process of framing. Framing will refer to the process whereby the meaning and coherence of a message is formed. Goffman (1974) defines framing as:

“Organizing experience through a certain way of defining what is going on in a situation.”

Framing is a sort of meta-communication in which a certain problem definition or interpretative framework is provided by focusing or emphasizing on certain aspects, cause or problem of an event or issue. In the process of framing certain characteristics of the event or issue are emphasized, while others are more neglected. The framing process can also be seen as a process in which a debate takes place about the interpretation and meaning of an event or issue at stake. This debate takes place at different levels of society and with the involvement of different actors. If more attention is paid to frames and the process of framing in the news media, framing can also be described according to the definition of Van Gorp (2006a):

“Framing refers to the process whereby a frame on the one hand indicates with the production of a news article which elements from the perceived reality to select, exclude, emphasize or complement, and on the other hand providing the receiver with context and a suggestion of meaning.”

Framing is considered to be important whenever an issue can be presented in multiple ways, this potentially influencing how the audience thinks about an issue. The goal of messages within the news media is not just to indicate what has happened, but also to illustrate how a specific event or issue should be understood by providing a certain avenue of thought and action. Each frame, applied within a news article, can also be represented as a frame-package. A frame package, can according to Van Gorp (2007) be described as *“a cluster of logical organized devices which can help with the identification process of frames in a text”*. The package has an internal structure composed of three parts, with at the core a central organizing idea and focussed on this central organizing idea, the so called framing and reasoning devices (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Van Gorp (2006b) summarized all the textual and visual elements supporting a certain frame under the term ‘framing devices’. Framing devices can be manifest in a text through various ways: as metaphors, catchphrases, historical examples from which lessons can be drawn, representations or as visual images (Gamson & Lasch, 1983). These framing devices are thought to help the reader to start thinking in a specific way considering the issue or event central in the frame. All the framing devices in a text point towards a central organizing idea which comprises the frame-package as a whole. The central idea that is ‘hanging’ on a frame tells something about how the people refer to it. In this case the wolf for example could be described as a mythical figure, an archetype (e.g. a victim) or as a value for nature. This core idea however, does not account for a frame on its own. In contrast to a frame, a core idea often lacks the quality to define the issue or event on its own (Fisher, 1997).

Next to framing devices, a frame-package also consists of so called reasoning devices. Reasoning devices, according to Van Gorp (2007), suggest a certain route of causal reasoning to the reader. Examples of the use of reasoning devices in a text are implicit or explicit statements which according to Gamson & Modigliani (1989) deal with justifications, causes and consequences in an often specific temporal order. According to Van Gorp (2007) similarities can be found between the route of causal reasoning suggested by the present reasoning devices in a text and the four most important functions which a frame fulfils:

1. A frame describes a problem
2. Describes who or what is the cause of the problem
3. Gives a moral judgement
4. Suggests how the situation can be solved

Reasoning devices do not have to be explicitly present in a newspaper article, but the frame should be able to be connected with it (Van Gorp, 2006b). Van Gorp (2006b) reasoned that even if reasoning devices are not explicitly mentioned in a text, they will still come forward during the interpretation process of the reader. The most important difference between framing and reasoning devices is therefore also the fact that reasoning devices do not have to be explicitly included in a text. During the interpretation process of the news article, the reader himself is likely to make a connection between



the text, the frame and the human values and beliefs. The reader may therefore in the end come up itself with causal inferences that are recalled by the reasoning devices.

Together with framing devices and the core idea 'hanging' on a frame, these reasoning devices form a frame-package. The frame-package gives meaning to a specific event or issue described in a news article by suggesting a certain definition, explanation, problematization and an evaluation of the event or issue, which then will ultimately result in a number of logical conclusions (Van Gorp, 2007). Consequently framing is a form of meta-communication. The news media therefore not only provide the audience with information on the event or issue itself, but also on how it the event or issue should be interpreted. The role of framing in media representation can therefore, according to Gandiwa (2013), be considered as important since it defines the boundaries of a debate by placing the event or issue within a certain sphere of meaning. The media can be considered as an actor in the process of framing which try to influence the interpretation of an issue by assigning specific meanings to an issue at stake. Framing is based on the assumption that the way in which an issue is characterized in the news media can have influence on how it is understood by the audiences. For journalists, framing could be viewed as a tool to reduce the complexity of issues. Frames could be seen as valuable tools for presenting relatively complex issues, efficiently and in a way that makes sense for the public.

2.1.3 INCREASING SUPPORT

The process of framing is all about the effort of different actors to enhance the acceptance of their frames of a specific issue or event. The framing process can therefore also be seen as a process in which a debate takes place about the interpretation and meaning of the event or issue at stake. According to Buijs (2009) the success of these efforts is depending on the content of a frame and also the contexts in which actors propagate a frame. Within the field of framing research many features are described which can strengthen or weaken a frame. Five features will now be introduced which are described in literature as strengthening for a frame. Cultural resonance can be described as a first feature which can increase the appeal of a frame by making it appear natural or familiar (Gamson *et al.*, 1992; Benford & Snow, 2000; Buijs, 2009). We speak of cultural resonance when the content of a certain frame largely corresponds to specific items within a certain subculture or culture. In order for a frame to be accepted by a vast majority of the population, it must 'resonate' with important cultural elements or concepts within a specific culture (Buijs *et al.*, 2011). The most powerful concepts that resonate within culture and which are shared in the collective memory of society are: myths, stereotypes, norms, narratives and metaphors. This due to the fact that they carry express meaning and can have tremendous symbolic power (Reese *et al.*, 2001). By mentioning powerful concepts in or linking these with a frame, an array of related ideas or understandings can be activated. Due to the fact that a single individual is not able to change an existing and persistent cultural phenomenon, the repertoire of frames is situated largely externally of the individual (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001).

Experiential commensurability can be described as a second feature, a feature which can increase the appeal of a frame. This feature can, according to Buijs (2009) be related to the salience of a frame and can be described as *"the extent to which specific claims within a frame are related to, recognizable in and relevant for the everyday lives of involved actors"*. If claims within a frame have a more abstract character it can be difficult for the majority of society to link the frames to their everyday lives. These claims are therefore likely to fail in convincing the general public. Centrality is a third feature being described as potentially strengthening for a frame. The concept of centrality is closely linked to empirical credibility. Centrality has to do with how essential values, beliefs and ideas are associated with the everyday life's of the audience. The more central or salient the expressed values, beliefs and ideas in a presented frame are to the public, the more support the frame will generate among the public (Benford & Snow, 2000). A fourth factor which can influence the strength of a frame is empirical credibility. Gamson & Modigliani (1989) describe empirical credibility under the term 'narrative fidelity' and recognise this a one of the most important success factor for frames. Empirical credibility is related to the perceived correspondence between 'real world' empirical events and the content of a frame (Buijs, 2009). For example, city dwellers faced with smog, will easier pick up the notion that industrial development is polluting the atmosphere. Invisible risks, such as radioactivity, will require a more elaborate mediation and discussion of the same framework, this since radioactivity cannot be directly observed and does not play a role in everyday life of most people. Due to the fact that empirical credibility



depends on individual experience in the personal as well as the professional life of people, the views on the empirical credibility of a frame can differ between different actors (Buijs, 2009).

A last factor, able to influence the degree of frame resonance, is the credibility of the frame authors or claim makers. Within the social psychology of communication it is a well-established fact that authors or speakers who are regarded as more credible, are generally more persuasive (Hovland & Weis, 1951). According to Druckman (2001), frames delivered by credible sources are therefore more likely to influence the importance people attach to a particular frame. McQuire (1985) and Hass (1981) found that variables like knowledge of the frame maker concerning the framed issue or event, or status of the frame maker can be associated with persuasiveness. Therefore hypothetically, the greater the perceived expertise and/or status of the frame author or organisation represented, the more resonant the presented frame will be (Benford & Snow, 2000).

2.1.4 FRAME TAXONOMY

In order to determine which frames exist in news media coverage, researchers must operationalize different type of frames. Frames can be divided into audience frames and media frames (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Scheufele, 1999). Research on audience frames is primarily focussed on the way in which individuals perceive, interpret and organize events or issues (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997; Valkenburg, Semetko & De Vreese, 1999) Research on media frames primarily focusses on how issues are covered and presented in the news media (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Since the focus of this master thesis will not be placed on framing effects, audience frames will not be further discussed.

Media frames can be further divided into issue-specific news frames and generic frames (Benford, 1997 & De Vreese, 2005). Issue specific frames pertain to specific issue or events, whereas generic frames are not bound to a specific topic (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001). Generic frames are applicable to a range of different news events. Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) have defined five types of generic frames: conflict, human-interest, responsibility, economic-consequence and morality frames. Analysing issue specific frames and trying to build hypotheses and theory, can be difficult due to the high degree of detail and specificity. Generic frame analysis on the other hand, offer less possibilities to study an event or issue in detail but does allow the researcher to compare frames and topics within for example different countries or between different studies. Parallel to the typology between issue-specific and generic frames, Iyengar (1991) made a distinction between episodic and thematic frames. Episodic frames take a form of an event-based report and discuss public issues in terms of concrete instances (e.g. a wandering wolf in the north of the Netherlands or the possibility of a dead female canine in Luttelgeest being a wolf). Thematic frames by contrast place public issues more in a general or abstract context, this more from the perspective of a back-ground reporter, with a focus on general conditions or outcomes. In practice however, few reports can be classified either being episodic or thematic (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001).

2.1.5 SUMMARIZING

The essence of framing can be found within the process of social interaction. Lots of research papers have been published on the topic of framing but a theoretical model reflecting the most important aspects of framing, and above all is recognised by different authors, is however still lacking. This as well as a recognized concept of framing and its underlying mechanisms. For this master thesis an interactional approach to framing will be applied. Frames according to this approach are built up piece by piece and constitute of a number of elements, merged during the ongoing process of interaction between different parties or groups. The focus of this thesis however, will not lay on the construction side of frames but on the existing and established frames for wolves in the Dutch news media. For this research frames will be appointed and identified and the content of the frames will be constructed and described with the use of framing and reasoning devices. Focussing on frames, features like for example cultural resonance, empirical credibility and experiential commensurability can potentially weaken or strengthen a frame. Each frame can furthermore be seen as a different story which tells the reader what is at stake, which facts should be taken into account and which arguments, experiences or events are of interest for understanding the issue. This interpretation places a clear emphasis on the choice aspect within the news media, alternative ways of reporting about the same event always exist. Within the process of framing the media can be considered as an actor in the process which try to influence the interpretation of an issue by assigning specific meanings to the issue at stake. Framing is based on the assumption



that the way in which an issue is characterized in the news media can have influence on how it is understood by the audience.

2.2 THE DEBATE ON WOLVES

Wolves can be described as charismatic but at the same also as controversial animals. For some people they are the symbol of the wild and untamed nature, mysterious and impressive, while to others they are vicious killers of livestock and a threat for human safety. The history of wolves in the United States and Europe underscores this dichotomy: once animals that were intensively hunted and killed, nowadays the wolf stands on the verge of recovery due to human efforts or natural re-establishment. According to Kellert (1985) world attitudes towards wolves are very complicated and diverse and parallel the different visions on the values of wilderness, land-use and wildlife. One can for example see the landscape more as a setting for the survival of culture traditions while on the other hand the landscape can also be viewed in a conservation context. For example as a place for the survival of species. It is likely that a tangled web of actors and stakeholders exists, each having divergent interests based on a different set of cultural and social values. The possible diverging environmental visions can be seen as competing interests in and different understandings of nature and wildlife. All this increasing the complexity of the issue.

2.2.1 THE LANDSCAPE OF WOLVES

Greider & Garkovich (1994) have described landscapes as symbolic environments which are created by human acts of giving meaning to nature and the environment. The environment is given a definition through a special filter of values and beliefs or from a particular angle of vision. Cultural groups can project different meanings on to the same landscape through the use of different filters or having different visions and thereby transforming the same environment into different specific landscapes. Nie (2001) mentioned in his research study that the debate about wolves and their role within nature is “*not just a conflict about wolves per se*”. According to Nie (2001) the debate likely also illustrates how different understandings of ‘landscape’ and ‘nature’ compete. What type of nature is being talked about? Is that nature in harmony with the wolf and its perceived wilderness status? Whose territory is dealt with? During focus group sessions in a study of Figari and Skogen (2011), results showed that different focus groups had diametrically opposed representations of the same natural environment along with different views as to whether wolves belonged to it or not. Informants expressing positive views on the presence of the wolf (conservationists & urban residents), saw the environment as untouched nature, or wilderness. Farmers, rural residents and hunters (expressing more negative views) on the other hand saw this same environment as a landscape for sustainable use, grazing, hunting and productive areas for logging. Interpretations of the surrounding landscape as productive land by wolf adversaries, distinctly differed from representations of the same environment as wilderness by wolf supporters. According to Figari and Skogen (2011) farmers, rural residents and hunters view nature as a place for human activities which should be maintained as such. In the same way as which wilderness is often closely linked with thoughts of untamed nature, productive nature is often associated with heritage of earlier generations and the continuity of these traditions. Productive land, according to Figari & Skogen (2011) contains the traces of hard work of ancestors, who tamed the wild and gave meaning to the physical environment. Respondents mentioned that through the continuation of traditional practices, the traces of the hard work of previous generations could be preserved. The wolf in that same highly valued landscape, which could for some mean having to change traditions due to its presence, could therefore be viewed as a form of ‘cultural dirt’ (Douglas, 2002). Wolves entering the humanised cultural landscape could possibly be interpreted as a crossing of the symbolic boundary between ‘the wild’ and ‘the cultural landscape’. As for the environment, different meanings are also given to the wolf. Conceptualisations of the wolf and its role in the landscape vary across space and time. Lynn (2010) provided an overview of different conceptualisations of the wolf in American history. According to Lynn (2010) the wolf has typically been represented as a pest or varmint, a potential symbol of the wild or a political symbol. The wolf as a political symbol has for example been observed in the Adirondack Mountains in the USA. In the Adirondack Mountains (USA) wolf restoration was initially favoured by 76% of the public, but when the issue was reframed in the news media from nature restoring to political influence from outside, the support for wolf restoration dropped to 42% (Enck and Brown, 2000). The public no longer considered the wolf as an animal, but considered the wolf as being the symbol from political pressure from higher up. Ratamäki (2008) described four different conceptualisations of the wolf in Europe: the wolf as an endangered, a game animal, a pest and as the synthesis of qualities as wilderness, beauty and freedom.



Locals, conservationists, researchers and authorities according to Ratamäki (2008) lacked a common image of the wolf, each having their own visions and ideas. Different conceptualisations of the wolf and the landscape it is living in could therefore potentially cause conflict and thereby possibly making it a problem for wolf policy and management.

The different conceptualisations of the wolf, described by Ratamäki (2008) and Lynn (2010) have also put pressure of those entities responsible for the accommodation and protection of wolves. According to European and national authorities the wolf is considered as an endangered species under the EU Habitat Directive. A species which needs strict protection against potential human threats in order to prevent extinction (Stöhr & Coimbra, 2013). In Finland, where the wolf is listed as endangered under the EU Habitat Directive, 250 to 260 wolves were reported living there at the end of 2006. Comparing this population with Spain, where more than 2000 wolves live, the Finnish population is considered to be quite small (Stöhr & Coimbra, 2013). In Finland however, the wolf population is concentrated in Eastern rural areas and can therefore be locally quite dense. According to Ratamäki (2008) is the cultural status of wolves in Finland as a pest, a socially constructed negative reputation of the wolf. Two distinctively different conceptualisations of the wolf have arisen, which have resulted in different views on the status of the wolf in Finland: the wolf as an endangered animal & the wolf as a pest. Knowledge system may play an important role within these different conceptualisations of the wolf. Qualitative research has already shown that knowledge systems play an important part in shaping conflicts concerning wild carnivores (Skogen, 2001). It is also not uncommon in wildlife management that scientific knowledge can compete with other knowledge systems, especially local & traditional knowledge (Ratamäki, 2008). Concerning the perception of so called different knowledge systems (e.g. scientific or local), trust in the different providers of the information can possibly be seen as an important issue (Skogen & Thrane, 2007). Coming back to Finland, the current resistance against the conservation policy for the wolf, can according to Ratamäki (2008) be partially understood as a form of cultural resistance against certain types of power structures within society. As in other areas of environmental conflicts, for example through the providence of scientifically legitimized arguments in decision making processes, scientific or expert knowledge may contain a considerable amount of power (Stöhr & Coimbra, 2013). Qualitative studies of Skogen and Thrane, (2007) have furthermore indicated that those people being sceptical towards carnivores, regardless of their social position, claim that so called “power elites” have no respect for local knowledge. Biologists, scientific experts, politicians, managers and conservationists can according to this the sceptical part of society be viewed as one alliance possessing a great deal of power (Skogen & Thrane, 2007). Farmers, rural residents and hunters in that same study of Skogen & Thrane (2007) mentioned their way of life being threatened by carnivore management, viewing the presence of wolves in the area as disturbing for their way of land-use. The scientific knowledge and politics working more top-down could potentially even lead to possible lack of commitment at a more local level. A potential victim of this debate could then be the wolf.

2.2.2 RESEARCH ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOLVES

According to social constructivists, meanings can be treated as different reflections of reality of a social group (Scarce, 2008). Among members of society, meanings are often not universally shared. In an ideal world there would be one universally and uncontested meaning, but in reality however different meanings can be ascribed to the same phenomenon, in this case the wolf. A wide range of factors (e.g. social norms, politics and science) can influence the meaning or perception of different groups (Scarce, 2008). Around the world attitudes towards and perceptions of the wolf are complex and diverse, according to some researchers even paralleling the divergent values of wildlife, wilderness and land-use (Williams, Ericsson & Herberlein, 2002; Bisi *et al.*, 2010; Kellert, 1985). The existence of different social groups and stakeholders, all often with divergent interests, contributes to the complexity of the issue (Bisi *et al.*, 2010). Each opposing actor basing their assumptions often on a different set of values within which cultural and social understandings of ‘their’ world are incorporated.



Longitudinal studies on the wolf, though relatively few, indicate a stabilization or increase in positive attitudes towards the wolf (Bruskotter, Schmidt & Teel, 2007; Ericsson & Herberlein, 2003). Williams, Ericsson & Herberlein (2002) analysed 38 scientific studies concerning the wolf between 1979 and 2000.

Of the total analysed surveys, 51% indicated to have found positive attitudes towards wolves. Comparing attitudes towards wolves among different social groups, Williams, Ericsson & Herberlein (2002) concluded that 35% of the farmers and ranchers had a positive attitude towards wolves (Figure 2). The general public expressed positive attitudes in 61% of the surveys, while among environmentalists or wildlife groups an even higher percentage (69%) of the scientific studies found a positive attitude towards the wolf. Attitudes towards wolves, are according to Bjerke, Reitan & Kellert (1998), embedded in a complex web which is composed of different variables like fundamental beliefs or value systems concerning the general relationship between humans and nature. Negative attitudes towards wolves are, according to

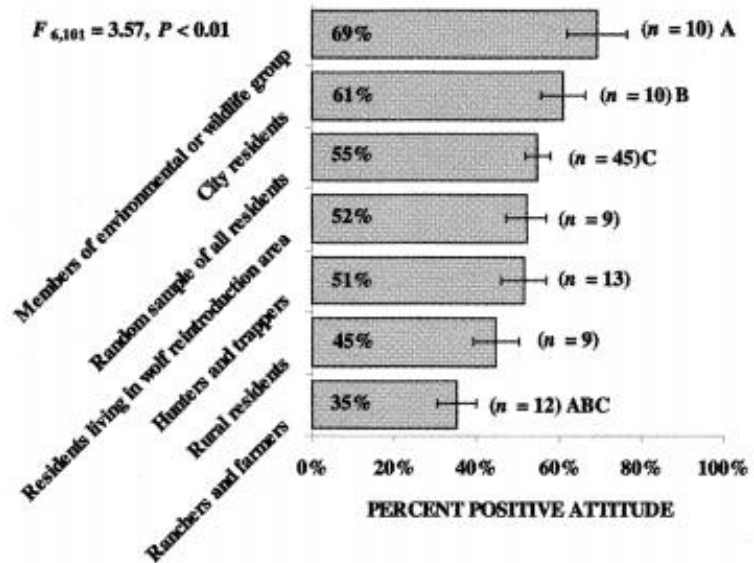


Figure 2. Percentage positive attitudes towards wolves & wolf reintroductions across different social groups, 1979-2000 (Tukeys procedure, $P < 0.05$) (Williams, Ericsson & Herberlein, 2002)

Kaltenborn & Bjerke (2002), often associated with fears about its presumed danger to us humans, the potential threat to human property, the association with the wild or views rooted within culture. On the other hand, also positive voices are heard, these mainly pointing at the ecological importance of the wolf for habitat balance and the aesthetic beauty of the animal (Kellert, 1985). Although analysis has shown general support for wolf re-establishment, in the United States as well as in Scandinavian countries wolf re-establishment can, according to Williams, Ericsson & Herberlein (2002), be seen as an event which elicits a wide range of attitudes, perceptions and reactions. Important factors likely to contribute to the uncertainty about the possible risks from wolves are socio-demographic variables, interaction between wildlife and humans and story-telling traditions about wolves (Zimmerman, Wabakken & Dötterer, 2001; Herberlein & Ericsson, 2008; Herberlein & Ericsson, 2005). Even though attitudes have shown a general support for wolf re-establishment, people are likely to become more negative due to experience with the presence of the wolf. A study of Ericsson & Herberlein (2003) for example found that Swedes living in areas where wolves have been established, have more negative attitudes than the general public. A vast amount of neutral attitudes have however also been reported. Neutral attitudes are considered to be changeable to positive or negative according to Ericsson & Herberlein (2003) and can possibly change quickly in response to a widely publicized event. Such a change was for example observed in the Adirondack Mountains (USA). Wolf restoration was in this area initially favoured by 76% of the public, but when the issue in the news media was reframed by local leaders from nature restoring to influence from outside, support for wolf restoration dropped to 46% in 1997 and 42% in 1999 (Enck and Brown, 2002). According to Williams, Ericsson & Herberlein (2002) this quick shift in attitudes among the general public could be explained by the fact that attitudes towards wolves are often not strong or well developed.

Focussing more on socio-demographic group differences, a number of studies have for example pointed at the urban-rural dimension (Wabakken *et al.*, 2001; Herberlein & Ericsson, 2005). Wolves are often appreciated among rural residents, but at the same time because they are more likely to directly experience the wolf, rural residents tend to have more negative attitudes towards the wolf than urban residents. Petty *et al.*, (1997) has shown that direct experience leads to more stronger attitudes, this since direct experience can have an impact on the social environment. Urban residents, living most of the time outside and furthest away from wolf habitats, therefore tend to have more positives attitude towards the wolf and its possible re-establishment. This finding coincides with the theory developed by Zimmerman, Wabakken & Dötterer (2001), mentioning that carnivore acceptance is high as long a carnivores are far away from where people live or if the chance of re-establishment in that specific area is low. According to Zimmerman, Wabakken & Dötterer (2011) acceptance is likely to decrease when



carnivores, and in this case wolves, come closer. Following this theory Szinovatz (1997) for example showed in his research that people living in areas free of carnivores were generally more positive towards carnivore establishment than people living in carnivore free areas. Among interviewed people living in the capital of Norway, 84% of the people approved of wolf establishment in Southern Norway. When asked however if wolves would be approved in recreation areas closest to Oslo, more than half of the respondents was opposed. Qualitative work has furthermore shown that the urban-rural dimension is also based on the sharp contrasts between the country life and the more stressful urban existence. According to Herberlein & Ericsson (2005) for example, in rural areas wolves are sometimes considered as being the symbol of urban dominance over the less populated countryside. Different knowledge systems may play here an important role. It is not uncommon in wildlife management that scientific knowledge can compete with other knowledge systems, especially local & traditional knowledge (Ratamäki, 2008). A national study, conducted on behalf of the Swedish government, concluded that *“the wolf in the Swedish landscape has become the symbol for the divide between rural and urban people”* and *“many rural residents feel that decisions are made ahead of them by urban people without having knowledge about reality”* (Herberlein & Ericsson, 2005). Rural residents in this study mentioned to view urban residents along with conservationists as the “pro-wolf lobby”. The reappearance of the wolf is often associated with urban life and values. Through this construction, according to (Skogen & Krangle, 2003) the wolf is becoming not an icon of wilderness, but one of urbanity.

Farmers, along with hunters, are also considered as a group having in general more negative attitudes towards the wolf and its possible re-establishment. Direct experience here also is likely to have an impact on the social environment and economic interest, making farmers and hunters more susceptible towards the wolf. Research has shown that in Sweden, as well as in Norway, the general feeling among farmers is that their cultural tradition is under threat with the presence of the wolf. A study of Sjölander-Lindqvist (2008) even reported farmers in rural areas of Sweden to have changed their farming traditions since their gained experience with the wolf. Another group with strong ties to wildlife and the ecosystem, are hunters. While hunters are often stereotyped as being negative towards wolves this has generally not been the case according to Bjerke & Kaltenborn (1999). Reviewing literature presents a somehow mixed picture of hunters attitudes towards wolves. In Finland for example, a country with strong hunting traditions, it is likely to find more negative attitudes towards wolves than in a country without these traditions. Although Finnish hunters (as in Norway and Sweden) do recognise the role of the wolf within the ecosystem, the presence of the wolf is experienced as a severe threat for hunting dogs & traditions (Bisi *et al.*, 2007). Hunters therefore tend to have a more negative attitude towards the wolf then the general public.



2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After outlining a theoretical framework in which the concept of frames, framing and previous research studies on attitudes towards wolves have been discussed, the research and sub questions for this master thesis can now be rephrased into even more specific questions. The research questions and sub questions addressed by this study will set the parameters and boundaries for this master thesis and will serve as guiding principles for developing methods for data gathering and analysis.

The main research aim of this master thesis is:

To investigate how the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback is conceptualised in the Dutch news media

The specific main research question to be addressed in this research:

Which frames for the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback can be identified in the Dutch news media?

Sub questions:

1. Which themes can be identified in Dutch news media articles?
2. Which central core ideas can be identified in Dutch news media articles?
3. Which framing and reasoning devices can be identified in Dutch news media articles?
4. Which support enhancing features can be identified in Dutch news media articles?



3. METHODOLOGY

Framing research can be performed in various ways. A first important difference can for example already be made with the choice between quantitative and qualitative research, but even within these approaches distinctions can be made. For this framing research with regard to the wolf has been chosen for a qualitative content analysis following an inductive strategy. Argumentation for this choice, definitions and the strategy followed for this research will be explained in the following paragraph.

3.1.1 QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

A first classical distinction made within the field of research, is the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research can be described as more explanatory in nature, focussing more on causal relationships between different variables (Straus & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research on the other hand can, according to Straus & Corbin (1998), be described as *“any research that produces findings not gathered by statistical procedures or any other means of quantification”*. Qualitative research seeks to describe and explore the research topic in depth. Some of the data within a qualitative research may however still be quantified, like background data about the event or issue at stake, but the vast majority of the information is interpretative. One of the most important reasons to conduct a qualitative study is the fact that the study is explorative, meaning that not much has been published about the event or issue at stake. Since the aim of this research is to investigate how the wolf and its possible comeback is represented in the Dutch news media by the use of a framing approach, and the main goal of a framing analysis is to understand how certain ideas and elements are linked together into a central organizing ideas (frames), ensures that a mere quantitative analysis will not be sufficient to be provide an answer on the main research question. The most frequent frame for example may not be the most important one. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the approach for this research will be qualitative. Qualitative research on frames in the news media revolves around opinions, processes and events which are not directly measurable in terms of quantity, intensity, frequency or amount. Qualitative research has an interpretative character, meaning that the researcher makes an interpretation of the collect data (Straus & Corbin, 1998). The researcher explores the collected data by developing a description of the specific situation or event, analysing the data and in the end drawing conclusions about its meaning. Taking into account a possible personal interpretation being brought into the analysis, the analysis will aim to check the validity continuously.

3.1.2 DEDUCTIVE VS. INDUCTIVE

A different dichotomy within the field of framing research can be found between deductive and inductive strategies. Applying a deductive framing strategy implies that in advance of the data analysis a limited number of frames will be defined of which will be examined to what extent they appear in the news media. Data will thus be developed on the basis of already developed theories. A potential disadvantage of this method is the chance that frames which are not predefined, but which are though present in a text, will be overlooked due to the focus of the researcher on the predefined frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Questions which are furthermore often let open in deductive framing analysis are for example: Where do frames come from? Which themes or theories lay at the basis of these frames? Framing research following an inductive strategy, asks for a complete opposite approach. The intention of this research strategy is to discover patterns, themes or theories in the collected data (Van Gorp, 2006b). A frame-analyst following this approach tries to map frames concerning a specific issue or event by analysing and interpreting the data with an open mind, this without the possible steering through predefined frames. The collected data according to this approach will be analysed and translated into categories or themes. These categories or themes are then developed into broader patterns, theories or generalizations, which can also be compared with other theories found in literature (Creswell, 1998). Literature, theories and predefined frames do not guide and direct a study with an inductive approach, but become an aid once categories or patterns have been defined from the collect data (Creswell, 1998). An inductive research follows a systematic and stepwise analysis which basis can be found in the principle of constant comparison method developed by Glaser & Strauss (2009). The simultaneously ongoing process of comparing, analysing and coding provides a counterbalance for the inevitable



involvement and subjectivity of the researcher with the data. By repeatedly going through the collected data according to Glaser & Straus (2009), developed patterns or theories can be strengthened, new ideas can be developed and information can be retrieved which can potentially confirm or contradict the occurrence of the developed frames. In comparison with the deductive research approach, the inductive strategy is however more difficult to replicate, is applicable on a smaller sample and is less suitable for comparative research (Van Gorp, 2006a). Since this study has an exploratory character, an inductive approach will be applied. Through a process of data gathering, analysis, comparison and the development of patterns, theories and generalizations, frames (which are used in the Dutch news media for the wolf and its possible comeback) will be reconstructed.

3.1.3 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

During the phase of operationalization a researcher needs to determine which material or unit of analysis will be used. According to Wester (1995) it is important during this phase to consider the practicability and the theoretical correctness. All this, of course, consistent with the goals that the researcher has in mind.

Dutch news media articles concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands will be traced by making use of LexisNexis[®]. LexisNexis is an online newspaper database, with access to reliable leading news sources with a focus on Dutch sources. The database consists of records of nearly 10,000 newspapers, legal documents, magazines and other printed sources (LexisNexis, 2014). Using the search key (using the term 'wolf in Netherlands') and limiting the search to only Dutch newspapers, newspaper articles will be searched over a five year period (June 2014 – June 2009) in the LexisNexis database. Expected is that by focussing on a 5 year period, the most recent discussion on the topic of the wolf will be covered. The manner of collection of units of analysis for this thesis is a deliberate choice, this taking into account the main research aim of this thesis: to investigate how the wolf and its possible comeback are conceptualised in the Dutch news media within the debate on the wolf on a wider scale. In order to get a good impression of this broader field of discussion, next to Dutch newspaper articles also news coverage of a number of specific groups or parties will be taken into account. This since it could be expected that specific groups or parties apply a specific frame (or frames) for certain persuasive reasons. Focussing first on the possible sources of newspaper articles, the Dutch newspapers can be further divided into national, regional and semi-regional newspapers (Kaiser, 1990). National newspapers, like the 'Telegraaf' and the 'Volkskrant' can be bought everywhere and are delivered to subscribers throughout the country. A subscription to the online version of these newspapers is nowadays also possible. Regional newspapers, are available in a particular area within the specific region. 'Dagblad van het Noorden' for example has as a target group people living in Drenthe and Groningen (both provinces in the Netherlands) and therefore mainly brings news from that particular region. Semi-regional newspapers make use of their own front page with their own title but are for the largest part composed of a combination of the national and regional news. An example of a semi-regional newspaper is the 'AD Rotterdams Dagblad' which forms a part of the 'AD' (Algemeen Dagblad in Dutch). Due to the fact that semi-regional newspapers are often composed out of a combination of national and regional news, the content of these articles therefore often shows much overlap with or can even cover the same articles as in regional or national editions. For this study therefore only semi-regional articles will be included which do not cover the exact same content or show much overlap with regional or national editions. Focussing again on Dutch national and regional newspapers; these newspapers must distinguish themselves in order to attract readers and stay ahead of possible competitors. A specific identity, signature or positioning can therefore still be found. The Volkskrant for example positions itself as a more "*progressive newspaper*" for a "*diverse and generally well-educated public*" (PCM Media, 2006) The specific identity of newspapers comes not only forward through the editors, but also through the commercial objectives of the publisher to which the newspaper belongs. Five different publishers will therefore be selected (Appendices A).

As mentioned earlier, in order to get a good impression of this broader field of discussion, next to Dutch newspaper articles also news coverage of a number of specific groups or parties will be taken into account. Different Dutch nature organisations, like Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten, will be contacted in order to get access to their possible published articles on the topic of the wolf. Natuurmonumenten for example, together with FreeNature, Ark, Zoogdierverseniging work on the project 'Wolven in Nederland' (Wolves in the Netherlands), publishing articles on the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. Reasons for the start-up of the project, according to a statement on the



website of 'Wolven in Nederland' (www.wolveninnederland.nl), have been "*the attention the animal receives in the Dutch news media in which many facts but also untrue things are told*" but also "*the belief that the wolf indeed is moving towards the Netherlands*". Previously mentioned factors have contributed to the establishment of the project which has the goal to search for the facts concerning the wolf, its behaviour and possible comeback and to prepare the Dutch inhabitants for the arrival of the first wolves in the Netherlands. Other possible frame sponsors like farmers or rural residents, according to the previous literature study, more likely to have a negative attitude towards the wolf will also be accounted for. News articles of the 'LTO' (Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture), 'Boerderij' and 'Boerderij Vandaag' (magazines for livestock and crop farmers) have also been collected for data analysis. Sources from which more than seventy articles can be collected, only around twenty five of the longest articles will be selected. This is taking into account the time frame for the data analysis and on the basis of the expectation that, as article becomes longer, more space will be available for the use of frames within the news article. An overview of the selected news sources can be found in Appendices B.

3.1.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Since for this thesis an inductive research approach will be applied, data-analysis for this thesis will consist of an ongoing process which involves continuous reflection of the collected data, asking analytical questions, and the formation of categories and themes which can be developed into broad patterns, theories or generalizations (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Despite analytical differences depending of the strategy used for analysis, qualitative researchers according to Creswell (2003) often use a general procedure for analysing the collected data. This general procedure will also form the basis for the analysis process in the master thesis (Figure 3). Following this procedure, the collected data for this thesis will first be organised and prepared for the analysis. All the newspaper articles will then be read through to get an indication of the general ideas that are coming forward and the tone of these ideas. In the next phases codes will be given for the following elements:

1. *Substantive themes (e.g.: landscape, ecosystem)*
2. *Central core ideas*
3. *Framing and reasoning devices*
4. *Features increasing the strength of a frame*

The purpose of coding will be to indicate, in a very concise manner, what the relevant section of the text is about. The registration forms for the coding of themes, framing and reasoning devices and support enhancing features can be found in Appendices D, E and F. After the coding of the news articles, coded themes will be combined and interrelated. In the next phase an interpretation of the coded data will be made by clustering, linking and placing the coded data along different discourse lines. In the end this will lead to a description of the frames contained within the news articles used for the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. Along the process, the accuracy of the gathered information will continuously be checked through a process of continuous reflection. The continuous reflection of the gathered data is an ongoing process in which theories are formed, confirmed or enhanced, this as a result of new gathered data or existing data that has already been collected in previous studies.



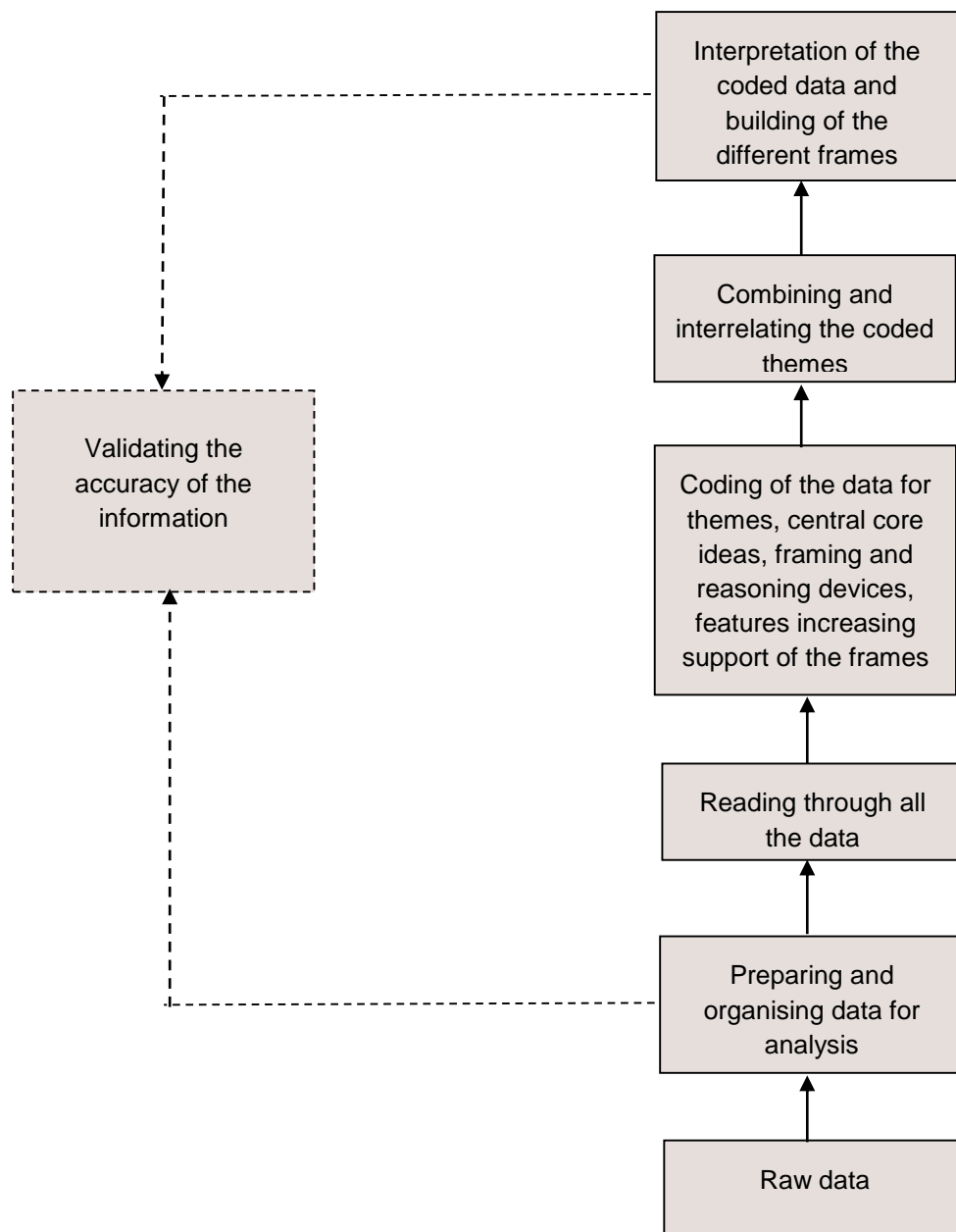


Figure 3. Data analysis based on Creswell (2003)



4. RESULTS

In this chapter the obtained results of the conducted research will be described, this in order to provide an answer on the main research question which was formulated as follows:

Which frames for the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback can be identified in the Dutch news media?

In paragraph 4.1 first of all an overview will be provided of the most important themes discussed and described in Dutch newspaper articles on the topic of the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. Paragraph 4.2 will describe in depth the six different frames which have been identified. An overview of the used abbreviations following the quotations can be found in Table 8 (Appendices)

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

The most important themes discussed and described in Dutch newspaper articles concerning the wolf and its possible comeback can be shortlisted as follows:

• Place for the wolf in the Netherlands
• Comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands
• Evidence comeback
• Suitability nature
• Function of the wolf in the ecosystem
• Behaviour wolves
• Risks and uncertainties
• How to act?
• General image
• Attitudes and beliefs towards the wolf in the Netherlands

4.1.1 PLACE FOR WOLVES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Before thinking of and discussing the possible comeback of the wolf another question is logically raised and considered; Is there a place for wolves in the Netherlands? Within this theme two clear discourses can be identified and described. On the one hand a clear doubt or in some cases even a clear no is pronounced when there is spoken of a possible place for the wolf in the Netherlands. First of all reference is made to the possible danger and risks a wolf on Dutch grounds can bring. Uncertainties concerning the behaviour of wolves and with that the risks for humans as well as animals are frequently considered *“What if a wolf causes damage? Foils sheep?”* (4NRC). Next to the possible danger and risks reference is furthermore made to the many possible obstacles for the wolf on its route through the Dutch landscape¹. Possible ‘obstacles’ mentioned for the wolf on its route through the Dutch landscape are for example the busy and dense road network; *“The busy and dense road network alone will make a lot of victims”* (1 Tub). Next to the dense road network the lack of areas with low human activities is mentioned as a point of concern; *“The biggest difference with German wolf areas is the lack of areas in the Netherlands with low human activity levels”* (9Tub). This relative high population density is described as a possible ‘obstacle’ which can make the Netherlands a less attractive new habitat for the wolf. The high population density could potentially hinder the wolf in finding large resting areas where a wolf for example could raise its young, but could in addition also have impact on the shyness of wolves. Next to the high human density, the high livestock density on Dutch grounds is also mentioned frequently, this according to multiple articles making the Netherlands possibly a “cockaigne”(3Bv, 1B) for the wolf. A place where the wolf *“can patiently wait with his mouth wide open in the meadow”*(7Bv). As a

¹ E.g.: 1B, 9 Tub, 16 Tub



counterargument however, is for example mentioned that the most important food source for wolves in Germany is currently the abundant populations of deer and wild boar, a food source which is *“amply present in the Netherlands”* (2Dst, 2Tub). *“Approximately 70.000 deer live within the Netherlands, which is more than enough food”* (19Vlks). Livestock as a possible victim of the wolf is from this point of view certainly not a fixed case. A debate is furthermore also taking place concerning the definition for and the state of nature in the Netherlands and its suitability for the wolf. Clear doubts and statements are pronounced concerning the definition and state of Dutch nature and its suitability for the wolf. Do we have enough nature? Is Dutch nature to park-like for the wolf? Can we still speak of wilderness in the Netherlands? Dutch nature is for example described as *“Park-like landscapes which have little more to do with the pristine nature where the animal normally lives”* (4TLG). Concern is furthermore also pronounced concerning the fact that most of the Dutch natural areas are lined with mesh, this potentially hindering migrating wolves (12Tub).

On the other hand however the Netherlands is convincingly described as a place which is suitable and also ready to welcome the wolf. The previous discussed doubts concerning the suitability of the Dutch landscape, as being the many possible obstacles for the wolf on its route through the Netherlands, are not seen or recognized here. *“The Netherlands is full and crowded, but the wolf does not mind”* (14Dst) and *“In Germany wolves hardly bother with fragmentation and urbanization”* (8LB). The Dutch landscape is here described and considered as an absolute ideal new habitat for the wolf or possibly even a population of wolves; *“The Netherlands has a perfect landscape for the wolf”* (8Tr). In order to strengthen the view of the suitability of the Dutch landscape for the wolf in some articles reference is also made to the landscape of the current German wolf region which is comparable to certain parts of the Dutch landscape². *“In Germany wolves are currently living in a landscape which is comparable with large parts of the Dutch landscape”* (11LB), *“In Germany wolves live in a half-open cultural landscape interspersed with forest elements, a diverse and attractive landscape that overflows in the Netherlands”* (1DvhN). Reference is furthermore also made to the large surplus game animals (e.g.: ±70.000 deer³) in the Dutch landscape. An important food source which wolves currently give preference to in Germany; *“The most important food source for wolves in Germany are the abundant populations of roe deer and wild boar, of which in the Netherlands also many populations can be found”* (2 Tub). These populations in the Netherlands are considered as a food source for the wolf, are abundantly present and will make sure that the wolf will thrive good on Dutch grounds.

4.1.2 COMEBACK TO THE NETHERLANDS

A possible wolf on its comeback to the Netherlands is a source for questions, opinions and emotions. A theme which logically comes to mind and is also discussed broadly within newspaper articles on the topic of the wolf is; Has the wolf started on its comeback to the Netherlands? A clear yes is coming forward in Dutch newspaper articles. *“Young wolves are moving westwards in search of new habitats, time to start thinking about the comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands.”* (5TuB). The possible comeback is described as being a matter of time until the wolf will set its first steps on Dutch grounds. *“Every two years a new wolf pack is found which has settled more westerly.”* (3ADR). In multiple news articles the Netherlands is described as being in reach for the wolf, argumentation supporting this view are among others; the increasing numbers of wolves in Eastern European countries like Poland and Germany⁴, an increase in the number of wolf sightings in Germany and other Eastern European countries⁵ and multiple sightings of wolves within 200 kilometres of the Dutch border, a distance which is regarded as easy to bridge for the wolf. The most important questions raised are furthermore ‘how’ and ‘when’. How will the wolf make its comeback? Will it be as expected, coming from German grounds where wolf populations thrive excellently and draw closer to the Dutch border each year? *“Since the appearance of the wolf in Germany, the comeback of wolves towards the Netherlands seems to be a matter of time.”* (14Tub). Or will they enter from the South, coming from France wolf populations in the Vosges? Next to the ‘how’ question the ‘when’ question is also raised a lot. The wolf is coming, but by

² E.g.: 8 Tr, 2 Tub, 12 Tub

³ E.g.: 19 Vlks, 7 DvhN

⁴ E.g.: 18 WiN, 24 WiN

⁵ E.g.: 10 NRC, 24 WiN



some described as possible to happen any minute while by others it is mentioned as a matter of years until the first wolf will cross the Dutch border and make its official comeback. The fact that there is a possibility for the wolf to make a comeback to the Netherlands is mentioned multiple times as being made possible by the good condition in which Dutch nature is currently thriving and the pursued nature policy of the recent years. *“The wolf back on Dutch grounds would be the crown on the pursued nature policy of the last years”* (6TLG) and *“Apparently Dutch nature is robust enough to give the wolf another chance”* (4NRC).

4.1.3 EVIDENCE COMEBACK

The only doubt that is pronounced concerning a possible comeback to the Netherlands is the observation of the first individual and with that making the comeback of the wolf in the Netherlands official. *“In only one out of thousand observations it appears to be a genuine wolf”* (9Tub). Until now often great doubts exist about the genuineness of wolf observations on Dutch grounds. *“You like to see what you want to see”* (6 Dst), *“Of course some of the notifications are also wishful thinking, people also want to a wolf”* (14Dst) and *“Really decisive evidence is often not provided”* (2DvhN). Different types of evidence like DNA, hairs or faeces are discussed as well as the strength of the provided evidence. The evidence (e.g.: photos, motion pictures or faeces), if even provided or found, is described as often of such poor quality that possible sightings of a wolf remain no more than speculations. These speculations in its turn, provide the opportunity for the emergence of new discussions and uncertainties.

4.1.4 SUITABILITY OF NATURE

Doubts and different views on the suitability of Dutch nature for the wolf come forward repeatedly. On the one hand the wolf is being considered as an asset for Dutch nature. The wolf is described as an animal which can make Dutch nature complete; *“With the comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands, the picture of Dutch nature is complete”* (8 LB) or *“Dutch nature can use a leader like the wolf, an animal which can control the system top-down”* (6Vlks). In other news articles the wolf is furthermore described as the evidence for the good condition in which Dutch nature is thriving and all the effort that has been put into this. *“If the wolf would make a comeback then that would be a compliment for our nature”* (8TLG), *“A wolf signifies mainly that nature is in a favourable condition”* (7NRC). Any doubts concerning the suitability of Dutch nature for the wolf are not expressed here. On the other hand the definition of (Dutch) nature is seriously questioned. A debate comes forward concerning the type of nature that is being talked about and the type of nature that can be found in the Netherlands. *“Our nature is landscaped and is in service of the human needs”* (11NRC). What type of nature do we have? Can we even speak of nature in the Netherlands? *“Okay, in Romania, Poland and Eastern Germany that we want to believe, but in the Netherlands with its carefully tended parks?”* (8LB). Clear doubts are from this side expressed concerning the state and suitability of Dutch nature for the wolf.

4.1.5 FUNCTION OF WOLVES IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Within this theme two clear subthemes can be described which are reflected in Dutch newspaper articles concerning the wolf: the current state of the Dutch ecosystem and the possible role of the wolf in the Dutch ecosystem. The current state of the Dutch ecosystem is mainly described as having an abundance of geese and large game animals like deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*); *“Roe deer, red deer and wild boar of which populations are still slowly expanding”* (4DvhN) and having a clear lack of a large predator which keeps these populations under control. *“A wolf would fit excellently in the Dutch ecosystem as a predator for large game animals, which currently do not have a natural enemy”* (5DvhN). Wolves are appointed multiple times as animals which will fulfil their role in the Dutch ecosystem properly, directly as a predator and indirectly as in being a good addition to the already active scavengers like for example foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*)⁶. Mentioned once is also that the wolf, through its role as a predator within the Dutch ecosystem, can possibly also make hunting and nature conservation as a whole in the Netherlands more natural by decreasing human influence⁷. When discussing the current state of the ecosystem, in multiple articles the comeback of the wolf is referred to as the evidence for the good state in which the Dutch ecosystem but also nature as a whole is thriving. Factors which

⁶ E.g.: 14 Vlks, 2 Tub, 19 Vlks, 2 Dst

⁷ E.g.: 4 DvhN



are mentioned to have contributed to the possibility for wolves to make a comeback are for example the good state in which nature is thriving, the nature policy of the last years and actively taken measures for the benefit of nature (e.g.; Ecological Main Structure)⁸. *“The wolf as a reward for all the energy which has been put into the Ecological Main Structure for the last decade”* (11Dst). Focussing then on the wolf and its role in the Dutch ecosystem, this is described from two different points of view. First of all the wolf and its function in the ecosystem is described in the light that there will be a place for the wolf in the Netherlands and with its comeback *“an interactive key species”* (15Tr) is returning which will ensure the re-emergence of a natural balance within the Dutch ecosystem. *“The wolf as a symbol that slowly complete ecosystems are arising again”* (19Vlks). Mentioned is also the possible indirect which a wolf can have on the landscape by creating indirectly, through control for example of the populations of roe deer, a more diverse landscape⁹. In addition to the possible positive role which the wolf can fulfil in the Dutch ecosystem however there is also spoken of possible risks and danger which may occur with a wolf in the Dutch ecosystem. Concern is for example expressed about the lack of a natural enemy for the wolf and with that the possibility of a population of wolves becoming a plague within the Dutch ecosystem¹⁰. Also mentioned is the possible negative effect of the wolf on the already present meso-predators, like the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), in the Dutch ecosystem.

4.1.6 BEHAVIOUR WOLVES

The behaviour of wolves is also a theme which is certainly not left undisturbed. Within this theme three clear discourse lines could be identified and will be further explained. First of all the behaviour of wolves is described as definitely not extremely shy and dangerous¹¹, an animal of which the potential risk should certainly not be underestimated. *“If a wolf sees a human being, a wolf usually makes a quick run. Nevertheless wolves or wolf-like creatures have made hundreds of fatalities all over Europe over the last decades”* (10NRC). The behaviour of a wolf is furthermore not only described as being a risk for human beings, but for a wide array of animal species the behaviour of wolves is also described as possibly dangerous. *“Once a wolf is aware that sheep can be attacked without problems or consequences, it will only be the beginning”* (3BV). On the other hand however, the behaviour of wolves is being described as very shy and forming a low-risk factor. *“Wolves should not be considered dangerous for humans: figures show that the number wolf attacks in sparsely populated areas is low, in spite of the fact that these areas have high wolf densities”* (10LB) and *“A wolf associates a human being with danger and not with a prey”* (2ADR). As a last the behaviour of wolves is considered and described as a subject of many uncertainties and possible risks. Conflicting evidence contributing to the confusion and uncertainties. Should a wolf in the Netherlands be considered dangerous or not? Shy or not? This line of discourse will be discussed more in depth under the following theme ‘risks and uncertainties’.

4.1.7 RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Described and likely also underlying the division in society are the many possible risks and uncertainties which a wolf on Dutch grounds can entail. On the one side the many possible risks and uncertainties which a wolf can bring are described as being severely underestimated in the Dutch society. Wolves should not be described as not only fun and nice, but a possible serious danger to both human and animals. A risk which should certainly not be underestimated. On the other side however, there is also spoken of overestimating risks and hazards which a wolf form or bring. *“With livestock properly protected, wolves do not form a threat and may even have a positive effect elsewhere”* (7WiN). Next to the possible risks and hazards a wolf could bring, the positive contribution of the wolf should however also be appointed. As a final, in addition to the over- or underestimation of risks regarding the wolf and his possible comeback to the Netherlands, there is in general also spoken of a big load of questions and uncertainties concerning the wolf and its possible comeback, on which at the moment no clear answers can be or have been provided.

Focussing on the risks and uncertainties, four domains of risks or uncertainties are mainly described and discussed: humans, animals, behaviour and its comeback. Focussing on humans the potential

⁸ E.g.: 4 NRC, 7 NRC, 6 TLG, 11 Dst

⁹ E.g.: 9 LB

¹⁰ E.g.: 6 TLG

¹¹ E.g.: 10 NRC, 3 Bv, 3 Vlks



financial damage and uncertainties, especially for farmers, are discussed and questioned. Who will pay for the potential damage which a wolf can inflict? What is the risk of specialization on livestock? *"Because a wolf is fun and nice, but what if he causes damage? Or starts eating sheep?"* (11LB). Will protective measures be effective enough? Contradicting evidence is also being put forward, this increasing the uncertainty. On the one hand for example it is mentioned that *"Less than one percent of the diet of wolves consists of sheep"* (1B), while on the other hand it is mentioned that *"The situation in Germany is not comparable with the one in the Netherlands.....surely in Germany is the chance that a wolf encounters a sheep much smaller than in the Netherlands"* (1B). The behaviour which a wolf will and can display on Dutch grounds towards humans furthermore also raises many questions. If a wolf shows shy behaviour in Germany does this also mean that the animal will show shy behaviour in the more densely populated Netherlands? Is there not any element of truth in the fairy tales and folk stories describing the wolf and its behaviour? On the one hand the shyness of wolves; *"If a wolf smells or sees a human being, it usually takes off"* (10NRC) and the fact that wolves have not formed a very big risk for humans over the past decades *"Within Europe, Russia and North-America only seventeen wolf victims have been reported since 1950"* (11LB, 15Tub) is discussed, but on the other hand also counterevidence is provided by mentioning *"Wolves do indeed pose a threat for humans as well as animals, in Canada alone more than ten wolf victims can be found every year"* (10Vlks). Contradicting evidence that is being described which may form a source for uncertainty among the Dutch population. Next to uncertainties concerning the behaviour of wolves also uncertainties concerning the possible place and moment of a comeback are described. Will the wolf really settle on Dutch grounds? If so, when and where? Will it be a single wolf or a pack of wolves? How many wolves can our ecosystem handle? The potential risk for public health from rabid wolves and the way to handle in these situations are also addressed as well as the risks and uncertainties relating to cattle and native animal species. *"What to think of diseases a wolf can spread?"* (5BV). *"Do we want rabies back in the Netherlands?"* (6BV). *"Are wolves dangerous for other animals in nature?"* (10NRC). The risk of hybridisation with domestic dogs and uncertainties concerning potential disease transmission to domestic pets also contribute to the discussion. Furthermore the possibility of a so called "problem wolf" ('Probleemwolf' in Dutch) is mentioned. *"How to deal with a 'problem wolf'?"* (13WiN). The right way to prepare for this is discussed as well as the potential problem which the decentralisation of nature policy can form for policy on 'problem wolves'¹². *"What a 'problem wolf' exactly is, will due to the decentralization of nature policy, be determined separately per province. It can therefore happen that a wolf which is defined as problem giving in Friesland, will not be defined as such in Overijssel or Drenthe"* (2Vlks). How to act then?

4.1.8 HOW TO ACT

A possible approaching wolf also raises questions and contributes to the generation of a discussion about whether and how the Dutch society should prepare itself: 'How to act?' How should the Dutch population act or prepare itself in advance of the arrival of the wolf and how should we act when the wolf has returned on Dutch grounds? Living for more than a century in absence of the wolf, it can be said that the current generation is hardly familiar with the species. The knowledge of how to live together with a wolf within Dutch borders is said to have faded and lacking. A possible comeback will therefore likely raise many questions and will contribute to the emergence of a divergent range of reactions. *"From experiences elsewhere it appears that the comeback of large predators often raises specific questions"* (21WiN). Important steps to take, according to some Dutch newspaper articles, are the spread of knowledge concerning the behaviour of and living with wolves. Also an important question raised and debated is how the possible arrival of the wolf in the Netherlands will be handled, both by the government as well as by other stakeholders. A management plan for example is mentioned as a good preparation for the possible comeback of the wolf and can enable the Netherlands in this way to prepare itself adequately for the social, economic and ecological consequences of the possible comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands. Drafting a claim settlement for possible animal or human victims, making sure there will be an open dialog and the duty of care for a wolf on Dutch grounds are also frequently mentioned acts within this theme¹³.

The protected status of the wolf under the Convention of Bern (1979) and the EU Habitat Directive (1992) is regularly named and the implications of this status for a wolf on Dutch grounds is being

¹² E.g.: 12 WiN

¹³ E.g.: 1 TLG, 2 B, 11 Tr, 9 Tub, 11 TLG



described for different groups within society (e.g.: the government, farmers)¹⁴. It is repeatedly named the protected status of the wolf makes sure that, with a wolf entering Dutch grounds, there will be an obligation to actively take measures in benefit of the wolf. Measures which for example should be taken in order to guarantee the welfare of the animal in the Netherlands. *"The wolf is an international protected animal species, when he puts his paw over our border we are obligated to protect him"* (22WiN). Discussed measures which the protected status of the wolf can also entail are for example those which relate to the compensation of potential damage inflicted by the wolf: *"The wolf gets in the Netherlands a legally protected status. Therefore it is possible to compensate for potential inflicted damage for livestock farms, when a wolf would attack livestock"* (3Vlks) and *"Because the wolf has a legally protected status, potential damage inflicted by the wolf can be reimbursed from the fauna fund"* (2Tr). The consequence of the protected status of the wolf for possible measures which can be enforced in case of aggression are also frequently named, for example *"A wolf which reacts aggressively without clear cause, must be removed. The same applies to a wolf which is aggressive towards dogs"* (2LB) or *"A wolf which responds unprovoked aggressively must be removed"* (5Dst). Also measures which cannot be undertaken, as a consequence of the international protected status of the wolf, are discussed. *"Shooting a wolf is in any case or situation not allowed; the wolf is heavily protected and can only be shot in very exceptional cases and under strict conditions"* (4NRC). A clear difference within the theme 'How to act?' can furthermore be found between articles written from the perspective of animal husbandry and articles written by for example 'Wolves in the Netherlands' (Wolven in Nederland). Preventing the wolf from making a comeback in the Netherlands is not possible due to its protective status, that actively measures for prevention must be taken is therefore described in the first group as an issue which cannot be ignored. *"Just waiting patiently without the protection of your sheep is the most stupid thing you could do"* (3BV). A clear image is also outlined of the possibilities which a livestock farmer has and has not to protect its livestock in the presence of the wolf on Dutch grounds. *"Since the wolf is an protected animal species, preventive measures are needed such as electric fences and guard dogs"* (7BV) and *"Safety measures ensure that wolves stay focused on their natural prey"* (9LB). With 'Wolves in the Netherlands' however, the emphasis is placed on the importance of a good preparation and measures which can already be taken in advance of the possible arrival of the wolf. *"It is good to be prepared in order to avoid panic and nuisance"* (12WiN) and *"Claim settlements and subsidies on prevention measures belong to a decent preparation, as well as agreements on how to deal with wolves which can cause problems"* (15WiN).

Further, within this theme is often referred to the gained experience in Germany. Experience with the presence of the wolf, which could serve as a good example for the Netherlands. *"The Netherlands can learn a lot from the experiences with the wolf gained in Germany over the last 20 years"* (11LB) and *"The start of the project 'Willkommen Wolf' has made it possible for the wolf to obtain a place on German grounds"* (19Vlks). Within the theme 'How to act?' the management or policy concerning the wolf is also appointed and discussed in multiple news articles¹⁵. A point for concern mentioned not often, but though ought to be important is the concern that is raised for the decentralisation of Dutch nature policy from the governmental to the provincial level and the possible consequences for future developed wolf policy for example; *"The larger the animal, the more unhandy decentralized nature policy is. A wolf obviously is not familiar with provincial boundaries"* (3Vlks). Will a wolf for example defined in the province of Drenthe as 'problem giving' also be defined the same way in the province of Utrecht? Clear doubts are being expressed concerning the decentralisation of wolf policy and the consequences thereof for the management of the species.

4.1.9 GENERAL IMAGE

Wolves can be described as charismatic but at the same also as controversial animals. For some people they are the symbol of the wild and untamed nature, mysterious and impressive, while to others they are vicious killers of ungulates and livestock and a threat for human safety. The 'image' of the wolf is a broadly discussed subject within Dutch newspaper articles concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. Focussing more on the origin of the image there is a clear story coming forward describing the role of the wolf in fairy tales like for example the Little Red Riding Hood and folktales as the basis for the development of this image. *"Fairy and folktales have provided the wolf with a negative image"* (1Tr) and *"Also, the animal suffers from a negative image since the brothers Grimm"*

¹⁴ E.g.: 15 Dst, 11 LB, 2 Tr, 12 Tr, 22 WiN

¹⁵ E.g.: 7 Bv, 2 Vlks, 3 Vlks, 2 Tr



symbolized the wolf in their fairy tales as the imagination of evil" (14Vlks). Stories of the wolf in the Middle Ages as a devourer of cattle and even children, a hungry and fierce animal or rabid wolves lurking for potential human or animal victims are frequently described, considered¹⁶ and enfeebled. For example: "Cases of gross exaggeration, since wolves have a healthy dose of suspicion and therefore try to avoid human encounters" (9LB). A clear deeply negative rooted image of the wolf is considered, in some articles described as an image likely containing an element of truth but in most articles described as unjustified. "There are few animals which have been as unjustly demonized as the wolf" (9LB). The 'Little Red Riding Hood Syndrome', a summary of all the negative prejudices concerning the wolf, is repeatedly cited and addressed as a source for unnecessary fear among the public¹⁷; "The wolf does not even like little girls with a red riding hood" (11LB), "Fairy tales have made us unnecessary fearful" (7DvhN) and "The wolf remains the beast that devoured the grandmother of the girl with the little red riding hood" (1DvhN). Misconceptions and a lack of realistic knowledge among members of society are furthermore mentioned to contribute to this deeply rooted negative and controversial image of the wolf. "There is too little realistic knowledge concerning the wolf" (11NRC) and "There are still many misconceptions in the Netherlands concerning the wolf" (24WiN).

4.1.10 ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS TOWARDS THE WOLF IN THE NETHERLANDS

The controversial image of the wolf also influences and is reflected in the 'attitudes and beliefs towards the wolf in the Netherlands'. A prevailing division is the right word to describe this theme; "Opinions are divided concerning the wolf" (10Tub). In general a clear division in for example emotions is described with on the one hand more negative emotions like evil, danger and fear, while on the other hand more positive emotions like excitement, enthusiasm and admiration are mentioned. Within the group of people expressing positive attitudes towards wolves differences are however also described. The question is for example raised whether the enthusiasm concerning the wolf and its possible comeback is not reaching a too high level, making the possible danger and risks which wolves can bring invisible; "The collective excitement on the comeback of the wolf looks a lot like the return of a lost son" (7Tr). "Jubilantly however, we overlook some possible details and problems" (11NRC). Warnings are also called here, risks and danger should certainly not be ruled out. Besides the described over-enthusiasm, there are also other positive voices heard towards the wolf. There is spoken of people having a positive attitude towards the wolf itself, however a place for this animal on Dutch grounds is unfortunately not seen as possible to happen. As argumentation for this multiple 'obstacles' in the Dutch landscape are mentioned, for example the busy and dense road network in the Netherlands; "The busy road network alone will make a lot of victims" (1Tub). Next to this group, the group of mainly livestock farmers are described as a group which recognizes the possible benefits of the presence of the wolf for Dutch nature. A possible place for wolves in the Netherlands is however also not seen here, but this since the wolf is mainly described as a serious danger and risk factor for livestock. "Wolves are a danger to livestock" (2DvhN) and the high livestock density within the Netherlands can increase the risk that livestock falls prey to the wolf. "The livestock density in the Netherlands is much higher than in Germany, which can make the Netherlands till a Cockaigne for the wolf" (3 V), "Wolves can lie with their mouths wide open in the meadow" (7BV). Next to these groups expressing a positive attitude towards the wolf itself, but not deeming the wolf suitable for the Netherlands, another group with positive attitudes also clearly comes forward. This group describes the wolf as complement to Dutch nature and being the missing link which can make Dutch nature and ecosystems even more complete. "Dutch nature can use a leader as the wolf perfectly" (5Vlks) and "With the wolf in Dutch nature, nature in the Netherlands is truly complete" (8LB). The possible comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands can according to this group not take place soon enough. If a wolf would make its comeback, it would definitely be welcomed enthusiastically. As a last there is also spoken of attitudes within society towards the wolf being too negative, where unnecessary fear prevails. "Gross exaggeration" (9LB) and "People really do not have to be afraid of wolves" (1Dst). Some suspicion towards the wolf and its behaviour is here described as justified, but exaggeration currently reigns.

¹⁶ E.g.: 7 DvhN, 6 Vlks, 19 Vlks

¹⁷ E.g.: 11 LB, 1 DvhN



4.2 DESCRIPTION OF FRAMES

The inductive framing analysis which has been performed for this research has resulted in the identification of six different frames. These frames concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands can be shortlisted as follows:

• Wolf as a missing link
• Supporters blinded by enthusiasm
• Suffering from a negative image
• Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf
• Focus on uncertainties
• Animal out of place

In the following section the above six frames will be extensively discussed. Per frame, by means of a table, a summary of the most important characteristics is furthermore provided. Empty compartments in a table indicate that the specific theme is not discussed within the frame. An overview of the used abbreviations following the quotations can be found in Appendices C.

4.2.1 WOLF AS A MISSING LINK

This frame states that the wolf is an asset to Dutch nature, which at this moment is not yet complete. The return of the wolf is characterized as an enrichment for nature in the Netherlands: *“Having the wolf in Dutch nature truly completes it”* (8LB). The argument for this is that the wolf has to be viewed as an interactive key species within the Dutch ecosystem, which will make it a complete and healthy ecosystem. According to this frame the wolf fits perfectly in the Dutch ecosystem as a hunter of big game, which at the moment does not have a natural enemy yet. Therefore the wolf will have a key role in regulating these wild ungulate populations and will be a good addition to the already present active scavengers, like for example the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). It was also stated that, because of the effect the wolf has on the size of wild ungulate populations, wolves can also have an indirect positive effect on the landscape. An example that supports the statement of the possible positive contribution of the wolf to the Dutch ecosystem is the important role of the wolf in Yellowstone National Park (USA) (9LB). The wolves there are important for regulating the population of elk (*Cervus Canadensis*) and indirectly caused the creation of a more diverse landscape. According to this frame the Netherlands is furthermore regarded as an excellent wolf country. Specifically referred to this are experiences in Germany with the wolf. In Germany wolves live in a landscape that consists of a combination of both resting and cultural areas, a diverse and attractive landscape which is comparable to parts of the landscape in the east of the Netherlands (11Tub, 8Tr, 9Tr, 1DvhN). The most important food source for wolves in Germany is roe deer, supplemented with red deer and wild boar, species which are also abundantly present in the Netherlands. Often referred to is the fact that over 70.000 roe deer live in the Netherlands (19Vlks, 7DvhN). The criticism users of this frame have is that the value of the wolf for Dutch nature is often underestimated. The wolf should really be seen as an asset for the Netherlands and the Dutch people should realize how positive it is that the Netherlands is attractive and accessible for the wolf (7NRC). The realization exists that, although the ecological support base for the impending arrival of the wolf in the Netherlands exists, on a social level people are not ready yet. Supporters of this frame believe that measures need to be taken actively for the benefit of the wolf, taking into account the protected status of the animal and making sure that living together with the wolf can take place as good as possible in a conflict free manner. It is stated for example that the protected status of the wolf results in a need to provide a quiet habitat, enough food, safety and tolerance for the animal (2Tr, 12Tr). The bearers of this frame are mostly enthusiastic, happy and impatient about the impending arrival of the wolf in the Netherlands because, according to this frame, the comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands is a fact. They believe it is just a matter of time and patience before the wolf will once again settle on Dutch territory. It is argued that the arrival of the wolf to the Netherlands should be considered as a consequence of: the reinforced position of the wolf in surrounding countries like Germany, Poland and France (10NRC, 18WiN, 10Dst, 5Tub), the fact that the wolf is getting ever closer to the Netherlands from France as well as from Germany (18WiN, 16WiN) and several wanderings of European wolves.



An example of this is a wolf, fitted by researchers with a transmitter in central Germany, which went to Belarus and back within five months (10Dst). The Netherlands is certainly within reach of the wolf according to the users of the frame and the distance for the wolf to reach the Netherlands is characterized as a distance which can be walked in only a few nights by the wolf (9LB, 7DvhN). The fact that the wolf can make a comeback to the Netherlands in the first place, is mentioned within this frame as to be made possible by the excellent state of the Dutch nature. It is even referred to as “*wolf as a reward*” (11Dst). According to this sub-frame the excellent state of the Dutch nature has been reached amongst others by the nature policy conducted in recent years and the associated measures taken for the benefit of nature (for example, the improved connection of nature areas in the Netherlands and the increase of wildlife) (e.g.: 4NRC, 4DvhN). The arrival of the wolf to the Netherlands is denoted as evidence that connecting large nature areas helps in increasing species richness.

Table 1. Summary of the frame ‘Wolf as a missing link’

Themes	Central idea: <i>Wolf as a missing link</i>
Place for wolf in the Netherlands?	Yes, there is currently an empty space which is kept free for the wolf. The value of the wolf for the Netherlands is currently underestimated. The wolf should be seen as an asset for the Netherlands.
Comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands?	Yes, it is only a matter of time before the wolf will once again settle on Dutch territory.
Evidence comeback	
Suitability of nature	Without the wolf, nature in the Netherlands is currently not yet complete. The wolf will be an asset for Dutch nature, which could use a leader like the wolf. The fact that the wolf can make a comeback in the Netherlands is made possible by the excellent state of the Dutch nature. This excellent state is amongst others achieved by: - The conducted nature policy of recent years - Measures which have been taken for the benefit of Dutch nature (e.g.: better connection of nature areas and an increase in wildlife).
Function of the wolf in the ecosystem	The wolf will upon returning to Dutch territory fill an empty space which is currently present in the Dutch ecosystem. The wolf is seen an interactive key species which will provide for a healthy Dutch ecosystem: it will improve the wildlife stock, increase biodiversity and reinforce the natural balance. A wolf in Dutch nature would symbolize the slow return of complete ecosystems in the Netherlands.
Behaviour of wolves	
Risks and uncertainties	
How to act?	Actively measures should be taken for the benefit of the wolf.
General image of the wolf (in frame)	
General image of the wolf (in society)	
Attitude towards the wolf in Netherlands (in frame)	Enthusiasm, joy and impatience.



Attitude towards the wolf in Netherlands (in society)	Currently the value of the wolf for the Netherlands is still underestimated. Enthusiasm and support are slowly rising.
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4.2.2 SUPPORTERS BLINDED BY ENTHUSIASM

This frame states that, in their enthusiasm about the possible return of the wolf to the Netherlands, people neglect to think about the possible negative consequences the return of the wolf might have. The criticism that users of this frame express is that because of the enthusiasm certain dangers and risks get overlooked (11Vlks, 5ADR, 4NRC). According to this frame it is important to also keep the possible negative consequences of the arrival of the wolf in the Netherlands in mind, since the wolf is a dangerous and risky animal. It is stated that the enthusiasm which is voiced in Dutch society about the possible return of the wolf can be compared to bringing back a lost son (5ADR, 7Tr). According to the bearers of the frame it would be better to temper the enthusiasm a bit, with reference to the return of the wild boar in the Netherlands: *“Everybody talked with the same enthusiasm about the return of the boar then like they now do about the wolf. A few years later we suffer from a plague”* (5ADR). Apart from that also some caution concerning the behavior of wolves is voiced. Besides the risky behavior of wolves and possible negative impact of the wolf for the Dutch ecosystem, the emphasis of this frame is also placed on the attitude and emotions of the average Dutchman towards the wolf. *“A wolf is not associated with danger anymore, but with a nice daytrip”* (11Vlks) and *“We yearn so much to the possible return of the wolf after such a long period of absence, that we are already cheering about a dead wolf in the Northeast Polder”* (3Tr). The frame states that, exactly because the Dutch people are not afraid of wolves, people should have the courage to recognize the potential risks that come with the wolves (11NRC, 4NRC). These risks should certainly not be underestimated. What if a wolf causes damage? Is there a risk of spreading diseases? Within this frame it is recognized that we do not have to be afraid of the wolf and its possible return to the Netherlands, but that a certain degree of caution and preparation is appropriate. It is stated that recognizing the dangers and risks which come with the return of the wolf and taking appropriate measures is the right course of action. According to the bearers of the frame this is not only helpful for society, but also for the wolf itself.

Table 2. Summary of the frame ‘Supporters blinded by enthusiasm’

Themes	Central idea: <i>Supporters blinded by enthusiasm</i>
Place for the wolf in the Netherlands	Doubt. Having wolves in the Netherlands will have, besides a possible positive contribution, also many possible dangers and/or negative consequences, which should not be underestimated. Is the Dutch society prepared?
Comeback to the Netherlands?	
Evidence comeback	
Suitability of nature	
Function of the wolf in the ecosystem	A wolf in the Dutch ecosystem could very well be a danger and/or a risk. Wolves could for example develop into a plague or can suppress meso-predators like the fox.
Behaviour wolves	Wolves are not shy and harmless. The possible uncertainties/more negative aspects concerning the behavior of the wolf have to be taken into account.
Risks and uncertainties	Possible problems or risks coming with the return of the wolf should be recognized and certainly not be underestimated. Is there a risk of spreading diseases? To what extent is the wolf a danger for human kind and animals?
How to act?	Education/extra knowledge is needed, not just about the positive aspects of the wolf, but also about the dangers and risks of a wolf on



	Dutch grounds. This will not just be helpful for society, but also for the wolf itself.
General image of the wolf (in frame)	Dangerous and risky animal.
General image of the wolf (in society)	
Attitudes towards the wolf in Netherlands (in frame)	Certain degree of caution is certainly needed.
Attitudes towards the wolf in Netherlands (in society)	Too enthusiastic about the wolf. Only positive things are to be heard, seen and considered, this while the enthusiasm could better be tempered a bit.

4.2.3 SUFFERING FROM A NEGATIVE IMAGE

This frame states that the wolf suffers from an (unjustified) negative image. The image of the wolf as a dangerous animal is described by the users of this frame as the biggest problem for the return of the wolf to the Netherlands. It is stated that over the centuries only few animals have been so unjustly demonized as the wolf. The frame suggests that there are countless misconceptions and faulty scientific claims which unjustly slander the image of the wolf. Often explicitly referred to is the role of the villain which the wolf plays in numerous folk stories and fairytales and which has damaged the image of the wolf (9LB, 11LB, 14Vlks, 4DvhN). "*The big bad wolf*" (1DvhN, 15WiN) and "*The man-eating beast from little red riding hood*" (2ADR) are expressions which according to the bearers of this frame are considered as gross exaggerations. They argue that the lack of realistic knowledge and the wolf being a mediagenic animal causes the knowledge that is spread about the wolf to be mostly based on misconceptions, fairytales and other myths. This has caused the wolf to become a symbol, torn away from a realistic context (11NRC, 10LB). It is stated that the fear of wolves is unfounded and that wolves are not as dangerous as folktales and cultural clichés make us believe. The argument for this is that wild wolves are not fond of humans and that wolves are animals with a healthy dose of shyness and suspicion (11Dst, 14Dst, 9LB, 17WiN). "*The wolf is a shy animal that not even protects its own young when it comes down to it*" (11Dst), "*Man has nothing to fear of the wolf, the wolf has learned to avoid people*" (14Dst). Besides this, also reference is made to experiences with wolves in other European countries, Russia and North America, experiences which, according to the bearers of this frame, confirm that the fear of wolves is largely unfounded (15Tub, 11LB). For example, in Germany there are a few dozen young wolves running around without hardly anyone noticing and territorial wolves hardly cause trouble for farmers, if sheep and goats are kept behind decent fences (17WiN). Bearers of this frame argue that the deep-rooted negative image of the wolf causes a lot of unnecessary fear, which needs to be removed if the wolf is coming to the Netherlands. It is suggested that the current image of the wolf within society should be adjusted, which should be accomplished by spreading realistic information about the wolf, its behavior and living together with the species (7DvhN, 19Vlks, 10Tr, 14Tub). Explicitly referred to is the example of Germany, where the wolf was also seen as an enemy and a threat to human kind. The project 'Willkommen Wolf', which aims to make sure that wolf and human kind can live together with the least amount of possible conflicts, has ensured that the wolf has got a foothold in Germany and that its comeback went on without hysteria (9Tub, 19Vlks). This project is seen as an example of how Dutch society could prepare itself for the arrival of the wolf to the Netherlands. Bearers of this frame argue that the wolf is definitely welcome in the Netherlands, but that society is not yet ready for it. There is a lot of work to be done!



Table 3. Summary of the frame 'Suffering from a negative image'

Themes	Central idea: Suffering from a negative image
Place for the wolf in the Netherlands?	Yes, but the Dutch society is not yet ready. The current image of the wolf within society is often based on too little/unrealistic knowledge.
Comeback to the Netherlands?	
Evidence comeback	
Suitability of nature	
Function of the wolf in the ecosystem	
Behaviour wolves	Unjustified image of a dangerous and unpredictable animal. Focus at the moment is too much on possible unwanted behavior of the wolf.
Risks/uncertainties	The dangers and possible problems of the wolf are mostly overestimated and the possible positive aspects of the wolf are not seen/named.
How to act?	Unjustified image of the wolf deserves adjustment. Spreading (realistic) knowledge, which is now mostly missing. If the wolf should arrive in the Netherlands, the wolfs image needs to be altered.
General image of the wolf (in frame)	Wolf is an unjustly victim.
General image of the wolf (in society)	Deep-rooted negative image of the wolf dominates, the image is often torn from the realistic context. The image is mostly amplified by the media, which uses the role the wolf plays in fairytales and horror stories.
Attitudes towards wolves in Netherlands (in frame)	The wolf is welcome in the Netherlands, however society should first be better prepared. At the moment the Dutch society is not ready yet.
Attitudes towards wolves in Netherlands (in society)	Negative attitude towards the wolf, fear and suspicion. A healthy dose of suspicion is justified, but exaggeration dominates.



4.2.4 STAKEHOLDERS POWERLESS AGAINST THREATENING WOLF

This frame argues that the wolf is an impending danger which does not belong in the Netherlands. It states that the return of the wolf is certainly a good thing for nature, but that for certain groups within society (in particular farmers), the wolf will not be welcome (1TLG, 5BV). The Netherlands is characterized as densely populated, which can be negative especially for human kind, but might be positive for the wolf. *"The Netherlands with its many recreationists in nature and many lambs, foals and calves in the meadows in spring is a Mecca for the wolf"* (16Tub). According to this frame, it will mainly be farmers who will have to work hard when wolves would make a comeback (3ADR, 10TR, 2B). The argument for this is that a wolf will attack livestock when it is not adequately protected and experiences in other wolf countries like Germany and France confirm that the wolf does not dislike a sheep, calf or goat. The potential additional risk of specialization by wolves in cattle is also named as an uncertainty and risk (1BV, 3BV): *"Problems start when the predator takes a sheep and subsequently specializes in it"* (1BV). The criticism further expressed by the users of this frame is that the Netherlands is difficult to compare with other neighboring countries, a higher population density and many easy targets around may make it difficult for the wolf remain shy. The fact that wolves for example only kill a few dozen sheep a year in the German state of Saxony (3BV, 4BV), does according to the users of the frame not mean that this would also be the case in the Netherlands. *"Sheep density in the Netherlands is much higher than in Germany, which could make the Netherlands a Mecca for the wolf"* (3BV). The frame suggests a sense of powerlessness and many concerns among stakeholders in the Netherlands. The argument for this is that on the one hand the wolf (before it has even put a paw on Dutch territory) cannot be stopped at the Dutch border because of its national and international protected status and therefore involves a forced acceptance (1DvN, 12TR, 7BV). On the other hand, this therefore means that because the wolf has been granted with a protected status and no direct measures against the presence of this species are allowed, farmers are forced to, for example take preventive measures. However, it is suggested that additional preventive measures, which may be effective, will entail extra costs, administration and manpower, while margins in the industry are already small. *"Many hobby farmers have already stopped, when costs become even higher I foresee that many professional sheepherders will also quit"* (3BV). It is recognized that not investing in preventive measures is not an option. Criticism which users of this frame further express is that possible damage caused by the presence of the wolf in Dutch territory in all probability again will unilaterally end up with the farmer, which is currently also the case with for example damage caused by wild boars (5BV, 1TLG). It is suggested that nature in the Netherlands has already been adjusted for the wolf, with which society wants to facilitate the return of the animal. A joint welcome for the wolf will, for the bearers of the frame, mean that we as a society will collectively pay the costs that wolves in the Netherlands may cause. Preparation of proper claim management and possible subsidies for taking preventive measures are seen as adequate preparation measures with which the government can already get to work (15WiN, BV, 1TLG).

Table 4. Summary of the frame 'Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf'

Themes	Central idea: <i>Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf</i>
Place for wolf in the Netherlands?	No, the Netherlands is too small and crowded. The wolf is an intruder, dangerous for livestock and an unwelcome guest.
Comeback to the Netherlands	Yes, the wolf is coming and can unfortunately not be stopped at the border because of the protected status. Acceptance is mandatory.
Evidence comeback	
Suitability of nature	Nature is adapted for the wolf. For nature the return will be great.
Function of the wolf in the ecosystem	
Behaviour wolf	Dangerous, risk, unpredictable.
Risks/uncertainties	Food choice? Specialization in livestock? Financial damage? Effectiveness of protective measures? Risks for man and animal? What if there is no (financial) room for additional measures?



How to act?	Whatever is done, the wolf cannot be stopped. Farmers are forced to take expensive prevention measures, which require additional investments, labor and administration. Proper claim management needs to be arranged by the government. At all costs it should be avoided that the damage falls to a single labor group.
General image of the wolf (in frame)	Dangerous, shy and unpredictable animal.
General image of the wolf (in society)	
Attitudes towards wolves in Netherlands (in frame)	Intruder, danger, unwelcome guest. Danger to livestock. Powerlessness. If society wants to achieve the return of the wolf, than costs have to be paid collectively.
Attitudes towards the wolf in Netherlands (in society)	

4.2.5 FOCUS ON UNCERTAINTIES

This frame suggests that the wolf and its possible return to the Netherlands may bring along many risks and uncertainties and already causes great division within the Dutch society. Whether there will be a suitable place for the wolf within the Dutch borders is considered doubtful. The argument for this is that there are many issues related to the wolf which make people question, doubt and discuss the return of the wolf. The number of wolves that could potentially live in the Netherlands, the state of Dutch nature, our infrastructure and the existing division within society are typified in this frame as issues which are under discussion and raise many questions. *"Is there locally room for small populations of wolves or a few individuals?"* (11 LB) and *"Is the situation in Germany comparable to the one in the Netherlands?"* (3 BV). Uncertainties and risks are also seen in the possible behavior that wolves will exhibit in Dutch territory. *"For a wolf it is all well and good, but what if he devours sheep?"* (4 NRC) and *"What about diseases which a wolf can spread?"* (5 BV). According to this frame the possible comeback of the wolf is also an event which will raise many uncertainties and questions. The "where" and "when" of a comeback, the establishment of a number of wolves or multiple packs, possible sightings of wolves on Dutch territory and the authenticity of wolf sightings are mentioned and discussed. *"What will happen if a wolf shows itself in the Netherlands?"* (17 Tub). Is preparation desirable to avoid possible panic and disturbance? It is further stated that great division exists within Dutch society in attitudes toward the wolf, ranging from enthusiasm to a hazard. *"Opinions about the wolf are divided"* (11 Tub) and *"Not everyone is enthusiastic about the arrival of the wolf"* (12Tr). The frame sketches the image of the Netherlands being divided, even before the wolf has returned. Some view the wolf as an asset to nature, others see the animals as a threat to humans and other animals. Bearers of this frame also argue that the possible return of the wolf in Dutch territory can lead to a polarization which can cause an even greater divisions within the Dutch society. The division over the wolf within society and the many risks and uncertainties surrounding the wolf and his return, cause many doubts about a possible place within Dutch society for the wolf.

Table 5. Summary of the frame 'Focus on uncertainties'

Theme	Central idea: <i>Focus on uncertainties</i>
Place for wolf in the Netherlands?	Yes and no. The wolf in the Netherlands is an asset for nature, but also brings along danger, risks and uncertainties. Will the wolf find enough tranquillity in the Netherlands? Is there enough space? What about the busy infrastructure?
Comeback to the Netherlands	Will the wolf really settle in the Netherlands? When and where? Will one wolf settle or a whole pack?
Evidence comeback	Authenticity of sightings? Is a picture enough evidence?



Suitability of nature	Does Dutch nature fulfil the requirements of the wolf? Is a wolf suitable for nature in Netherlands? Is there still real nature in the Netherlands?
Function of the wolf in the ecosystem	Facilitating natural balance or possible plague? How many wolves can our ecosystem handle?
Behaviour of wolf	Dangerous yes or no? Choice of food? Shy and harmless? Risk of spreading diseases?
Risks and uncertainties	
How to act?	Spreading information about the wolf in advance? How to handle wolves attacking livestock of rabid wolves? Compensation arrangements? Preventive measures?
General image of the wolf (in frame)	
General image of the wolf (in society)	
Attitudes towards wolves in Netherlands (in frame)	Uncertainty and doubt
Attitudes towards the wolf in Netherlands (in society)	Division. Exciting and welcome or dangerous and unwanted? There is now already division in opinion among the people, what will it be like when the wolf truly returns? Polarisation?

4.2.6 ANIMAL OUT OF PLACE

This frame suggests that the Netherlands will not be a suitable new habitat for the wolf. That is regretted. The argument for this is that there are several "obstacles" for the wolf in the Dutch landscape, which prevent the animal to fulfill its role properly. The high population density, the busy Dutch (rail) road network, cancelling natural connections and the status and amount of nature in the Netherlands are all seen as obstacles which will make the establishment of the species in the Netherlands difficult or even impossible. According to this frame, the Netherlands is too crowded and small for establishment of the wolf. As an example the difference between the German and Dutch situation is taken. "*The difference with Germany is the lack of areas with little human activity*" (9 Tub). "*Insufficient tranquility is the biggest obstacle for the establishment of the wolf in the Netherlands*" (2 Tub). Doubts about the state, definition and quantity of nature in the Netherlands are also used in this frame to support the image of the Netherlands as unsuitable new habitat for the wolf. Bearers of the frame are unsure about the state of Dutch nature and whether it meets the requirements of the wolf. "*Indeed, it is questionable whether there is room for a predator like the wolf in our park-like landscapes*" (4 TLG). The frame comes together with a sense of disappointment that the Dutch landscape has no place to offer for a wolf within the national borders, this while the animal is just so close. It states that the arrival of the wolf would certainly be positively received, but that the Netherlands is just not considered suitable for the wolf.

Table 6. Summary of the frame 'Animal out of place'

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Central idea:</u> <i>Animal out of place</i>
Place for the wolf in the Netherlands	Sadly not. Dutch landscape is not considered as suitable for the wolf, there are too many 'obstacles'.
Comeback to the Netherlands	
Evidence comeback	
Suitability of nature	Doubts are expressed concerning the state, definition and quantity of Dutch nature for the wolf. Is there still real nature in the Netherlands? The kind of nature that suits the needs of the wolf?



Function of the wolf in the ecosystem	
Behaviour wolves	
Risks and uncertainties	
How to act?	
General image of the wolf (in frame)	
General image of the wolf (in society)	
Attitudes towards the wolf in Netherlands (in frame)	Positive. However the Netherlands is not considered suitable as a new habitat for the wolf.
Attitudes towards the wolf in Netherlands (in society)	



5. DISCUSSION

Given the popularity and the attention that has been paid to the wolf and its possible comeback within the Dutch news media, it can be seen as a good moment to strengthen the scientific basis on which for example also conservationists and policy makers base their plans. As a densely populated country, with more than a century in absence of the wolf, it can be said that the current generation is hardly familiar with the wolf. A wolf on its return can therefore not only be considered as a biological or ecological case, the social aspects relating to this subject are important as well. For this master thesis we were therefore interested in the different conceptualisations of the wolf in the Dutch news media, this because a successful conceptualisation can steer the attention of the reader to those aspects of an issue which are considered to be important. The main aim of this thesis was therefore *'to investigate how the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback is conceptualised in the Dutch news media'*. It was reasoned that the Dutch news media, by serving as a direct forum for the debate on wolves, could provide us with a good reflection of the national debate on wolves and their possible existence in the Netherlands.

For this master thesis a framing perspective was adopted in order to analyse and identify the different conceptualizations of the wolf and its possible comeback in the Dutch news media. The main research question to be answered was:

Which conceptualisations for the wolf (Canis lupus) and its possible comeback can be identified in the Dutch news media?

On the basis of a qualitative interpretative content analysis has been worked towards an answer on this main research question. Previous chapters have described the theoretical framework, the methodological accountability and the final research results. In paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 answers on the research questions will be provided. The findings will furthermore be linked to previous work of other authors on this topic and will be discussed in the background of the scientific objective and the research question set for this master thesis. A critical reflection on the choices made in this research design will also be provided in paragraph 5.3. Lastly, in paragraph 5.4 suggestions for the conduction of future research on this topic will also be discussed.

5.1 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

During the coding process it was noticed that some themes were clearly discussed and described more extensively in the Dutch news media as others. The themes 'Place for the wolves in the Netherlands', 'Comeback to the Netherlands', 'Risks and uncertainties' and 'How to act' are examples of themes which were broadly discussed. Described under these coded themes are for example reasons whether or not there is a place for wolves within the Dutch borders, the how and when concerning the possible comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands. Reason for the active discussion surrounding these themes is likely the topicality of the subject through for example the multiple wolf sightings and the ever closer approaching wolf populations which makes themes also more easy to grasp. Following a literature review prior to the analysis process, it was however also expected that themes such as knowledge systems, wildness and history of wolves in the Netherlands would have been discussed more intensively. Regarding for example knowledge systems as not (often) found in newspaper articles, it could for example be that this specific theme will come forward more in the Dutch news media if the wolf has really arrived on Dutch grounds and one has gained direct experience with the presence of the wolf. Petty *et al.*, (1997) showed that direct experience with large carnivores leads to stronger attitudes, where knowledge systems could play an important role. It is expected that with the comeback of the wolf towards the Netherlands, and thus direct experience with the species, this theme will be more topical and be covered in the Dutch news media more often. The theme wildness is also a theme which was appointed regularly in scientific articles, but was in Dutch media articles concerning the wolf not often discussed. This while in literature the theme was widely discussed. Kleese (2002) for example raised the question whether the wolf should be considered as being a wild animal representing wild and untamed nature. Buller (2004) discussed the wolf in relation to the boundary between wild and domesticated. A possible explanation for the little or no discussion of this theme within the Dutch news media could however not be provided.

It furthermore noticed that within the coded themes in particular more negative aspects like risks, danger and disadvantages of a wolf in the Netherlands prevailed. The positive addition which a wolf could for



example also be for the Netherlands was really only discussed under the theme 'Function in the ecosystem'. Within this theme the wolf was mainly described as an asset for Dutch nature and an animal which would fulfil a beneficial role within the ecosystem. This while wolves could for example, in addition to their possible positive role in the ecosystem, also contribute to the development of for example ecotourism, which could be beneficial for the leisure sector in the Netherlands. A positive contribution of the wolf in this form was however hardly mentioned. The question could be raised whether there can indeed more negative than positive aspects be found concerning the wolf and its possible comeback or that the negative aspects concerning the wolf find a broader support within society and are therefore mentioned more often than arguments mentioning positive aspects of the wolf and its possible comeback.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF FRAMES

Results reveal that the news media use different frames to give meaning to the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. As a result of the analysis of a large number of Dutch newspaper articles the following six frames could be described: '*Wolf as a missing link*', '*Supporters blinded by enthusiasm*', '*Suffering from a negative image*', '*Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf*', '*Focus on uncertainties*' and '*Animal out of place*'. Frames as for example '*Wolf as a missing link*', '*Suffering from a negative image*' and '*Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf*' came forward clearly and were described extensively in the Dutch news media, this in contrast to the for example less frequent heard frames '*Animal out of place*' and '*Supporters blinded by enthusiasm*'. That some frames were encountered more often could for example be due to the fact that they better reflect cultural beliefs by which these frames are easier to grasp in the light of what appears to be the basic belief or not (Figari & Skogen, 2011). A cultural belief on which many stories about the wolf for example seemed to be based was the story of the 'Little Red Riding Hood Syndrome'. Another cultural belief which was for example recognised in the frame '*Wolf as a missing link*', was the more scientific ecological theory concerning the wolf.

The qualitative research approach furthermore showed that references are made to different arguments to demonstrate positive or negative aspects of the wolf as well as on the possible comeback of the species to the Netherlands. Within the frame '*Wolf as a missing link*' the focus was for example clearly placed on the positive contribution which a wolf can and will be for nature in the Netherlands. Positive voices described in Dutch newspaper articles were mainly pointing at the importance of the animal for Dutch nature, creating stability in the system and being the missing link in the Dutch ecosystem. A finding which has also been described in scientific literature by for example Kellert (1985), mentioning positive voices describing the wolf mainly by pointing at the ecological importance of the animal for habitat balance and stability for the system as a whole. In addition to the frames with a more positive focus on the wolf, frames with a predominantly negative focus were also found. Within the frames '*Supporters blinded by enthusiasm*', '*Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf*' and '*Focus on uncertainties*' the in general more positive view seems to have changed into a view with an emphasis on the possible negative consequences, risks and danger which a wolf can form for humans as well as animals. Arguments pointing at the possible threat which a wolf can form for human safety or economic interests which could be provoked, were for example named. Serious doubts were within these frames pronounced concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. Negative perceptions of the wolf and its possible comeback which have also been recognized in scientific literature on the topic of the wolf and are described as often associated with fears about its presumed danger to humans, traditional cultural depiction or potential threat to human property. Research of Hilbers *et al.*, (2011) for example mentioned that the appointed disadvantages of the comeback of the wolf are mainly related to for example the possible danger to humans, or the material and financial consequences for farmers. The frame '*Suffering from a negative image*' is precisely a frame which mentions this, in the opinion, unduly negative focus and describes that a wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands should not solely be considered as something negative. A realistic view is considered to be important; a wolf is not an animal to pet, but also not a murderer. In contrast to the earlier mentioned frames, in which the focus was mainly placed on the positive or negative aspects of the wolf for human society, within the frame '*Animal out of place*' the focus is clearly placed on the well-being of the wolf and the living conditions of the wolf in the Netherlands. The focus is within this frame was clearly not placed on the well-being of human kind, but on the well-being of the wolf in the Netherlands.

Furthermore was also noticed that more frames with a positive view towards the wolf were lacking, finding a possible explanation for this was not easy. Since the focus of this study was not placed on the analysis or description of reasons for the emergence of frames, this study does also not provide information on this topic. A possible explanation for the presence of more frames with a more negative



view on the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands can therefore also be found in different directions. A first explanation could be that frames with a more negative view on the wolf could for example raise more support than frames with a more positive view, this since they are better linked with values and beliefs which are culturally accepted as important or true. As an example here, the 'Little Red Riding Hood Syndrome' can be mentioned, a commonly heard and discussed cultural belief with a predominantly negative view on the wolf. Van Gorp (2007) and Gamson & Modigliani (1989) mentioned that a frame which better reflects the beliefs and available frames of references, has a greater chance to be recognized and propagated than if this is not the case. Another possible explanation for the fact that more frames with a positive view towards the wolf were not found, could for example be found in the diversity among supporters. It could for example be that among supporters with a positive view towards the wolf less diversity prevails, which results in multiple supporters able to 'unite' in a frame. This may then contribute to the creation of only a small number of frames with a positive view towards the wolf.

Looking back on the obtained results it was furthermore noticed that not much has been written about if the comeback of the wolf is also favourable for the species itself. Here for instance can be thought of if a larger habitat for the wolf, which could ensure an expansion of the population, could have a positive effect on the genetic diversity of the population. Arguments which were however appointed repeatedly, were arguments stating why the comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands would not be favourable for the species. Also the possible material impact of the wolf played an important role in the debate. A possible reason for the high prevalence of arguments stating why the comeback of the wolf to the Netherlands would not be favourable for the species could be due to the fact that this type of arguments correspond better with important thoughts or cultural elements in our society towards the wolf, they therefore find a broader support and are therefore also propagated more often and more frequently. On a regular basis, for example, reference was made to the evil and angry role which the wolf fulfils in many well-known folk stories and fairy tales like the 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Argumentation supporting the view of the wolf as an cunning and dangerous animal. By Buijs, Mattijssen & Kamphorst (2013) it was appointed that for frames it is important to be credible, considered to be relevant and have persuasiveness. The risk a wolf may for example pose for society can in that case be considered to be more relevant as the positive effect of habitat expansion for the population of wolves. These arguments can simply be considered stronger and more appealing to most of the people than argumentation focussed on why the comeback is favourable for the species itself. What in addition could also play a role here is that the wolf as an animal species is currently making its comeback, is not seriously threatened anymore and one could therefore attach less importance to media articles which provide an explanation on the positive effect of the possible comeback for the species itself.

As a last point of discussion concerning the frames used in Dutch newspaper articles, it seemed that in some articles it was not even the wolf being the central point of the frame use. It seemed in some cases that the wolf vouched for something else happening in society, it was not just the wolf being talked about but a much wider context that was considered. In a news article was for example referred to the wolf potentially becoming a pest, this with all the financial and immaterial consequence coming with it. Referred here also was to the comeback of the wild boar to the Netherlands. An animal species which was years ago welcomed into the Netherlands with open arms, but that now symbolizes a species of which the population continues to increase with a wide array of financial and immaterial consequences. If one thinks of the wild boar then automatically is also thought of the consequences for the human economy as they can cause crop damage and transmit diseases to livestock and wildlife, but also dangerous situations in the traffic. In some articles the wolf was also already considered as a bringer of possible changes in the rural economy. Here was for example spoken of investing in precautionary measures for the protection of livestock but also measures focussed on prevention of contact between livestock and wolves. In other news articles the wolf functioned as a symbol for the current state in which Dutch nature is thriving at the moment. The return of the wolf was in newspaper articles for example described as being the evidence for the good state in which Dutch is thriving, since the wolf is likely able to establish a new and suitable habitat on Dutch grounds. In scientific literature Figari & Skogen (2011) have described the wolf as *"a symbol of the wild"* or *"the antithesis of the humanized"*. The wolf mentioned here as the symbol for something else happening and not just the wolf itself being the central point of attention. In a few other coded news articles the wolf was being described as the symbol for the influence of national or international nature policy, which will for example mean a mandatory acceptance of the wolf on Dutch territory. The wolf seemed here to be the symbol for political pressure for higher up. Similarity can here be found with Lynn (2010) describing the wolf as *"an important political symbol"*.



Since the process of framing is all about the effort of different actors to enhance the acceptance of their frames of a specific issue or event, the success of these efforts have been described as depending on the content of the frame and also the contexts in which actors propagate these frames (Buijs, 2009). The following five features, described in literature as able to increase the frame resonance, were selected from scientific literature and have been coded for in the analysis process: cultural resonance, experiential commensurability, centrality, empirical credibility and credibility of the authors or claim makers. During the analysis however, it proved to be very difficult to recognize and name these concepts in news media articles, what subsequently also made the coding of these features a difficult job. A feature which could however clearly be identified and recognized, was cultural resonance. A feature which has already been extensively described in scientific literature by different authors. The “Little Red Riding Hood Syndroom” can be considered a good example of cultural resonance which came forward clearly in news media articles on topic of the wolf. A powerful concept that resonates within Dutch culture and can be described as the summary of all the negative aspects on the wolf. The application of the other four features was however much more difficult, reason for this could be that these features were insufficiently described in scientific literature, therefore also not clearly enough defined in the theoretical framework of this thesis and therefore also too vague and difficult to identify during the coding process. In scientific literature difficulties in defining and applying some of these features have also been described. In particular the features experiential commensurability and empirical credibility were mentioned. In earlier scientific research, where these concepts have been applied, Zou & Benford (1995) mentioned that “*these concepts work hand in hand*” and according to Babb (1996) the two categories could simply be collapsed without any comment. Naming and describing some of these features was also here described as very difficult. A good example of this was the fact that wolves do pose a threat to the agricultural sector, since in Germany sheep were found to be part of the wolves menu. A statement which could on the one side be assigned to empirical credibility, but on the other side also certainly to experiential commensurability. The clear assignment of this portion of text into one of the concepts appeared in this case therefore also to be very difficult. When carrying out a possible follow-up research it is therefore recommended to not distinguish both features separately, since there appears to be little difference in practice between both features.

5.3 REFLECTION ON RESEARCH METHOD

The selection of the research material for this study, has been a reasoned, but also a practical choice. By means of the selected news sources, it was attempted to show a broad image of the frames present in Dutch news media articles on the topic of the wolf. Within the collected data, according to Boeije (2005), a researcher is expected to continue until a so called ‘saturation’ occurs. Within the selected sources for this research study, saturation has been reached. During the coding process work was continued until no new categories and information were recognized and thus within the sources saturation was reached. Coming back to the selection of news sources that has been made, this obviously had an influence on the obtained results. When for example the research had started with a broader base and other news sources on the topic of the wolf this would probably also have yielded additional or other frames. In addition to the manner in which news sources have been selected, the interpretative character of the applied inductive research strategy likely also has had an influence on the obtained results. It would be highly unlikely for other students to come to the exact same frames if this research would be repeated. A number of frames would, in all likelihood, also have come forward due to their strong presence and robustness in Dutch newspaper articles. This making these frames more easy to recognize. Here can be thought of the frames ‘*Wolf as a missing link*’ or ‘*Focus on uncertainties*’. A frame like ‘*Supporters blinded by enthusiasm*’, which in comparison with the previously mentioned frames emerged less clearly, would perhaps not have been found by other students performing the exact same research. Since this study had a clear explorative character, with the aim to understand the frames which occur within the broader debate about the wolf, future research with a slightly different focus (e.g.: with a focus on frame-sponsors) could be a good addition.

A possible disadvantage of the highly interpretive character of an inductive research strategy is that this could make it very difficult to replicate the research in the future and could in addition also provide other or new insights when this study is repeated (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Further, it is also the case that the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific socio-political and historical moment, meaning that one cannot escape the personal interpretation that has been brought into the analysis (Creswell, 2003). In order to reduce the possible influence of the researcher in future research even more, a researcher could for example make use of peer debriefings in which the researcher presents possible interpretations to other researchers. To test the reliability of the data



analysis Thomas (2006) furthermore suggests to apply checks of interrater reliability, in which another coder could for example check the defined categories and the text that belongs into those categories. Although the inductive approach is by some authors mentioned as not as strong as other approaches in the area of model or theory development, the approach does provide a simple and straightforward way for deriving findings on the basis of which a clear answer on the established research questions can be provided.

Finally, there were also a number of difficulties where I as a researcher had to deal with in this research. First of all my great interest and therefore enthusiasm about the wolf, which could ensure that I would not undertake this research with an objective eye and could have affected the entire analysis process and the results obtained. In addition, could my background as a student in the field of forest and nature conservation also contribute to a certain perspective on this topic. A certain vision on the role of the wolf in the Dutch nature might for example be more appealing and therefore more noticeable for me. However, by being aware of this since the start of the research project and in addition to this also having performed a literature review prior to the analysis process, I am convinced this research has taken place in a very objective way. Another difficult point in the study, was that I had no experience as a researcher with the coding of newspaper articles. Therefore, especially in the initial phase of the research study, I had the feeling that the coding of the news articles took some extra time and effort. Assigning the appropriate level of detail for the codes was experienced by me as a rather difficult and time consuming process. As a researcher I experienced difficulties with finding the right level of abstraction for the codes to be used. When assigning too general codes, the risk would be that I would have a statement after the analysis of what apparently was relevant, but that a lack of insight was gained in the different views on a specific topic. Coding in a too detailed way on the other side would have given me a fairly accurate picture, but would at the end of the data analysis have provided a set of codes that would all be unique or would occur only sporadically. By being aware of this since the start of the coding process, extra attention has been paid with assigning the appropriate level of abstraction for the codes. A next difficult step was to merge the coded fragments into themes and in frames. In order to merge themes there has been tried to reduce the total list of categories by grouping topics which relate to each other. To support this process, for example lines were drawn between categories showing interrelationships. A last difficult point during the analysis process, was the coding for framing and reasoning devices. Looking back on the coding process I appeared to have applied and traced the concepts on a too detailed level and not according to the higher level of abstraction of Van Gorp (2007), described in the theoretical framework. The inductive nature of this study might have contributed to the way in which these concepts have been coded. The higher level of abstraction of Van Gorp (2007) might have been easier to apply in a study with a more deductive nature. Due to the fact that the coding of the framing and reasoning devices has taken place on a too detailed level, discussion of these concepts in a separate chapter therefore proved to be not an option. Taking also into account the time frame for this research study, made the abstraction of these concepts back to a higher level of abstraction not possible anymore. A sub question related to these concepts was therefore also released.



5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In any research choices are made; so also in this study. Choices are often necessary or they are made from a practical point of view. Because certain choices have been made, this study has taken place within a predefined area. It is up to other researchers to explore the new terrain on which this study has made no statements. In this paragraph therefore some suggestion are made for future research.

The results of this study offer a few opportunities and leads for future research. Now through this study insights have been gained on the frame use concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands, it could be interesting for future research to shift the focus slightly and to look at for instance frame-sponsors, people and organisations which have a clear opinion on this topic, for which the comeback of the wolf can have very different consequences (positive or negative) and probably all try to bring a different frame into the world. For all involved actors it may therefore be interesting to gain insight in the different visions and goals regarding the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands. Insights which may also be helpful for future research of scientist or managers. Besides just analysing news media articles of these groups, in-depth interviews could be conducted in order to get an even better understanding of the different views and arguments concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands.

In addition it would also be interesting to repeat this study once again when the wolf has made its official comeback to the Netherlands. Several scientific articles have highlighted that attitudes towards the wolf often change when the animal really starts to have an impact on the social environment. Zimmerman, Wabakken & Dötterer (2001) for example mentioned in their work that "*Attitudes towards large carnivores seem to be related to what experience respondents have had with them*". Acceptance of carnivores was found to be high as long as carnivores lived far away from where people live, or if the chance of re-establishment is very low. When carnivores came closer, the acceptance decreased, and negative attitudes come towards a peak. In all likelihood, the use of frames will also be influenced by the direct presence of the wolf in the Netherlands. It could therefore be interesting to see if an increase in negative attitudes towards wolves or argumentation can also be found in frame use on this subject. One might therefore repeat this study with the same selection of news media sources, but place the focus this time on the differences in frame use before and after the arrival of the wolf. In order to make a good comparison between the two studies it would be advised to use the same themes for coding or to make use of an deductive approach and trace the established frames in newspaper articles by means of coding.



6. CONCLUSION

That the wolf is much more than just an animal which is possibly approaching the Netherlands and is likely to find a new habitat here, has definitely become clear after the execution of this research. The gained insights of this study expand current scientific understanding of the wolf on the ecological and biological side by approaching the wolf from a more social point of view. We have seen in the media the wolf is an animal which can evoke a wide range of thoughts, emotions and reactions within Dutch society. The current topicality and attention in the news media for the possible comeback of wolf to the Netherlands and the fact that policy makers have already developed plans and strategies to deal with this even before the animal has made a definitive comeback in the Netherlands, subscribes how trending the topic currently is in the Netherlands. The news media has and still pays extensive attention to the wolf through its many articles on the subject in national as well as regional and semi-regional newspapers. Each article presents the wolf in a specific way hereby giving the reader a suggestion as to how the news fact can be interpreted.

Through the conduction of this research some interesting themes and frames have come forward. Examples of broadly discussed themes in Dutch newspaper articles were 'Place for wolves in the Netherlands', 'Comeback to the Netherlands', 'Risks and uncertainties' and 'How to act'. Six different frames came forward of which the most important frames were '*Wolf as a missing link*', '*Suffering from a negative image*' and '*Focus on uncertainties*'. Each of the six frames providing a different perspective on the wolf and its possible return to the Netherlands. Frames with a positive as well as with a negative view were found. A striking result was that there was clearly a greater variety of frames with a negative than frames with a positive view. The question was therefore also raised whether there can indeed more negative than positive aspects be found concerning the wolf and its possible comeback or that the negative aspects concerning the wolf find a broader support within society and are therefore mentioned more often than arguments mentioning positive aspects of the wolf and its possible comeback. Another possible explanation for this finding could however also be that more frames with a positive view on the wolf were not found due to the fact that less diversity among supporters with a positive view prevails. This may then in the end contribute to the creation of only a small number of frames with a positive view on the wolf and its possible comeback. It is however important to mention that a small number of frames does not say anything about the support for a frame. Less diversity among supporters could result in multiple supporters able to unite in one frame.

A remarkable result that emerged was that in a number of articles it seemed that it was not just about the wolf itself, but that the article referred to a much wider context. The wolf seemed to be considered in these articles as a sort of symbol for something else happening or about to happen. In some articles the wolf for example appeared to be the symbol for the good state in which Dutch nature is thriving, while in other articles the wolf seemed to symbolize possible upcoming changes in the livestock sector. It is important to note that a possible wolf on its return can therefore be much more than just an animal that is approaching our borders. Furthermore there seemed to be little attention paid to why a possible comeback would be favourable for the species itself. Here for instance could be thought of the establishment of a new habitat or the expansion of the wolf population, which could have a positive effect on the genetic diversity of the population. Attention was however paid to why a comeback would not be favourable for the species and the consequences of a comeback for human society. It could be the case that these type of arguments better correspond with important cultural elements in our society, they therefore are likely to find a broader support, and are therefore also propagated more. What in addition also could have played a role here is that the wolf as an animal species is currently making its comeback, is not seriously threatened anymore and one could therefore attach less importance to media articles providing an explanation on the positive effect of a possible comeback for the species.

Practically, the gained insights could be used to obtain a better insight and understanding of the possible reactions which can be expected when there is spoken about the wolf and its possible comeback. These obtained insights could for example be used to respond to or anticipate on expressed concerns or uncertainties and in this way possibly preparing society even better on a possible comeback of this animal species. Diversity in communication is hereby seen as an important focal. This study showed that there is spoken about the wolf in many different ways, each providing the reader with a different avenue of action and thought. A story with for example a focus on uncertainties was found, but also a story with a focus on the image of the wolf come forward. Each of these stories discussing different aspects of wolves and their possible comeback towards the Netherlands demand a different strategy in



communication towards society. It is therefore important that stakeholders (e.g. Natuurmonumenten) are aware of this and also take this into account for their communication towards citizens.

Focussing for example on the frame '*Stakeholders powerless against threatening wolf*', it could be wise to create a positive frame as well. Such a positive frame should erase the feeling of powerlessness and should focus on cooperation and devising solutions as the step forward. Important subject to focus on in this frame is on an estimation of the possible costs and the array of the effective measures with which in other 'wolf countries' already good results have been achieved. Furthermore it is important here that a realistic picture is presented of the possible risks and for example also ways in which these risks are dealt with in other European countries which have already gained experience with the wolf. Another example of a frame which can communication wise be used and should get continual attention, is the frame '*Focus on uncertainties*'. Opposite to this frame could very well a frame be placed which takes away many uncertainties and which very clearly provides a realistic picture of what could be expected when wolves make their comeback on Dutch grounds. Lessons can here also be learned from other European countries which have already gained experience with wolves. Use and share these experiences with the Dutch population. Also frequently heard questions like; Can wolves survive in the Dutch landscape? How should I act when encountering a wolf? Are wolves to be considered dangerous for humans? Examples of questions which cannot be answered often enough. By adapting the communication strategy in this way and taking into consideration the various ways in which the wolf is discussed, the communication towards Dutch citizens can be more effective and balanced than it is at the moment.

In addition the obtained insights of this research study could also be an important source of information for the possible return of other wildlife species on Dutch grounds, for example the wild cat (*Felis silvestris*). An animal of which recently it is claimed to have reproduced a first litter on Dutch grounds (December 2014). If we look at the usability of the obtained results, for example governments, stakeholders and other relevant organizations, lessons can already be learned by considering how they should and will respond to this already now or in the future. Adopting a pro-active attitude is considered to be important here. The results of this study should make everyone aware of what is happening around this topic and therefore this study should definitively be considered as a starting point for further in-depth research. A recommendation would be to extend the obtained results even further by the means of a follow-up study, something that would be interesting for all involved parties. In a follow-up study the focus should however be placed on frame-sponsors, organizations or people. For each of these groups the comeback of the wolf can have very different consequences (positive or negative) and because of this they probably all try to bring different frames into the world. For all involved actors it might therefore be interesting to gain insight in the different visions and goals regarding the wolf and its possible comeback. A follow-up study should however not only make use of an analysis of media articles of these groups, but should also conduct in-depth interviews in order to gain an even better understanding of the different views and arguments about the wolf. This will provide all the involved parties with an even better insight and understanding of the frame use concerning the wolf and its possible comeback to the Netherlands.



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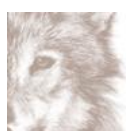
II. APPENDICES

APPENDICES A. SELECTED NEWS SOURCES ALONG WITH THEIR EDITIONS AND PUBLISHER

Name source	National (N), Regional (R), Semi-regional (SR)	Publisher
AD Rotterdams Dagblad	SR	AD Nieuwsmedia B.V.
BN/De Stem	R	Koninklijke Wegener
Dagblad van het Noorden	R	NDC Mediagroep
De Stentor: Veluws Dagblad	SR	Koninklijke Wegener
Gooi- en Eemlander	R	NV Holdingmaatschappij
Limburgs Dagblad	R	NV Holdingmaatschappij
NRC	N	PCM Uitgevers
Tc Tubantia	R	Koninklijke Wegener
Telegraaf	N	NV Holdingmaatschappij
Trouw	N	PCM Uitgevers
Volkskrant	N	PCM Uitgevers
Boerderij	-	Reed Business
Boerderij Vandaag	-	Reed Business
Wolven In Nederland	-	-

APPENDICES B. OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTION OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Name source	Total number	Number after filtering (June 2014-June 2009)	Number after filtering double articles
AD Rotterdams Dagblad	15	8	8
BN/De Stem	30	16	15
Dagblad van het Noorden	29	12	9
De Stentor: Veluws Dagblad	21	16	16
Gooi- en Eemlander	7	6	3
Limburgs Dagblad	34	11	11
NRC	14	11	8
Tc Tubantia	28	24	17
Telegraaf	13	12	11
Trouw	22	15	15
Volkskrant	25	19	19
Boerderij	6	3	3



Boerderij Vandaag	11	8	8
Wolven In Nederland	76	46	25
Total number of articles	331	207	168

APPENDICES C. LEGEND OF THE ABBREVIATIONS

Name source	Abbreviation	Article numbers
AD Rotterdams Dagblad	ADR	1 – 8
BN/De Stem	BNS	1 – 15
Boerderij	B	1 – 3
Boerderij Vandaag	BV	1 – 8
Dagblad van het Noorden	DvhN	1 – 9
De Stentor: Veluws Dagblad	Dst	1 – 16
Gooi- en Eemlander	GE	1 – 3
Limburgs Dagblad	LB	1 – 11
NRC	NRC	1 – 8
Tc Tubantia	TUB	1 – 17
Telegraaf	TLG	1 – 11
Trouw	TR	1 – 15
Volkskrant	VLKS	1 – 19
Wolven In Nederland	WIN	1 – 25



Registration form Themes

ID number article:..... Date:.....

Title article:..... Source:.....

I. Coding for content

<i>Themes</i>		
1.		
2		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

II. Central core idea(s)?

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APPENDICES E. REGISTRATION FORM FRAMING AND REASONING DEVICES

Registration form framing and reasoning devices

Article ID: Source text	Framing devices	Reasoning devices

APPENDICES F. REGISTRATION FORM SUPPORT ENHANCING FEATURES

Registration form support enhancing features

	Article ID:
<i>Cultural resonance?</i> (ideas and language that resonates with larger cultural themes)	•
<i>Empirical credibility?</i> (fit between real world empirical events and content of a frame, the more evidence a frame can claim, the higher its empirical credibility)	•
<i>Centrality?</i> (salience of essential values, beliefs and ideas, perceived importance of the topic or debate to particular audiences)	•
<i>Experiential commensurability?</i> (extent to which specific claims within a frame are related to, recognizable in and relevant for everyday lives of involved actors)	•
<i>Claim makers?</i>	•

