



Analysing the Foxhunting Debate:

Implications for Animal Protection

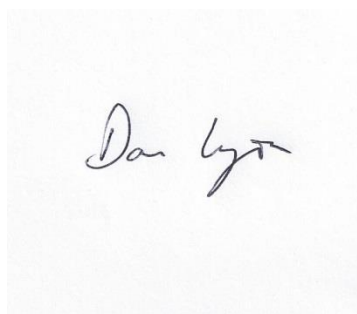
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On behalf of the Centre for Animals & Social Justice

Foreword

This new report presents the key findings of Dr Lucy Parry's ground-breaking PhD research into the foxhunting debate, entitled '*Representing Animals in the Deliberative System: the UK Foxhunting Debate*'. This publication helps to fulfil the Centre for Animals & Social Justice's (CASJ) mission to communicate its research findings to the public, animal protection NGOs and government policy-makers in order to increase understanding of the social and political factors that have a decisive impact on the progress of animal protection.

Dr Parry's research was part-funded by the CASJ in conjunction with the University of Sheffield. We are grateful to the University of Sheffield's Department of Politics and Lucy's supervisors, Dr Alasdair Cochrane & Dr Hayley Stevenson for their invaluable help and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Lyons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

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Executive Summary

Despite the enactment of the Hunting Act over a decade ago, foxhunting remains perhaps the most controversial animal issue in British politics. The debate over foxhunting is highly politicised and contentious. In the past few years there has been growing interest in the political aspects of animal ethics, with an increasing number of academics offering theoretical approaches rooted in politics and philosophy to enhance animal protection (see Garner and O'Sullivan 2016). My research takes up this challenge; I argue that deliberative democracy has the potential to improve animal protection. Deliberative democracy is a prominent strand of political theory that argues for a 'talk-centric' approach to democracy. It puts deliberation, a specific type of communication, at the heart of democratic decision-making. Deliberative democracy is known for helping to achieve environmental goals and I argue that it could also enhance animal protection.

This report is a summary of the thesis, highlighting the key findings for animal protection. I use deliberative democracy as a lens through which to evaluate the foxhunting debate. I first identify four different viewpoints on hunting in the public sphere, and examine how animals are represented within these narratives. I then follow these four viewpoints into Westminster and examine the parliamentary foxhunting debate. I find that despite considerable entrenchment and hostility, moments of reflection and geniality can be found in the hunting debate. However, my analysis of Westminster reveals the distortive influence of party politics and the intractability of the hunting debate. This undermines the potential for meaningful deliberation and animal protection. My research suggests a key role for animal protection organisations in holding the government to account for animal protection decisions. Animal protection organisations should adopt a more deliberative approach, but currently the British political system is a significant barrier to this. If we want substantive, feasible policies to support animal protection in Britain, we must pay attention to the political system we are dealing with, as well as individual animal issues.

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Section One

1.1 A brief history of the foxhunting debate

In the years leading up to the Hunting Act 2004, and the time that followed, foxhunting became one of the most hotly debated topics in the UK. This debate conjures up arguments about the purported rural/urban divide, class warfare, the rights of animals and the right to hunt them.

Several scholars have written about the politicisation of the foxhunting debate. Both Anderson (2006) and Toke (2010) discuss the overtly political nature of the debate around the time of the 'Liberty and Livelihood' march in 2002, and how the Countryside Alliance (CA) became the self-appointed representative of rural Britain. Toke suggests that the CA, knowing they could not mobilise a broader public on the hunting issue alone, broadened their political remit to garner a wider appeal. The 'Vote OK' campaign – which is still active – canvasses against anti-hunting parliamentary candidates under this banner. Plumb and Marsh (2013) demonstrate the increasingly politicised nature of the hunting debate in Westminster. They argue that over time the hunting debate came to reflect party political divisions more than animal welfare concerns. Throughout this time hunting became increasingly party-driven, with higher party cohesion seen particularly within the Conservatives. As party politics increased in significance, there was a noticeable shift away from animal protection concerns to predictable party slurs.

So what's changed since then? The debate has remained fairly salient, with campaigning on both sides. In 2010 the Coalition Agreement stated that the government would find Parliamentary time to debate hunting again. But it was not until the Conservatives entered government with a majority that this looked likely; following the election amendments were proposed to the Hunting Act and the blue touch paper was ignited once more. In July 2015 amendments were proposed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and a 90-minute Commons debate and vote was scheduled under the rubric of a Statutory Instrument (SI). The actual debate and vote were cancelled at the last minute, and the surrounding media attention and debate provided a focal point for my research. My thesis takes the whole of 2015 as a timeframe for analysis, and the opportunity to take a closer look at exactly what was going on with the July 2015 amendments.

1.2 Theories

I can't present my research findings without first providing a little bit of theoretical background. This is after all an academic endeavour, and in fact the theoretical underpinning of my work –deliberative democracy – has the potential, I argue, to enhance animal protection policy. So, please bear with me – I'll be brief.

My research identifies and analyses four **discourses** on hunting. A discourse consists of stories and narratives that weave together individual opinions into a shared viewpoint. It provides a common frame of reference for understanding different issues (Dryzek 2005: 9). Discourse analysis provides important insights into the beliefs and values that people have about hunting and animals.

Deliberative Democracy is a prominent strand in democratic theory that emphasises collective reasoning at the heart of democracy and decision-making. Decisions should be made through inclusive deliberation, talk characterised by mutual respect, consideration of alternative viewpoints and reflexivity – being able to reflect on your own views in light of new arguments. Deliberative

ideals can be sought after in a single forum like a Citizens' Jury¹, or across different sites in the real world.

Deliberative Systems is an approach to deliberative democracy that looks for the above features of deliberation not within a single forum, but across different sites in the real world. This includes within the public sphere, parliament, the media, campaigning, and everyday talk (Mansbridge 1999) between citizens. I use the deliberative systems approach to analyse discourses on hunting in different sites, to see how those viewpoints are presented in parliamentary debates, the Telegraph newspaper, League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) YouTube videos and the Blue Fox (Conservatives Against Fox Hunting) website.

1.3 Methods

Q Methodology is a research method used to identify shared viewpoints on a topic. Q contains both qualitative and quantitative aspects and seeks to understand subjective views in an in-depth manner. Taking part in the Q study involved sorting a set of 52 statements about hunting on the matrix below, alongside an interview with me. The statements were derived from a set of semi-structured interviews. Participants for the interviews and Q study were selected strategically to try and ensure a diverse range of viewpoints. The 33 participants included animal protection organisations and professionals, people who took part in hunting or similar countryside pursuits, former activists and people who had experienced hunting in some way. The criterion for participating was simply to have an interesting and relevant viewpoint on hunting (Watts and

most disagree						most agree						
-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6
(1)												(1)
	(2)										(2)	
		(3)								(3)		
			(4)						(4)			
				(5)				(5)				
					(6)		(6)					
						(8)						

Stenner 2012: 71).

Following the Q study, I analysed documents and videos. This included transcripts of debates in Parliament, newspaper articles, webpage content and YouTube videos. I also interviewed nine MPs and Peers for their reflections on the hunting debate in Westminster.

¹ A Citizens' Jury is a deliberative forum that brings together a small group of randomly selected citizens to deliberate on a policy issue and provide a collective decision or recommendation. It is one of many formats that aim to achieve deliberative ideals within a forum. More information and examples can be found at Participedia.net

Section Two

2.1 Four discourses on hunting

My Q study reveals four viewpoints on hunting. Below I present them each in turn, before a discussion of the interplay between discourses.

Animal Protectionism: two viewpoints united?

The two anti-hunting viewpoints are correlated 76%. Whilst statistically, this makes them the same viewpoint, close qualitative analysis shows that there are some important subtleties that distinguish these two positions. I first discuss what they have in common.

Both the liberal-progressive and critical-radical discourses are anti-hunting. They prioritise animal sentience as the most important thing to consider when it comes to hunting. They reject pro-hunting arguments about wildlife management – this is not what hunting is about and even if it was, hunting with dogs is an ineffective way of doing it. They also reject the idea that hunting is an important British tradition, pointing out that ‘removing [hunting] does not stop us from being British’ and that

Slavery was a British tradition. Our involvement in slavery and empires and colonialisation were also British traditions but we kind of stopped being involved in them for particular reasons.

Neither positions think that the hunting community should have more of a say in policy. They also reject the ‘tally-ho’ posh stereotype about hunting: some people laughed about it, but ultimately didn’t take it seriously.

Liberal-progressive

This position is underpinned by an animal welfare ethic, maintaining that animal use should be dictated by necessity and conducted humanely. The attitude extends beyond hunting to other animals, but for hunting the main concern is how the animal is killed. It also argues that animals should be treated equally.

I call this position liberal because of the value it places on open and diverse debate. Its proponents recognise the value of listening to everyone’s opinion – even if they vehemently disagree with it. It is progressive in its view that hunting is a throwback to the past and has no place in modern Britain.

Critical-radical

This viewpoint rejects pro-hunting arguments and completely rejects the idea that the fox population needs controlling in the first place. It upholds that humans should give animals the same moral consideration as humans. It is indifferent to open and diverse debate.

This position critically reflects on the power structures that accommodate hunting, including the class structure. That hunting remains controversial at all reflects the powerful position that the hunting community occupies. It is more radical than the other viewpoints in its advocacy of equal moral consideration for animals, and in its condemnation of the farming industry.

Countryside Management

This view argues that hunting is an effective and necessary form of wildlife management and pest control. It thinks there is a place for hunting in modern society and those who disagree don’t

understand hunting. Countryside management desires a more rational and diverse debate about hunting.

This view encompasses a stewardship argument that the countryside is not natural, and needs managing; this includes hunting. It sees a difference between wild and domesticated animals, and wildlife requires active intervention by humans sometimes. At the same time, proponents of this viewpoint strongly identify as animal lovers.

Sporting Libertarian

This viewpoint supports hunting, but doesn't think it is the most effective form of wildlife management. Instead, it defends hunting as a legitimate sporting activity. The libertarian streak comes in the view that those who hunt should be able to do what they want, regardless of what other people think.

Being out in the countryside is important to proponents of this view and they see human impact on the countryside as negative. Humans are selfish and destructive and there is a fatalist seam running through this viewpoint, with the condemnation of spreading populations and damage to the environment seen as an inevitable result of the human condition.

2.2 The discursive representation of animals

My analysis reveals a more complex interplay of views than the usual pro-anti dichotomy. Within this, there are also insights into the representation of animals and the deliberative quality of the hunting debate. Importantly, it shows that the two animal protection viewpoints which can be seen as encompassing animal welfare and animal rights are in reality highly correlated. This debunks the notion that the two are diametrically opposed, a view often put forward in pro-hunting arguments.

There are some key distinctions in how animals are represented across the four discourses. Most important is the liberal-progressive and critical appeal to sentience. Sentience is a generalizable characteristic that animals and humans share. Appealing to sentience is deliberative because it looks to a generalizable rather than sectional interest. By contrast, the countryside management view compartmentalises animals; wild and domestic animals are different and this affords different treatment. They see it as problematic when people treat wild and domesticated animals the same way. The terminology of sentience is just not salient for the pro-hunting positions, but this doesn't mean that they don't consider animals in some depth. Countryside management strongly identifies as an 'animal lover', and sporting libertarianism showed first-hand knowledge and experience of working with the animals involved in hunting.

Liberal-progressive and critical-radical advocates appeal to animal sentience which can be conceptualised as an interest held in common with humans (see Cochrane 2013). Pro-hunting discourses emphasise difference across animals and across the human/animal border. Another distinction is over the meaning of respect. All four viewpoints discuss respect for animals but come to different conclusions. For anti-hunting positions, respect means not hunting because 'that word respect, means politeness, love, caring...if you're polite loving and caring you don't rip apart somebody else'. Critical-radicalism goes further in stipulating that respect entails giving animals the same moral consideration as humans. For pro-hunting viewpoints, respect can mean killing an animal, but doing it properly: 'you can go and shoot a fox out in the park if you want, but they should be treated with respect really'. In other words, 'hunting's very very simple. It either gets away, or it dies. There's no in between'. From this perspective, death in this manner is quick and the quarry does not suffer unduly.

2.3 Deliberation in the hunting debate

Encounters between anti-hunting activists and hunters out in the field were characterised by most participants as intimidating and sometimes violent on both sides. All four discourses contain the acknowledgement that aggression is present to varying degrees. However, some recalled rare moments of geniality, humour and even respect.

Many participants from both sides of the debate were surprisingly optimistic for a more deliberative debate on hunting in future. Some participants offered suggestions as to how this could be achieved. Suggestions included excluding the most extreme sides, and focussing on small points which people could agree on. Another suggestion was for the scientific community to take a more active role because 'who better to do that than people who have done studies or performed research on the effects'.

Several participants discussed how their views on hunting had changed over the years – in both directions. During the Q study people reflected on their own views in some depth. However, reflexivity is held back by the assumption of rightness in all the discourses – positions are entrenched. This is unsurprising given how long this debate has been going on. 'People get quite bitter and angry...because you do become very jaded, it's a hell of an emotional toll on you, mentally and emotionally'. It is symptomatic of this emotional toll that views are deeply entrenched. This leads to resentment and resignation. Someone working in hunting said that 'if someone wants to get stuck into a hunting debate, I can't be bothered really... that's the last thing I wanna talk about, to be honest'.

My analysis reveals the complex and often contradictory nuance of the debate that is overlooked in mainstream media coverage. I now turn to the debate in Parliament to see if these nuances translate into Westminster.

Section Three

3.1 The debate in Westminster

I analysed transcripts of 2015 Parliamentary debates that discussed hunting, alongside interviews with MPs and Peers where I asked them to reflect on their experience of the hunting debate. I found that out of the four discourses on hunting, two are well represented whilst two are exaggerated and distorted.

On the 9th of July, DEFRA announced that a 'small number of technical amendments' had been proposed to the Hunting Act to increase the number of dogs allowed to flush out a quarry. A Commons debate and vote was scheduled for the 15th of July but the government unexpectedly cancelled it on the 14th of July. The hunting amendment became embroiled in the English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) controversy because the Scottish National Party (SNP) announced their intention to vote on the proposed amendments to the Hunting Act. Some commentators subsequently argued that the SNP only weighed in on the hunting issue to undermine the Conservative government. When the government cancelled the scheduled debate on hunting, it was suggested in Parliament that this was so that the EVEL bill could go through Parliament first. During that week, hunting was discussed at a range of debates including the daily Business of the House briefings and the EVEL debate in the Commons.

Both the liberal-progressive and countryside management positions are clearly present in Westminster, in some cases almost word for word. The liberal-progressive view is the most prevalent. However, they are not entirely untainted by party politics. Both discourses are presented alongside party political claims, either to bolster the speaker's party position or to attack another party. Notably, party politics is not prominent in any of the four original discourses. There are a few moments of cross-party solidarity on hunting, but these are dwarfed by party political point-scoring.

Sporting libertarian is also presented in debates, but it appears exaggerated in some ways. In Westminster there is a far greater emphasis on the social and economic value of hunting, and the importance of hunting as a British tradition. The notion that anti-hunting sentiment is motivated by class is very prominent in Westminster. This view does appear in the original discourse but it's not strongly held; in Parliament the anti-class war argument really takes over. This makes it something of a straw-man, given that the class war in its stereotyped form is not prominent in the original discourses.

Most worrying for animal protectionists is the distortion of the critical-radical viewpoint. The original structural critique of class and power is lost, and morphs into the 'tally-ho' toff stereotype. This makes it vulnerable to attack from pro-hunting viewpoints in Parliament. Anti-hunting advocates in Parliament recognise this danger because

there are so many Tory voters out there who don't agree with [hunting] you know... So it's *really* stupid, to play the Countryside Alliance game of dividing public opinion by playing the class line. That's exactly what they want. So it's not even clever politics. Playing into their hands completely (HC3).

It's unsurprising that party politics dominates the hunting debate in Westminster (see also Plumb and Marsh 2013). But the deeply entrenched views, strategic bargaining and lack of respect all serve to undermine deliberative capacity in the hunting debate and present barriers to meaningful dialogue. Most concerning is the distortion of the critical-radical viewpoint. This is the only position that interrogates power and structure in the hunting debate, but it is reduced to a pantomimish attack on the tory toff.

Deliberation is further hindered by the nature of debates in the House of Commons, where ‘a ten second intervention on prime ministers’ questions...is equivalent to something like 72 and a half years on European Standing Committee B... more effective than making a well-researched, detailed, speech’. In other words, there is no appetite in the Commons or the British press for rational, deliberative argument.

3.2 Transmission

Transmission mechanisms in the deliberative system are organisations, actors or sites of communication that connect public and empowered spaces. I analysed three mechanisms: the newsfeed of the Blue Fox website), coverage from the Daily and Sunday Telegraph, and YouTube videos from LACS. The analysis looked at which discourses were presented, and the deliberative quality of the transmission.

The Telegraph.

Unsurprisingly, the Telegraph purveys an equal blend of countryside management and sporting libertarian viewpoints. The latter is present in its exaggerated Westminster form with particular emphasis on the importance of hunting as a British tradition.

Telegraph coverage is highly politicised and antagonistic. The tone is perhaps the antithesis of deliberation, with a deep lack of respect for alternative viewpoints. It is nonetheless a relative success for the pro-hunting lobby; the Countryside Alliance is heavily referenced and cited. Most concerning for animal protection is the demonization of anti-hunting campaigners, in particular the RSPCA and hunt saboteurs, with the latter likened to terrorists and the 2011 rioters.

Overall, Telegraph coverage resembles the debate in Westminster more than any of the four discourses.

The Blue Fox Group.

Blue Fox is in a unique position. It supports anti-hunting Conservative MPs who are going against the party line. This is reflected in how Blue Fox transmits claims about hunting. The newsfeed overwhelmingly reflects the liberal-progressive discourse. Its tone is supportive, and it does not demonise or antagonise those who hunt. The aim is to foster an environment conducive to persuading new or undecided MPs to take a stand against hunting. Blue Fox aims to support such MPs ‘because they need that support, because they’re being lobbied constantly...by the pro hunt lobby, so they need that, support and that strength, and there is something in strength in numbers’ (interview Lorraine Platt). Blue Fox appears to have been relatively successful; the number of anti-hunting Tory MPs has increased since the group was founded.

One of the main arguments Blue Fox presents is an appeal to public opinion; that the majority of the British public and Conservative supporters are opposed to hunting. This is also seen in the parliamentary debate from anti-hunting advocates and is a more deliberative appeal given it reaches out beyond sectional (party) interests. Blue Fox emphasise that hunting should not be party political and despite their focus on the Conservatives have worked with other parties as well.

Blue Fox is a unique actor in the deliberative system: it focuses on the public and on MPs for support, straddling different sites. In comparison to the rest of the hunting debate, the group also has a deliberative tone – respectful and constructive. It also unique in that anti-hunting Tory MPs occupy a minority position within the Conservative Party, and the group offers a place of support and solidarity for them, because

'they're in a very challenging position, they don't want to be seen as...causing dissent...yet it's very necessary to oppose this policy, to protect wildlife, so we unite anti-hunting Conservative MPs together' (interview Lorraine Platt).

The supportive and constructive atmosphere of the group is conducive to strengthening the voice of anti-hunting Conservatives in Parliament. Thus, although the group may not be marginalised, it does contribute positively to deliberative capacity in that it promotes respectful, reasoned arguments against hunting. Given the tit-for-tat nature of the debate in Westminster, Blue Fox may provide some counter to this antagonism.

League Against Cruel Sports (YouTube videos).

I analysed 11 YouTube videos published by LACS in 2015. Why videos over text in this case? For one, LACS suggest that sharing their videos is 'a great way of getting the message out there' (LACS 2016b). Second, one of their aims is to 'expose the cruelty that underpins hunting, and the false claims that are made by those who want to bring blood sports back' (LACS 2016c). Videos are a key way of achieving this. Video analysis also provides an insight into two tactics used in animal activism: graphic imagery and moral shocks. Graphic imagery refers to videos and pictures of animal suffering and abuse, and moral shocks involves trying to shock an audience into seeing a situation in a different light. A classic example is the book *Eternal Treblinka*, comparing factory farming to the Holocaust. The underlying assumption here is that eliciting an emotional shock from an audience can provide a catalyst for opinion and/or behavioural change. Another instance of this approach is PETA's campaign 'if slaughterhouses had glass walls' (PETA 2016), reflecting the idea that if people could see the suffering that animals are subjected to behind closed doors, they would not support those industries and practices.

The LACS videos mainly present elements of the critical-radical discourse. They seem to emphasise the moral distance between pro- and anti-hunting positions by asking audiences to choose which side they identify with – there is no in-between. Graphic imagery and moral shocks are used in several videos. Graphic imagery of animal abuse plays an important role in the deliberative system, because it makes visible animal suffering that might otherwise remain hidden. However, its role in persuasion is less clear. It's possible that this tactic could alienate viewers or turn them off (Brown and Quinn-Allan 2015). This raises the question of who LACS' audience is. If their aim is to persuade the public and policymakers of their viewpoint, an over-reliance on emotional appeals may be a mistake: it's possible that policymakers and animal industries are more open to rational-style discourses than emotional ones. However, present in many videos is an emphasis on LACS' reliance on public support in the form of donations. If LACS' videos aim at consolidating and rallying its existing support base, then these tactics are likely to be more effective. There is some evidence (Herzog and Golden 2009) that animal advocates are more susceptible to visceral responses like horror and disgust – so graphic imagery could be particularly effective in eliciting a response from this group.

Nonetheless, relying only on graphic imagery and moral shock serves to weaken the transmission of the critical-radical discourse. It allows pro-hunting viewpoints to contest it on the basis that it is over-emotional and anthropomorphic; not rooted in rational argument. Ultimately, this 'detracts from the rationalistic basis of animal rights philosophy' (Garner 2016: 1; also Parry 2017: 19). There are plenty of reason-based arguments employed in the liberal-progressive and critical-radical discourses that contest pro-hunting claims; excluding them solely in favour of emotion work does those discourses a disservice. I suggest that emotion work should be deployed with caution and not to the exclusion of reasoned argument; the two are not mutually exclusive and should be used in unison. Moreover, animal protectionists should be reflexive and consider the broader systemic effects that their tactics might have.

3.3 Accountability

Democratic accountability is usually described in the form of sanctioning, where an elected representative is held accountable through elections and can be kicked out. However, to be held accountable literally means having to provide an account, an explanation, of one's actions (Dryzek and Stevenson 2011: 1867). This is described by Mansbridge (2009) as 'narrative accountability'. I looked for narrative accountability in the hunting debate, focussing on the proposed amendments of July 2015. Unfortunately the best opportunity for narrative accountability was lost because the government cancelled the debate last minute. Other places to look for an account including the EFRA select committee, public announcements, other parliamentary debates and Freedom of Information (FOI) releases.

The EFRA select committee had apparently not discussed the Hunting Act for a number of years. I then turned to parliamentary debates around the week of July 9 2015, where the proposed amendment was discussed by members. A transcript from a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Animal Welfare (APGAW) in September 2015 provided an important part of the story. I also used insights from interviews and FOI releases and requests to elicit an account of the proposed amendments. It is worth noting however that FOI requests and information from interviews do not contribute directly to democratic accountability because they were not proffered publicly but were elicited by me through the course of the research. Ultimately, it was extremely difficult to put together a clear picture of the narrative behind the proposed amendments to the Hunting Act.

The proposal to increase the number of dogs allowed to flush the quarry appears to have been informed by a paper published by the Federation of Welsh Farmers' Packs (FWFP) on the efficacy of flushing foxes to guns using two or more dogs (Naylor and Knott n.d.). Some interviewees expressed doubt about the quality of this paper as evidence, a conviction which was also shared by civil servants who reviewed the paper in late 2013:

Until a process of independent peer review has reached a satisfactory conclusion it would be premature for this report to be regarded as an evidence-based justification for a review of current policy (DEFRA 2013; underlined in original).

I wanted to find and analyse an explanation behind the July 2015 amendments – which closely resemble that paper's recommendations. Finding no public account available, and based on interviewee's views that the amendments *were* based on this paper, I submitted an FOI request to DEFRA asking for an account of the peer review process and the extent to which the proposed amendment was based on the paper. DEFRA provided a partial response in August 2016 which disclosed that the department requested peer review in March/April 2014. Reviews were 'undertaken by three UK based University professors to provide Defra with an independent assessment of the flushing with foxes paper...The results of the reviews were provided for Defra's own purposes' (DEFRA 2016). The results of the peer review were withheld from disclosure, under exemptions relating to information consisting of personal data, formulation of government policy, individual safety and legal professional privilege.

The minutes from the September 2015 APGAW meeting give the impression that the paper had not yet been peer-reviewed at that point in time. This means either the peer-review process took an inordinate amount of time (which is feasible) or that the results were not made available to the public, or key actors in the hunting debate including LACS, RSPCA and one of the paper's authors – all of whom were present at the September APGAW meeting. Either way, the available account is patchy and inconsistent. In their FOI release to me, DEFRA stated that the amendments were not based on any single piece of evidence. Yet, anecdotally from my interviewees it appears that this paper was central to this story.

It is safe to say that the government's decision to table the amendments suffers from a dearth of accountability and transparency. Because the debate and vote on amendment was cancelled, an opportunity for accountability was lost. The remaining avenues for accountability are sparse and upon examination provide an inconsistent and opaque account of the decision-making. This is surprising given the level of public interest in the issue and the attention given to the proposed amendment around July 2015. However, it is less surprising if we take into account the broader political system that this deliberative system sits within: Westminster is not designed to enable direct accountability between the electorate and the executive. This could explain why DEFRA is unable to provide a clear account of the decision-making process behind the amendment – they are not accustomed to having to provide such an account.

From the minutes of the APGAW meeting and from interviews, it appears that key actors in the debate were aware of concerns regarding the flushing paper. However, there is no public record of these actors pressing the government over this issue. Animal protection organisations have a potentially crucial role to play here in publicly holding government to account for its decisions. This is especially important in this case given that the government was not forthcoming in providing an account; animal protectionists should publicly call on government to give a clear explanation of the reasoning behind its decisions.

Section Four: conclusions

The final chapters of my thesis draw together the findings from different sites in the deliberative system to make some conclusions about the overall deliberative capacity of the hunting debate. One important aspect of this is termed 'meta-deliberation'. Meta-deliberation is the capacity of a deliberative system to reflect on itself and, if necessary, self-correct (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014, p29). In this case, meta-deliberation is reflection on the terms and state of the hunting debate – rather than hunting itself.

During my research, many participants showed the capacity for reflexivity and meta-deliberation. For the most part, this took the form of reflecting on the polarised nature of the debate and how it could be improved. The level of reflection was impressive and many imagined what a more deliberative debate might look like. Interviewees in Westminster were less enthusiastic about reviving the debate, with little appetite to revisit hunting as an issue. For some, the debate was settled with the Hunting Act. For others, there were simply more pressing issues, including animal issues, to be tackled.

Despite moments of reflection found across the debate, true meta-deliberation is in short supply for two reasons. For one, these individual moments of reflection do not scale up to anything resembling systemic reflection or most importantly, *self-correction*. This is perhaps not unusual; Stevenson and Dryzek observed something similar in their analysis of global climate change negotiations. Whilst individuals involved in the process are well aware of the problems in the decision-making process and the need to improve, 'such human capacity does not necessarily scale up to an institutional capacity' (2014: 210). This indicates that the lack of systemic meta-deliberation is not necessarily down to individual failings.

Secondly, I found little reflection on the broader political context in which the hunting debate is embedded. The adversarial nature of British party politics and a lack of executive accountability are symptoms of the Westminster model and both are significant barriers in the hunting debate to meaningful deliberation. This has implications for animal protection beyond the hunting debate: animal protection organisations should be alive to the political context in which they operate and play an active role in calling out those systemic barriers to achieving greater animal protection, such as a lack of accountability.

Despite deeply entrenched views and polarisation in the hunting debate, my research reveals a more nuanced and complex picture. The four discourses on hunting illustrate the complexity of views on this topic, that beyond hunting speak to broader attitudes towards animals. The interplay of these discourses confirms the substantial void between pro- and anti-hunting positions, but also reveals high correlation between animal welfare and animal rights positions. Ultimately it shows that the debate is more complex than simply a pro/anti dichotomy.

My analysis of the hunting debate in Westminster is an apt illustration of what we already know in many ways: the highly partisan, adversarial nature of British politics. Importantly though, it also shows how the most radical animal protection discourse is transformed into a joke: from structural critique to Tory toff. The critical-radical discourse is the only counter-hegemonic viewpoint that interrogates the structural power relations surrounding hunting, so its distortion in Westminster is a loss to the debate given the lack of reflection elsewhere about the political system.

My research suggests that animal protectionists should adopt a more deliberative approach, focussing more on reasoning as the primary mode of persuasion, rather than relying solely on emotional appeals. This is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive, or that there is no place for

graphic imagery or moral shocks in animal advocacy. However, animal protectionists should be reflexive in deploying these tactics and be alive to the possible broader effects of using them.

It is one thing to recommend that animal protection organisations adopt a more deliberative approach. It is quite another to claim that a more deliberative approach will actually be more effective in the political system in question. The UK political system undermines accountability and collective reasoning. A more deliberative approach may help animal advocates to be taken more seriously and have their voices heard by those in power. However, any debate that divides along party lines will struggle to forge a constructive deliberative path in Parliament. So divisive is the *outcome* of this issue that any new *process* introduced will be vulnerable to attack from both pro- and anti-hunting advocates.

Hunting remains a polarised debate. However, it must also be acknowledged that the health of the debate is, deliberatively speaking, better in public space than in Westminster. Party politics is almost entirely absent in the public discursive sphere, and the class critique is less *ad hominem* and more structural. There are clearly deliberative deficits; hostility characterises the majority of encounters between pro- and anti-hunting advocates. Nonetheless, moments of humour and tolerance *do* exist. Moreover, individual moments of reflexivity can be found and many research participants articulated the desire for a better hunting debate.

These deliberative moments do not translate into transmission or empowered space, except for the saving grace of Blue Fox. Empowered space is not entirely bereft of authentic deliberation – again, some instances of reflexivity are present and two out of the four discourses are well-represented in Parliamentary debates. It may be the case however that the individual capacity of actors in empowered space is undermined by the adversarial culture of Westminster.

Select committees offer a rare opportunity for accountability in Westminster. An independent select committee or other empowered body for animal protection could provide a nonpartisan space in Westminster for a more deliberative democratic approach. Until that point, more deliberative activities undertaken by animal advocates in public space face an uphill struggle. This is not to say that animal protection organisations ought not to bother; any attempts to emphasise the importance of a constructive, deliberative debate in public space could contribute positively to animal protection.

There are also opportunities in public space for activists and animal protection organisations to employ a more deliberative approach. A vibrant, oppositional public sphere is best placed to challenge state authority (see Habermas 1962). For animal protectionists, employing a more deliberative approach that emphasises the underlying rationale of the critical-radical discourse could help strengthen the movement and ultimately, present a viable challenge to the dominant approach in Westminster, which currently clearly undermines both deliberative democratic and animal protection goals. And until we pay greater attention to the underlying systemic barriers that stymie the hunting debate and animal protection policy, we have little hope of achieving substantive change.

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Appendix

List of truncated Q statements and factor array scores (prevalence of statement in discourse).

Statement Number	Shortened Statement	Liberal-progressive	Countryside management	Sporting libertarian	Critical-radical
1	Farmers have a duty to protect their livestock from predators	0	+4	+5	0
2	Hunting is dangerous for the horses	+1	-1	+4	+2
3	Hunting is an important British tradition	-5	+1	+1	-5
4	The hunting debate is polarised and can be irrational	0	+5	+1	-1
5	The majority of rural communities are against hunting	+1	-4	-3	+1
6	Humans exploit the countryside for selfish reasons	+3	+1	+4	+3
7	People who work with animals have a different attitude to them	0	+4	+2	0
8	The British countryside isn't entirely natural	+1	+3	0	+1
9	The British countryside only exists because of man's investment	-2	+3	-2	+3
10	People hunt because they're adrenaline junkies	-1	0	-1	-1
11	There's a violent undercurrent around hunting	+2	-4	-4	+1
12	There's no nice way to kill any animal	-2	+1	+3	+3
13	Wildlife is better off without human intervention	0	-2	+4	+4
14	Humans should only intervene in nature if it is for the animal's benefit	0	-4	0	0
15	Farmers' interests should be a priority in rural policies	-1	+2	+3	-3
16	Everything people enjoy about hunting can be done with drag hunting	+1	-1	+3	+1
17	Being out in the countryside is really	+2	+4	+5	0

	important to me				
18	During a hunt, the dogs cause damage and disruption	0	0	0	0
19	Drag hunting is less disruptive for the local community	+1	-1	+1	0
20	Hunting is just a form of pest control	-4	-3	-3	-4
21	Hunting is an important social activity and supports the rural economy	-3	+2	+1	-2
22	Hunting is a gratuitous form of cruelty on animals for the sake of entertainment	+3	-5	-6	+5
23	Hunting is the most effective way of controlling the fox population	-6	+2	-1	-6
24	Hunting with dogs replicates the natural 'survival of the fittest' relationship	-5	+3	0	-4
25	I consider myself to be an animal lover	+4	+6	+2	+2
26	I think the way the dogs are kept for hunting is cruel	0	-2	-5	1
27	I see posh, upper class types shouting 'tally-ho!' when I think of hunting people	-1	-3	-2	-1
28	Most people on a hunt are at the back and never see the animal being killed	-1	+1	0	-1
29	People should respect animals as sentient individuals	+6	+2	0	+6
30	Urban people haven't got a clue about rural life	-4	-1	-1	-2
31	People in the hunting community think they can do what they like	+1	0	-1	+2
32	The class structure favours and sustains hunting	+2	-3	-4	+4
33	The hunting community should have more of a say in deciding rural policies	-3	0	-1	-3
34	The police would rather catch anti-	-1	-2	0	+2

	hunters than illegal hunters				
35	Worse things for animals than hunting should have been banned first	-2	0	+1	-2
36	My main concern about hunting is how the animal is killed	+2	0	-1	-2
37	All animals should be treated equally	+5	0	-1	+1
38	Hunting is very difficult to regulate	+1	0	+1	-2
39	The fox population needs to be controlled	-2	+3	+3	-4
40	There's a big difference between killing animals for food and for sport	+3	-2	+2	-1
41	We should give animals the same moral consideration as humans	0	-3	-2	+3
42	We need to re-balance the ecosystem by re-introducing wolves to the UK	-2	-1	-4	+1
43	I think the huntsmen do respect the foxes	-3	+2	-3	-5
44	Hunting wild animals is only OK if you need to do it to survive	+2	-6	-2	0
45	Anti-hunting campaigners get worked up about the wrong things	-4	+1	+1	-3
46	I try to look at hunting from the animals' perspective	+3	+1	-2	+2
47	It's silly to say that animals share human characteristics	-3	-1	0	-1
48	Being soft about animals is not really in their best interests	-1	+2	+2	-1
49	The only population out of control is us humans!	-1	-2	+6	+4
50	There is no place for hunting in a modern, civilised society	+5	-5	-5	+5
51	The hunting debate should include a wide range of people and viewpoints	+4	+5	+3	0
52	Terrier work is a particularly cruel and unfair practice	+4	-1	-3	+3