ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES OF THE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS OF A HUNTING SOCIETY

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Abstract.
Purpose and aim of the study: *to perform an analysis of the management functions of hunting societies, identify internal and external factors that influence their performance, and propose ways for improvement.*
Design/methodology/Approach: *During the study, the activities of the hunting society have been described, the boards of directors of hunting societies have been interviewed, the strengths and weaknesses of the hunting society have been analysed, proposals have been developed for improvement of the activities of the hunting society.*
Main Findings: *The study examines how the society's leadership can contribute to sustainable resource use and protection. The hunting society must be effective and well-organised to perform its functions successfully.*
Originality: *The paper analyses the management functions of the hunting society as well as the possibilities to improve its management processes. The work of the hunting society and its management are also capable of influencing public attitudes towards hunting, as well as the use of natural resources.*
Implications: *The study development process analyses how to build successful collaboration with the rest of society, and how to successfully overcome the challenges facing hunting societies. For example, environmental change, lack of resources or negative public attitudes.*

Keywords: *hunting society, hunting, leadership functions, society.*

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Introduction

A hunting society is a voluntary union of persons established in order to achieve the objective specified in the articles of society, which is not profitable (Biedrību un nodibinājumu likums, 2003). Societies usually combine groups of people with the same views and hobbies. When setting up a hunting society, efforts should be made to bring together the common objectives of the members. One of these aims is to organise hunting for members of the hunting society.

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Hunting societies in Latvia are critical to ensuring sustainable wildlife management, protecting natural resources, and maintaining ecological balance. These voluntary organizations are entrusted with managing wild game populations, ensuring legal hunting practices, and promoting conservation efforts.

The problem of the study: hunting societies face numerous challenges, including inefficient management structures, financial constraints, territorial conflicts (raiderism), and limited engagement with public institutions.

The aim of this study is to analyse the management functions of hunting societies, identify internal and external factors that influence their performance, and propose ways for improvement.

The novelty of the study. This research provides valuable insights for strengthening the management processes within these organizations and improving their role in environmental sustainability and resource management. By using SWOT analysis and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more effective hunting society structures and policies, ultimately fostering better public understanding and support for sustainable hunting practices.

Over the course of their work, the authors used the following **research methods:** the monographic method, the qualitative study method (interview), SWOT analysis and the environmental profiling method, and the logical analysis method.

Study **hypothesis:** the management functions of hunting societies are organised efficiently, but there are opportunities to improve them.

Research results and discussion

A society is a voluntary union of persons established in order to achieve the objectives set by the society and which is not profitable. Societies may establish natural and legal persons with a specific scope of activity and perform an economic activity (Biedrību un nodibinājumu likums, 2003).

A hunting society is a legal organization that brings hunters together for collective and individual hunting, as well as bringing hunters together to promote sustainable and responsible hunting practices, as well as protect the natural environment and animal populations. These types of societies can offer various advantages to their members, including hunting education, participation in hunting activities, participation in nature conservation projects and participation in legislative processes.

The main course of operation of hunting societies in Latvia is the organisation of individual and collective hunting in accordance with the interests of the hunting society (members), observing the requirements of the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia (see Figure 1). The legal

framework of hunting societies is essential in order to ensure the proper functioning of hunting societies and to protect both the members and public interests as a whole, the legislation shall be independently reviewed and improved in order to meet the needs of hunters and the needs of the hunting society.

Fig.1 Laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia binding to a hunting society (created by authors)

The management of natural resources, especially in organizations dealing with wildlife management and conservation, has been extensively studied in the context of both public and private entities. Successful leadership in these sectors often involves balancing ecological, economic, and social factors (Samant & Sangle, 2016). As a central element in wildlife management, hunting societies must also adopt a balanced approach to leadership, ensuring that hunting activities are sustainable while respecting ecological boundaries and contributing to conservation efforts.

Sustainable leadership in these organizations is directly tied to the development of clear policies, the monitoring of wildlife populations, and the integration of members into decision-making processes (Ehnert et al., 2016). The governance of hunting societies must, therefore, integrate principles of sustainable development, focusing on long-term resource management and fostering cooperation among diverse stakeholders, including hunters, landowners, government agencies, and conservationists (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Bagnoli and Megali (2011) highlight that sustainable resource management requires organizations to balance ecological goals with human activity. In hunting societies, this balance is crucial, as their role extends

beyond simply providing recreational opportunities to members; they must also contribute to managing wildlife populations in a way that does not harm ecosystems or local communities.

According to Barton and Størkersen (2008), hunting societies must adhere to principles of sustainable use, ensuring that hunting quotas are scientifically determined and implemented in collaboration with environmental authorities. This is essential not only for preserving wildlife but also for maintaining public support and legal standing. Gossling, Hall, and Weaver (2009) argue that public perception of hunting is shaped by how effectively hunting societies demonstrate their commitment to conservation. The challenge, therefore, is to promote sustainable hunting practices while fostering trust with both the public and regulatory bodies.

The values of the society of hunters lie in their internal culture, which is and will be the reason that ensures the development of the society of hunters. When a society builds on its own internal values, it positions itself as a place of democracy and understanding. In such an environment the members of the society will be always loyal and promote the development of the society. An important moment in the society is the creation of a shared vision that helps members of the hunting society to see common, otherwise ambitious goals and move in their direction. If the members of the hunting society have a common purpose and a correct understanding of their role in society, then it generally promotes the motivation of the society and consolidates the members of the hunting society.

The internal culture of the hunting society must include respect for nature, animals, hunting ethics and hunting traditions. Such guidelines are essential in order to maintain ethical and sustainable hunting practices, which are important not only for the hunting society but also for the society of the Republic of Latvia. The proper internal culture of the hunting society promotes cooperation and trust among members of the hunting society. If members of the hunting society respect and trust each other, it promotes communication and proper decision-making. Building the right dialogue between the board and members is the way to ensure that each Member is free to express their ideas and concerns and participate in solving the hunting society's problems. Such proper dialogue also promotes responsible and respectful behaviour towards other members of the hunting society, as well as towards nature and Latvian society.

A society, as an organisation, is a social system whose nature is different from that of national culture, largely because its members do not normally grow up there. On the contrary, they gain a certain influence in the decision-making process in order to join the organisation and are only included in the organisation's culture on working days and can be abandoned at any time by staff (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2010).

Culture in this context is also a form of personality expression and self-affirmation that is essential in different sciences, including leadership science. The cultural understanding of organisations in the field of governance is closely linked to its activities and development (Dubkēvičs, 2009).

The internal culture of the hunting society and its values play an important role in it. The negative internal culture of the hunting society may create and cause conflicts between the management of the society and their members, endangering the existence and development of the hunting society in the future. The internal culture of the hunting society develops mainly on the basis of the values put forward by its board of directors or founders, so it is necessary to create a consciously positive internal environment.

The authors of the work point out that the internal culture of the hunting society and its values are and will be the decisive moments that will contribute to the sustainable development of the society, ensuring the effective functioning of the hunting society, strengthening its role in nature protection and in Latvian society. But if, however, a negative culture and an unhealthy internal hunting society policy develop within the hunting society, it can lead to discord and tensions between its members and the board. Such situations cause divisions within the organization, which can lead to the dissolution of the hunting society. The internal culture of the hunting society often evolves from situations from which no society is protected and forms unwittingly, accentuating the values of the board or the opinions of its founders, so it is important to be aware and maintain the internal environment and culture.

Table 1 Factors influencing the hunting society (created by authors)

Internal factors influencing the activities of the hunting society	External factors influencing the activities of the hunting society
• The management of the hunting society and the structure of its organisation; • Financial stability; • Active involvement of members in the life of the hunting society; • The internal culture and values of the hunting society.	• National laws and regulations; • Changes in public opinion; • The status of the game population at the hunting station and the availability/unavailability of areas; • Financial movements; • International association of hunting societies.

The authors conclude that the activities of the hunting society depend on both internal and external factors (Table 1) that arise during the operation of the hunting society. External factors, although not directly influenced by the hunting society, can nevertheless be predicted by analysing

and predicting their impact on the society. Internal factors, on the other hand, form among the members of the hunting society itself, and it is essential that the board of directors of the hunting society, as the executive and decision-making power of the hunting society, is a deliberate factor.

The role of the board of directors of the hunting society is to ensure the welfare of its members, guarantee transparent and reasoned decision-making processes and promote forthcoming and friendly attitudes within the society. The analysis of the activities of the board and their development possibilities is an essential step in ensuring the successful operation and long-term development of the hunting society. This type of analysis helps to assess the current functioning of the board, identify best practices and identify directions that require improvement and improvement.

In the analysis process of the hunting society, it is important to identify how well the current board is able to achieve the objectives of the hunting society. This includes strategic planning, resource management, operational organisation and effective communication with members of the hunting society.

At the same time, it is necessary to assess whether the executive board has sufficient resources and expertise to manage all responsibilities successfully and to achieve the objectives set. After analysis, it is possible to identify exactly what development opportunities are required for hunting societies. They may relate to the experience of the executive board and the improvement of its competences, organisational structures or the improvement of its work processes.

A regular survey of hunting society members on board work can provide valuable feedback that would help to improve the regularity of board operations. It is also possible to review and improve actions to make decision-making faster and more efficient.

Development opportunities may also include the introduction of technologies or more active cooperation with other hunting societies and state institutions. Such cooperation can help not only to improve the activities of the hunting society but also provide more opportunities to achieve the objectives set. Analysis of the activities and possible improvements of the board of directors of the hunting society is an important process for ensuring the long-term operation of the society.

In order to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the activities of hunting societies, as well as possible development directions, which could be realized in the near future, the authors of the work organised three separate interviews with the chairpersons of the boards of hunting societies, the day-to-day activities of which related to the organisation, management and planning of the activities of hunting societies. The interviews were conducted

between 01/04/2024 and 30/04.2024. The following persons were selected as interviewees:

1) Chairman of the Board of the society of hunters and anglers "Piekuns";
2) Member of the Board of directors of the Latgale society of hunters and anglers, as well as Chairman of the Board of directors of the society of hunters "Nautreni";
3) Chairman of the Board of the hunting society "Hunters' Club Murmastiene".

According to the authors, one of the main positive factors in the hunting society is effective organisation, a favourable working climate and an appropriate management style. Therefore, in subsequent analyses, the authors used the SWOT method to identify the main factors influencing the activities of hunting societies.

Table 2 SWOT analysis results for the hunting societies
(created by authors)

Strengths (Internal environment factors)	**Weaknesses (Internal environment factors)**
• Process for the recording and monitoring of wild game animals. D = 10 • Members of the hunting society with common objectives. D = 10 • Structured management model. D = 10 • Effective organisation of the flow of documents through the "Mednis" mobile application. D = 7 • Contribution to the economic development of the Republic of Latvia by reducing the devastation of forest animals and threats to road traffic. D = 6 • Management of hunting areas within the framework of one hunting society. D = 4 • Cooperation with PES and other societies to achieve the objectives set. D = 2 • Experienced hunters. D = 1	• Hunting is becoming an expensive hobby, requiring significant financial investment. D = 10 • Cooperation in the recording of hunting data and the setting of limitations on the devastation of game. D = 10 • Hunting societies, which hunt the specified hunting area, shall not participate in the distribution of hunting animal limits. D = 10 • Rotation of hunting grounds (raiderism). D = 10 • Infrastructure development is seen as an initiative by hunting societies. D = 9 • Generational shifts in hunting societies are slow, if not visible. D = 7 • The different opinion of the members of the hunting society may lead to division within the society. D = 5

Opportunities (External environment opportunity factors)	**Threat (external environment threat factors)**
• Involvement of hunters in national defence measures. D = 10 • Use of technological development for improvement of the records of game animals. D = 10 • Improvement of the mobile application "Mednis". D = 10 • Conducting events to promote hunting. D = 5 • Improvement of the infrastructure of hunting societies. D = 3	• Loss of hunting grounds. D = 8 • Poaching. D = 8 • Young people's interest in hunting is decreasing, which poses challenges for the management of hunting areas. D = 4 • Competition from hunting societies can lead to poor relations between them. D = 3

An environment profiling method was used to assess the internal and external environments of hunting societies, by which the significance of each factor was assessed in order to determine which of these are the most relevant:

- factor significance in the industry: 3-large; 2-moderate; 1-small;
- factor impact on the organization: 3-strong; 2-moderate; 1-small;
- factor impact direction: +1 - positive; 0 - neither positive nor negative; -1 - negative.

The severity was calculated according to the following formula (Barney & Hesterly, 2020)**:**

$$D = A * B + C \text{ where;} \quad (1)$$

D – degree of significance of the factor;
A - importance of the factor in the sector;
B - impact of the factor on the organisation;
C - direction of influence of the factor.

The research analysed the most relevant of the factors. After conducting a SWOT analysis, the authors concluded that the hunting societies had two main strengths. Firstly, a correct and correct process for the recording and monitoring of wild game animals by each hunting society on its hunting grounds. As a second strength, one can highlight the common goals of members of hunting societies, which are achieved applying a structured leadership model. Achieving goals is a core task for leadership, and therefore goals and the leadership style are key indicators for hunting societies. Experienced hunters are recognised as the weakest strength because their contribution to the development of hunting societies is limited, and they stick to old hunting traditions that are inconsistent with modern hunting policies and methods.

After an analysis of Table 2, it can be seen that the weaknesses of hunting societies are due to hunting becoming an expensive hobby, requiring significant financial investment. Hunting societies are often not involved in the distribution of game limits, and there are problems with the rotation of hunting grounds (raiderism). The analysis revealed that these weaknesses were mainly due to the challenges of the 21st century, such as financial demands, devastation and deprivation of hunting grounds, which weaken hunting societies from within. This type of approach can lead to irreversible consequences, as animal populations becoming uncontrollable can negatively affect forestry and agriculture, as well as increase the risk of road accidents on roads in Latvia.

In order to remedy this situation, closer cooperation between hunting societies and public authorities monitoring the hunting sector would be necessary, allowing the hunting societies themselves to set the limits for game animals to a greater extent, thus adapting to the specific needs.

Raiding hunting grounds is another major problem caused by unbalanced legislation and insufficient control of it. Hunters, often, move between different hunting precincts, which sometimes make positive changes, allowing undercamped areas to be settled. However, raiderism often also takes the form of illegal acts of taking over hunting rights from other hunting societies, which can lead to conflicts and jeopardise the existence of these hunting societies. This problem requires clearer legislation and clearer rules to protect other hunting societies' rights to specific hunting areas.

The authors conclude that closer and clearer cooperation between the State Forest Service and hunting societies is needed to address issues of granting game limits and prevent opportunities for raiderism. In order to promote long-term hunting practices and reduce conflicts between hunters and landowners, mechanisms should be developed to allow hunting societies to become more actively involved in the distribution of game volumes.

The SWOT analysis showed that external development directions included the use of technological development for improvement in the registration of game animals at hunting stations, improvement and development of the mobile application “Mednis”, as well as measures for popularisation of hunting in Latvia. These development directions will allow hunting societies to develop and improve hunting practices, attracting young hunters and facilitating the recording of hunter organisations and game animals.

The threat section says hunting societies face a number of threats that can disrupt their operations. Hunting societies indicated loss of hunting areas and poaching as the primary threat. Competition for resources and territories with other hunting societies leads to hunting societies fighting.

These factors can significantly weaken the sustainability and efficiency of hunting societies. Loss of territory can occur for a variety of reasons, from land owners' wishes to land sales. In order to prevent this situation, hunting societies need to be flexible and adapt to different circumstances, actively working with landowners and forest managers to ensure access to new hunting grounds and preserve hunting grounds.

In order to ensure the existence of hunting societies, a systematic approach to problem solving is necessary, fostering both long-term hunting practices and closer cooperation between the parties involved in hunting.

Conclusions and Suggestions

1. The authors conclude that hunting societies have two main strengths. Firstly, a correct and correct process for the recording and monitoring of wild game animals by each hunting society on its hunting grounds. Secondly, a structured management model and common objectives linked to the management of the chairman of the board of directors of the hunting association, which include effective internal work and division of responsibilities. The analysis of SWOT carried out also points out the weaknesses of the hunting society, one of which is the incorrect distribution of hunting limits for game animals and the second one is the raiderism of hunting grounds.
2. The National Forest Service needs to work more closely with hunting societies in the distribution of game limits; to mitigate the raiderism of hunting areas and its negative impact, it is important to promote sustainable hunting practices and cooperation between hunting societies and landowners.
3. According to the analysis of SWOT, hunting societies have two main development directions. The first course of development is the use of technological solutions to improve the recording of wild game. The second way that may reinforce its importance over time is the involvement of hunting societies in the field of national defence. Hunters are armed and familiar with the open-air conditions that make them potentially useful in national defence.
4. The main threats are the risk of loss of hunting grounds and poaching. The first threat is particularly serious because, if the aim of the hunting society is to organise and manage hunting, then losing the available hunting area may be difficult, if not impossible, for the society to continue its activities.
5. The State Forest Service, together with the joint stock company Latvian State Forests, must continue to modernise the information system “Mednis”, which would include the creation of new functions or updates that provide a comprehensive view of the hunting process and activities

of hunting societies. Extending the possibilities of the mobile application "Mednis", for example by allowing hunting societies to see the boundaries of hunting areas of all hunting organisations and the information binding thereto (registration of contracts), could be useful.

6. In order to prevent the loss of hunting areas of hunting societies from raiderism by other hunting societies or manipulation by landowners, the Ministry of Agriculture together with the State Forest Service should introduce a new regulatory framework that protects hunting societies from such unfair practices. The authors of the work propose to create a new or amend the current Hunting Law or to edit hunting regulations that would lay down clear criteria and procedures for switching hunting contracts, as well as provide for sanctions for unfair conduct by hunting societies.
7. The Ministry of Defence should develop the involvement of hunters and hunting societies in the protection of the state, as they are experienced and trained for forest life and shooting. Their understanding of the nature of shooting and its damage can be helpful, especially if combined with military training.

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