



CHALMERS
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Value-driven sustainability transitions in large organisations

Applying a Transition Management Lens to the Swedish Church's Intended Change of Forestry Practices

Master's thesis in Industrial Ecology

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CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Gothenburg, Sweden 2026
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Master's Thesis 2026
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Abstract

The urgent need to mitigate climate change has placed the forestry sector under intense scrutiny, calling into question the widespread use of clear-cut practices. In Sweden, this issue has turned into a conflict within the Church of Sweden, which manages approximately 470,000 hectares of forest land through its historically acquired clergy salary assets. Replacing the previous stance on forestry as a means to generate income, in November 2025, the Church of Sweden adopted a new church order which balances four equal sustainability-dimensions: economic, ecological, social, and spiritual. This master's thesis explores how this is currently being translated into practical action.

Combining transition management theory with organisational concepts, such as structural silos and institutional logics, this study looks at the behavioural and organisational dynamics that shape the early phases of the transition. The empirical data were drawn from 24 semi-structured interviews with a variety of handpicked participants from various parts of Sweden, including elected officials, church board members, foresters, and sustainability administrators.

The thematic analysis highlights a widespread willingness to incorporate the new regulations into forestry. However, several internal barriers still exist. The findings reveal differing logics within the church, perhaps driven by established organisational silos between the relatively isolated estate management departments and the rest of the dioceses. Furthermore, geographic, ecological, and economic differences between the 13 dioceses, make the church suited for local governance, something that also is a long standing tradition in how the church is run. This, however, complicates the establishment of shared goals, and vision necessary for sustainability transitions. Specifically within the church, despite its traditional bottom-up organisation, parishes and congregations remain somewhat excluded from the early-stage vision-setting. Moreover, lock-ins within the Swedish forestry sector, for example, knowledge gaps regarding alternative methods, industrial interests, historical purpose of forests, and uncertainty in a changing climate, further hinders change. Finally, the long timeframes inherent to forests clash with the quick organisational expectations for change, and therefore demands a high level of patience.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to all participants in the study; without their contributions, this work would not have been possible. We also thank our supervisor and examiner, Sverker Molander, for encouragement and support during the whole process. Finally, we would like to thank our psychologist friend Thea for help with tips and tricks around interview methods and thematic analysis.

Carl Lunneryd and David Winroth, Gothenburg, June 2026

List of Acronyms

CB	Church board member
CO	Church official
CoS	Church of Sweden
CSA	Clergy's salary assets
EC	Estate committee member
ENSO	Property Council's cooperation body (Egendomsnämndernas samarbetsorgan)
F	Forester
FM	Forest manager
FPIC	Free, prior and Informed Consent
FSC	Forests Stewardship Council
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MLP	Multi-level perspective
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEFC	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
SA	Sustainability administrator
SCI	Scientist
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet)
SMB	The Super-environmental Blog (Supermiljöbloggen)
SSR	National Association of the Swedish Sámi people (Svenska Samernas Riksförbund)
STEF	Association of Diocesan Estate Management departments (Stiftens Egendomsförvaltningars Förening)
TM	Transition management

English - Swedish Dictionary

Association of Diocesan Estate Management departments	- Stiftens Egendomsförvaltningars Förening
Church Council	- Kyrkofullmäktige
Church Board	- Kyrkostyrelsen
Church Office	- Kyrkokansli
Church Order	- Kyrkoordningen
Clear-cut area	- Hygge
Clear-cut forestry	- Trakthyggesbruk
Clearing	- Røjning
Clergy salary assets	- Prästlönetillgångar
Congregations	- Församlingar
Diocesan Council	- Stiftsfullmäktige
Diocesan Director	- Stiftsdirektor
Diocesan Office	- Stiftskansli
Diocese	- Stift
Estate Committee	- Egendomsnämnd/Egendomsutskott
Estate management	- Egendomsförvaltning
Felling	- Avverkning
Forester manager	- Stiftsjägmästare
Missive	- Skrivelse
Multi-layered forest	- Fullskiktad skog
National association of the Swedish Sámi people	- Svenska Samernas riksförbund
Non-clear-cut forestry	- Hyggesfritt skogsbruk
Patch-cutting	- Luckhuggning
Property Council's cooperation body	- Egendomsnämndernas samarbetsorgan
Selection system	- Blädning
Shelterwood systems	- Överhållen skärm
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	- Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet
The forestry act	- Skogsvårdslagen
The General Synod	- Kyrkomötet
The Super-environmental blog	- Supermiljöbloggen
The Swedish Forestry Agency	- Skogsstyrelsen
Thinning	- Gallring

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Sammanfattning

Bakgrund och syfte

Skogsbrukets roll för klimatet och dess påverkan på biologisk mångfald, ekosystem och sociala värden har under senare år blivit allt mer omdiskuterad. I Sverige, där skogen är en betydande industri, har trakthyggesbruk länge varit den dominerande skötselmetoden. I och med klimatförändringarna finns det däremot ett växande intresse för alternativa metoder som i högre grad beaktar andra värden än virkesproduktion, både inom politiken, industrin och samhället i stort. Att förändra skogsbruket på ett sätt som går bort från trakthyggesbruket är dock svårt eftersom skogsbruket är beroende av etablerad kunskap, ekonomiska strukturer, industriella system och långsiktiga investeringar.

Denna studie undersöker hur en hållbarhetsomställning inom skogsbruket kan genomföras i en större organisation där Svenska kyrkan används som fallstudie. Svenska kyrkan är Sveriges femte största skogsägare och förvaltar omkring 470 000 hektar skogsmark genom sina så kallade prästlönetillgångar. I november 2025 antogs en ny inriktning inom kyrkan, där egendomsförvaltningens uppdrag ändrades från att i första hand generera avkastning till kyrkan till att istället balansera fyra likvärdiga hållbarhetsdimensioner: ekonomisk, ekologisk, social och andlig hållbarhet. Denna studie undersöker hur denna beslutade förändring redan omsätts och planeras att omsättas i praktiken.

Studien använder Transition Management (TM) som huvudsakligt teoretiskt perspektiv, kompletterat med organisationsteori om bland annat organisatoriska stuprör, institutionella logiker och förändringsarbete. Tre forskningsfrågor behandlas: (1) hur Svenska kyrkans omställning förhåller sig till TM, (2) hur organisationens struktur och styrning möjliggör eller hindrar förändringen, samt (3) vilka de största utmaningarna i omställningen är.

Metod

Det empiriska materialet består huvudsakligen av 24 semistrukturerade intervjuer med personer från olika delar av Svenska kyrkan samt två skogsforskare. De intervjuade var ledamöter i egendomsnämnder och -utskott, hållbarhetsstrateger, tjänstepersoner på kyrkokansliet, kyrkostyrelseledamöter, skogsförvaltare, jägmästare och forskare. Intervjuerna analyserades genom tematisk analys.

Materialet från intervjuerna jämfördes sedan med hur hållbarhetsomställningar och transitioner föreslås genomföras inom ramen för *Transition Management* och andra vedertagna arbetssätt.

Resultat

Ett övergripande resultat är att det finns en utbredd vilja att arbeta med den nya inriktningen. Samtidigt betonas vikten av att denna vilja omsätts till konkret handling och att kyrkans organisation inte fastnar i status quo. För vissa intervjupersoner bygger engagemanget främst på en känsla av plikt gentemot Svenska kyrkan, medan andra drivs av en vilja att förändra skogsbruket. Studien betonar därför att den formella förändringen måste följas av konkreta åtgärder.

En central utmaning är att innebörden av de fyra hållbarhetsdimensionerna fortfarande är oklar. Det finns särskild osäkerhet kring hur dimensionerna ska balanseras, hur de ska mätas och vad andlig hållbarhet innebär i praktiken. Förändringen innebär dessutom ett skifte i synen på prästlönetillgångarnas syfte: från att främst skapa ekonomisk avkastning till att balansera flera olika värden. Det saknas till viss del fortfarande en tydlig gemensam bild av vad den nya inriktningen betyder för det praktiska arbetet i stift.

Flera av de intervjuade pekade på ett behov av tydliga riktlinjer från kyrkans nationella nivå för att skapa en överenskommelse om hur den nya kyrkoordningen ska tolkas och tillämpas. Även förbättrad dialog samt inkludering av olika kompetenser och aktörer sågs som nödvändiga. Församlingar och andra berörda aktörer har i begränsad utsträckning varit involverade i de tidiga stegen av processen och kommunikation med församlingarna har dessutom ofta handlat mer om information än verklig dialog. Att inkludera nödvändiga kompetenser för att tolka kyrkoordningen samt att ha bättre dialog inom kyrkan är en förutsättning för förändringen.

Samtidigt som studien fann behov av tydlighet från nationell nivå så finns det fortfarande starka skäl att behålla ett lokalt beslutsfattande. De 13 stift har olika geografiska, ekologiska och ekonomiska förutsättningar och vilka skogsbruksmetoder som är lämpliga varierar därför mellan olika stift och geografiska områden. Många av de intervjuade menade att en helt centraliserad styrning riskerar att bli olämplig,

medan lokalt anpassade mål kan göra det möjligt att ta hänsyn till regionala förutsättningar. En utmaning blir därför att kombinera en gemensam övergripande riktning med tillräcklig lokal frihet.

Ett annat resultat är behovet av att experimentera med alternativa skogsbruksmetoder. Dels för att arbeta med de kunskapsluckor som finns kring alternativa skogsbruksmetoder men också för att anpassa skogsbruket till lokala förutsättningar och för att skapa ett erfarenhetsutbyte mellan stiftet.

Studien identifierar även ett antal utmaningar kopplade till omställningen. Dessa inkluderar flertalet så kallade lock-ins inom den svenska skogssektorn, nämligen: etablerad kunskap och utbildning, industriella strukturer, ekonomiska intressen och den traditionella uppfattningen om skogen som huvudsakligen en källa till virkesproduktion och intäkter. Även ekonomiska konsekvenser och det faktum att förändringar i skogen tar lång tid sågs som hinder för omställningen. Dessa faktorer gör det bekvämare att fortsätta med dagens arbetssätt även när en förändring sker i organisationens bestämmelser.

Under intervjuerna lyftes även ett par organisatoriska strukturer som kan påverka omställningen. Egendomsförvaltningarna har under en längre tid skött skogen någorlunda självständigt, utan många åsikter från andra delar av kyrkan. Studien fann en klyfta inom organisationen som kan komma att försvåra omställningen då delar av organisationen behöver föras samman för att få in andra värderingar i skogsbruket. Samtidigt finns det delar av organisationen som kan underlätta arbetet. Kyrkan är en botten-upp-organisation som kan underlätta arbetet med att anpassa skogsbruket till lokala förutsättningar utifrån nationella mål. Det finns även tydliga hierarkier inom kyrkan och ett antal roller, framför allt biskopar och stiftsdirektörer, som många inom kyrkan lyssnar på och som därför kan driva arbetet framåt.

Slutsatser och rekommendationer

Utifrån Transition Management bedömer författarna att Svenska kyrkan har tagit viktiga steg genom att formulera de fyra hållbarhetsdimensionerna. Däremot återstår ett omfattande arbete med att översätta dessa övergripande principer till gemensamma mål, arbetssätt och konkreta experiment i fältet.

Författarnas huvudsakliga rekommendation är därför att skapa lokala omställningsarenor inom stiftet. Dessa skulle samla olika kompetenser och perspektiv, exempelvis skogsförvaltare, hållbarhetsexperten, biskopar, präster och stiftsdirektörer. Därefter kan en bredare grupp av intressenter involveras, exempelvis församlingar, localsamhällen, forskare, entreprenörer och miljöorganisationer. Syftet är att skapa gemensam problemförståelse och vision, bryta organisatoriska stuprör, möjliggöra lärande och utveckla lokalt anpassade vägar framåt.

Sammantaget visar studien att en hållbarhetsomställning i en stor organisation inte enbart handlar om att byta teknik eller arbetsmetod. Den kräver också förändringar i organisationens strukturer, kultur, kunskap och beslutsprocesser. För Svenska kyrkan blir den centrala utmaningen att hitta en balans mellan en gemensam riktning för de fyra hållbarhetsdimensionerna och stiftens behov av lokal anpassning. Om organisationen lyckas kombinera tydligare mål med bredare deltagande, experimenterande och lärande kan omställningen av skogsbruket samtidigt bli en organisatorisk förändring som på sikt bidrar till en bredare utveckling av det svenska skogsbruket.

1

Introduction

1.1 Sustainability and sustainability transitions

Over the past 40 years, the issue of climate change and the environment has been covered by numerous authors, articles and research efforts. The literature spans from the Brundtland report in 1987 (Brundtland, 1987) to the first IPCC Assessment report in 1990 to the latest in 2023. In addition, there is a vast number of research papers covering different mitigation methods, schools of thought, policy instruments, etc. This is in no way a surprise. Climate change is a wicked problem, encompassing both complex and complicated elements (Andersson et al., 2014). As a consequence, there are many different ways in which researchers, policymakers, and others in society approach and tackle this issue.

One of these views or areas of study is "sustainability transitions". Markard et al. (2012) define sustainability transitions as

"...long-term, multi-dimensional, and fundamental transformation processes through which established socio-technical systems shift to more sustainable modes of production and consumption."

Within sustainability transitions research, the four main areas of study are *Transition management* (Loorbach, 2007), *Strategic niche management* (Kemp et al., 1998), *the Multi-level perspective* (Geels, 2002) and *Technological innovation systems* (Bergek et al., 2008) (Markard et al., 2012). Over the years, these research strands have been developed, complemented and broadened by other ideas, research and theories, resulting in the vast field of sustainability transitions research (Köhler et al., 2019). These areas examine distinct parts of the sustainability transition field and contribute to understanding the complex, hard-to-grasp dynamics of these transitions. The fields of Technological innovation systems and Strategic niche management primarily examine the emergence of new technologies and the management of new niches, primarily from a societal or macro perspective. For this thesis, which covers how organisations can work with transitions that do not necessarily require innovation or the development of new technologies, but rather a change in organisa-

tional practices, the two relevant areas are therefore Transition management (TM) and, to some extent, the Multi-level perspective (MLP).

The MLP describes sustainability transitions at three levels: the *landscape*, the *regime*, and the *niche* (Geels, 2002). Pressures at the landscape level create opportunities for change in the regime, which in turn allow different niches to develop and establish themselves within the new regime. This perspective on sustainability transitions offers a lens through which to view transition processes and to situate the case in this study within the wider societal context. However, MLP can also be difficult to apply at the basic level of organisations, as MLP often treats organisations as niche actors within the wider regime. This contrasts with TM, where the regime can be viewed as the dominant ideas *within* an organisation, and what would have been niche actors in the MLP are *forerunners* in the TM framework (Loorbach et al., 2010). TM also offers a clear management approach through an iterative, cyclical framework that establishes common visions and problem framings for the system and the problem, and then develops paths through the transition (Loorbach, 2007). While usually focused on large, society-spanning sustainability transitions, the TM framework also offers a way to study individual organisations' approaches to transitions and the management of actions and actors associated with them (Loorbach et al., 2010).

1.2 Forests role in climate change

One area that has been high on the EU agenda in recent years, and which could play a big role in the global issue of climate change, is the forestry industry (European Commission, 2021). Forests provide timber, fuel, medicine, jobs, and recreation and culture, and mitigate climate change, as they absorb and store large amounts of carbon (European Commission, 2021). Globally, deforestation and reforestation are the largest sources and sinks of carbon dioxide emissions, respectively (Nabuurs & Mrabet, 2023). Moreover, wood from the forest can be used to substitute for other, more energy-intensive materials, further helping to mitigate climate change. However, mainly due to agricultural expansion (Nabuurs & Mrabet, 2023), forest areas have decreased globally over the last few decades. This negatively affects the forest's capacity to act as a carbon sink, and its ability to provide various ecosystem services (European Commission, 2021).

In Sweden, the forestry sector is one of the largest industries (Ekonomifakta, 2026, February). Overall, about 75% of Sweden's forests are managed in some way, most commonly through clear cut forestry (Skogsindustrierna, 2025, May). While this increases the growth and correspondingly the pace at which the forest binds carbon, it neglects other values in the forests, such as, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and recreation (Eggers et al., 2019). Hence, how the forests are managed has a large impact not only on what they provide but also on how much they contribute to climate change mitigation (European Commission, 2021).

The current Swedish forestry model, with intensive clear-cutting and monocultures, is under scrutiny, and there are both environmental and societal pressures to move away from the current system (Hertog et al., 2022) including, for example, decreased biodiversity under the current system (Eggers et al., 2019), greater susceptibility to drought, fires, and pests (López-Andújar Fustel et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024), and critiques from the public (Segerstedt, 2024) as well as researchers (Holm, 2024). At the same time, some academics (Bergh et al., 2020; Björheden et al., 2022), argue that the current methods are better for the climate because they increase the forest's overall growth rate, thereby binding more carbon, while creating products that can substitute for fossil fuels.

Regardless of the arguments for or against any method, alternative methods are often met with scepticism. Hertog et al. (2022) have identified several barriers to change in Swedish forestry including culture, forestry education, industrial networks, and timber markets. Among these barriers, at least three (culture, industrial networks, and timber markets) are described in the paper (Hertog et al., 2022) as connected to money-making. The attitude around the current method is that it is the easiest way to make money. The industry (e.g. machines and sawmills) is well adapted to clear-cut forestry and favours large timber volumes to maintain profitability. Similarly, the market demands large volumes from clear-cut forestry rather than higher-quality timber from continuous-cover forestry. (Hertog et al., 2022)

This makes the case of the Church of Sweden (CoS) rather interesting, as it is an organisation with several sources of income, and the clergy salary assets (forests, agriculture, and equity funds) only account for about 2% of its total income (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). Hence, the CoS is not highly dependent on forestry and does not necessarily have to prioritise profitability. Furthermore, the church upholds many other Christian values that are less prevalent in other parts of society, such as large companies and private owners. At the time of writing this report, the CoS has also just set a new direction for its forestry, which is now to be "balanced" across four sustainability dimensions: ecological, economic, social and spiritual. As this is a sustainability transition within a large and important organisation with a significant share of the Swedish forestry sector, it is a good case study for examining how such transitions take place in organisations.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how intended transitions are implemented in practice. By using the Church of Sweden's intended transition to more sustainable forestry practices, this study aims to give new insights into how large organisations with newly established environmental goals and sustainability dimensions work towards achieving these transitions. In addition, the study aims to identify specific challenges, barriers, drivers, and opportunities in the CoS associated with its unique organisational structure and core theological values. The CoS is a very large, decentralised national organisation with multiple layers of decision-making and an organisational structure in which religious, economic and political logics all work alongside one another. This creates an opportunity to investigate how these organisations address sustainability transitions. The literature on transition research usually covers technological or economic drivers for transition, but in the Church of Sweden's case, the transition is also driven by *religious* drivers, that is, the idea that the forest and nature have spiritual values that need to be stewarded by the church and humankind, and that need to be preserved for future generations.

1.4 Objectives

To fulfill the purpose of this study, three objectives were formulated:

- Analyse the intended transition within the Church of Sweden through the lens of Transition management by using ideas from the TM literature to understand and evaluate the CoS's ongoing work with the transition.
- Evaluate and propose ways forward in the CoS's work on sustainability transitions within forestry and
- Contribute to the understanding of value-driven transitions for sustainability within large organisations

The objectives will be achieved by answering the following research questions:

1. How does the transition process within the Church of Sweden compare to best practices and the TM framework?
2. How do the organisational structures and governance mechanisms within the Church of Sweden act as either enablers or barriers in the proposed sustainability transition?
3. What are the major challenges for the Church of Sweden in this transition?

2

The Church of Sweden and its forest management: structure, history, and the new direction

2.1 The Church of Sweden's organisational structure

The Church of Sweden is Sweden's largest religious organisation and is led by the highest decision-making body, the General Synod, and the Church Board in Uppsala. Since the CoS is an episcopal church, it also has an archbishop, who serves as the Church's main representative in national and international contexts and the chairman of the church board. The General Synod meets every autumn, and sets the overall direction for the Church, creates policies, and has the power to change the organisation's bylaws and the Church Order, which contains common rules for the Church as a whole and also regulates operations within congregations and parishes. Furthermore, they elect the church board, which is responsible for leading the CoS's national work when the general synod is not gathered. For the everyday operations of the Church on the national level, the board has the national office at their disposal. (Svenska Kyrkan, n.d.)

At the regional level, the CoS is divided into 13 dioceses, each led by a bishop, a diocesan director, a diocesan council, and a diocesan board. Similar to the general synod at the national level, the diocesan councils are the highest decision-making bodies at the regional level and are responsible for setting the goals and guidelines for the diocese's overall operation. The diocesan council also elects committees to oversee specific issues important to the diocese, and every diocese has an office for daily operations. (Svenska Kyrkan, n.d.)

Each diocese consists of different congregations that hold church services and teachings and are responsible for the local work of the Church. In each congregation, the church council is the decision-making body, and they elect the congregation council, which acts as the congregation's board. Some congregations work together in

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a parish. In practice, this means they cooperate on basic tasks and administrative work when congregations are too small to handle them on their own. Congregations in the same parish have a common parish council and congregation council. (Svenska Kyrkan, n.d.)

The Church of Sweden's organisational structure is visualised in figure 2.1.

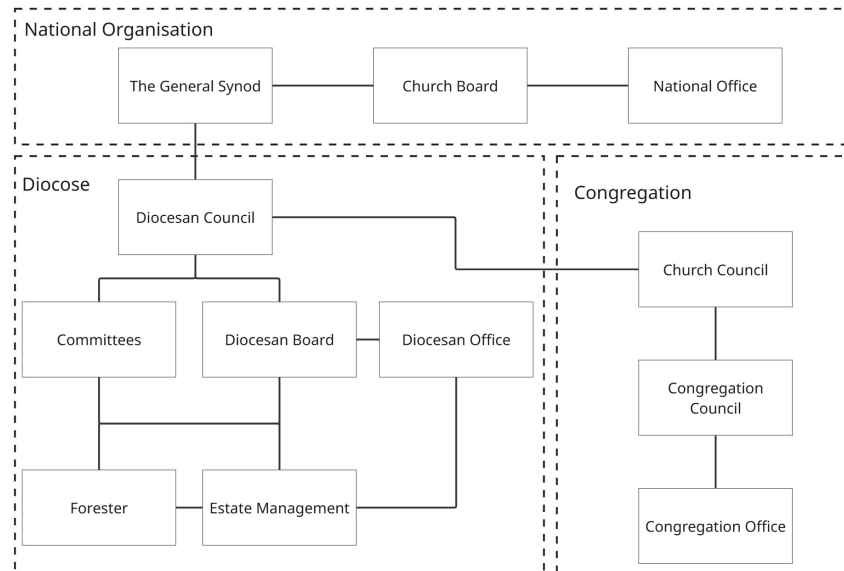


Figure 2.1

Organisation chart over the Church's organisation. The lines represent some type of connection between two or more parts of the organisation.

2.2 Brief history of the Church of Sweden and its forests

The Church of Sweden manages around 470,000 ha of forests (an area bigger than both Gotland and Öland) of which about 400,000 ha are classified as productive forests, i.e., forests suitable for forestry (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). Historically, these lands were given or donated to the Church to help priests provide for themselves. These estates have since remained under the Church's management, even though they no longer constitute the priests' main source of income. The Church does not own this land; instead, the property owns itself, but the Church is by law allowed to manage it (Regeringen, 1998). Due to their history, these properties are called clergy salary assets; however, today they include funds, as well as forests and agricultural land. Nowadays, the main purpose of these properties is to generate income for the various congregations in Sweden, enabling them to continue their religious work.

The clergy salary assets are spread throughout Sweden. As a result, the properties

are nowadays managed independently by the 13 dioceses (Svenska Kyrkan, 2026a). As the monetary values of these lands vary across different parts of Sweden, due to soil productivity, geography, etc., the income is shared and distributed within the Church according to a regulated system. Half of the income from the assets goes to the congregations in the diocese where the forest is, and the other half is given to the Church and redistributed among the congregations, thus equalising incomes. (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024).

2.2.1 Organisation around the Church of Sweden's forest management

As mentioned above, the 13 dioceses in the CoS have delegated responsibility to manage the forests within the clergy salary assets. The different dioceses have one political and one managerial branch for managing these assets. Political interests are organised within estate committees that are either appointed by the diocesan council or part of it. These committees set the overall goals for the estate management. Operations are then carried out by the estate management departments, typically led by a forester (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). This means that, e.g., decisions about harvests, planting/sowing, and forestry methods are taken by the dioceses, not the CoS. The forestry operations are then, most commonly, carried out by external entrepreneurs.

For collaboration on certain matters, the estate committees and the estate management departments have organized their collaboration into two distinct organisations. *The Association of Diocesan Estate Management Departments*, STEF (Stiftens Egendomsförvaltningars Förening), coordinates certification processes for FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) certifications across all of the CoS's forests. Similarly, in *The Estate Committees Cooperation Body*, ENSO (Egendomsnämndernas samarbetsorgan), estate committees coordinate on matters related to the Church's forestry and estate management.

2.3 Forest management

Below is a short description of Swedish forestry. Regarding the described methods, note that there are many, and the ones below are just some of the more common ones. Furthermore, the most suitable method depends on local conditions, e.g. soil fertility, altitude, coordinates, economic possibilities, and the goals of the forest owner. Furthermore, the methods are not defined by strict numbers, i.e., there is no exact definition about how, e.g., clear-cut forestry looks. Instead, they are approximate descriptions that give the reader an idea of the forestry in Sweden.

2.3.1 Swedish forestry, short history and tradition

Historically, and still today, the focus in Swedish forestry has been on production even though the environmental and production goals described in the Forestry Act are, in fact, equal (Skogsstyrelsen, 2025a). However, in practice the principle of "freedom with responsibility" is implemented. This means that the law has very few regulatory requirements and that forest owners have considerable power over how to manage their forests (Skogsstyrelsen, 2025b). But it also means that forest owners have significant responsibilities for various forest interventions and are, e.g., required to plant new trees when older ones are felled (Skogskunskap, 2025). Hence, the Swedish forestry model is built on Swedish forest owners' interest in managing their forests and, in doing so, producing timber while respecting the environment.

2.3.2 Clear-cut forestry

The method follows a clear pattern, similar to agriculture; the trees are planted or sown, cared for, and finally harvested. This cycle is often split into four parts: the regeneration phase, the young forest phase, the thinning phase, and the felling phase.

The regeneration phase is when a new forest is established and replaces the harvested one. Trees are either planted or sown, but one can also leave older trees to seed themselves (Skogen.se, 2026). This is followed by the young forest, where the trees are 1,3-7 meters (Skogen.se, 2026). During this time, clearing is done to manage the different tree types in the forest (e.g. in a fir forest, most other trees are removed). Furthermore, by removing smaller trees and saving the larger ones, the growth is concentrated on the faster-growing trees, yielding larger and more resilient trees (Pettersson et al., 2012).

The third stage is the thinning phase (12-22 meters). At this point some trees are, again, removed, called thinning, often done 2-3 times (Skogen.se, 2026). Similar to clearing, this is done to concentrate the growth onto the larger trees and make them more resilient (although sometimes for other reasons such as creating a specific environment or landscape in the forest) (Agestam, 2015).

The final phase is felling. This can legally be done when the forest has reached a certain age (Skogen.se, 2026). For example, in southern Sweden, the lowest felling age is 45 years for spruce and 60 years for pine. Commonly, the trees are removed in one go, leaving a clear-cut area (Skogen.se, 2026). As felling is a major disturbance to the forest, there are laws governing how many and which trees to save for nature preservation. For example, dead trees, leafy trees, old trees, and nest trees shall be saved to support plants and animals until the new forest is established.

Pros and cons of clear-cut forestry

One of the advantages of clear-cut forestry is the economic aspect. Studies that compare clear-cut forestry to different non-clear-cut forestry methods found that overall growth is lower for non-clear-cut forestry methods and that the operational costs are higher (Hammerz et al., 2017). Similarly, the revenue for clear-cut methods was higher or sometimes equivalent to that of non-clear-cut forestry, depending on the method. (Bergh et al., 2020).

At the same time, clear-cut forestry causes large disturbances to the forest (Rummukainen, 2024). Clear-cutting leads to monocultures and forests where most trees have the same age. This is vastly different from natural forests, where there are both young and old trees, as well as different species, including both conifers and leafy trees. Critics mean that this has negative impacts on biodiversity as well as animals, plants and various organisms and even the ecosystem as a whole (Appelqvist & Mogren, 2023). It is also argued that even though there are laws about leaving trees after clear-cutting, they are not sufficient to support biodiversity and wildlife. Moreover, they argue that clear-cutting disables the forest from becoming a carbon sink and that clear-cut areas leak carbon for many years after harvest. Also, clear-cutting destroys many of the recreational/social values that the forest has (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024).

2.3.3 Non-clear-cut forestry methods

Non-clear-cut forestry is defined by the Swedish Forest Agency in the following way: "Non-clear-cut forestry on forest land intended for wood production implies that the forest is managed in such a way that the land always has a tree cover, without any larger clear-cut areas." (Appelqvist et al., 2021). It includes a multitude of different forestry methods, some of which are described briefly below. Note that there exist slight variations to all methods.

Selection systems

This practice focuses on maintaining a continuous multi-layered forest, i.e., trees in all sizes and ages. Harvesting is done at regular intervals, usually every 10-30 years, depending on soil fertility. The method involves knowledge of the timber volume in the forest before and after felling to determine how much to harvest. Usually, only the biggest trees are harvested. (Appelqvist, 2020)

Patch-cutting

This method harvests small patches in the forest, each about 20-50 meters in diameter. These areas are then replanted, or they are left to be naturally regenerated by the surrounding trees. The patches are then, through regular harvests, enlarged until they become one unit. (Appelqvist, 2020).

Shelterwood systems

A maintained shelter means that about 130-150 trees/ha (about 9 meter between each tree) are left to seed themselves while maintaining a forest-feeling. These trees are left for about 20-40 years until the newly established forest is large enough. Usually, the shelter is removed in stages. This method is most common for pine but can be done for other trees as well. (Appelqvist, 2020).

Pros and cons of non-clear-cut forestry

The positives and negatives briefly described below are generalised to non-clear-cut forestry. As described above, there are several methods, each with slightly different pros and cons.

Non-clear-cut forestry is, overall, a gentler practice, meaning that several species (plants, mosses, fungi, etc.) have a greater opportunity to survive than in clear-cut forestry. The method is also kinder to reindeer herding, which is a big question in parts of Sweden. Finally, recreational values are mentioned as being maintained in non-clear-cut forestry (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024).

As for the cons of non-clear-cut forestry, the largest is economic. The growth in these types of forests is lower than in clear-cut forests, leading to lower harvest income (Rummukainen, 2024). The magnitude of this loss will vary depending on the alternative method and the geographical preconditions. Add to this that the harvesting cost is often higher, since greater respect for surrounding trees is needed, felling is done more frequently, and because new trees are established more slowly (Appelqvist, 2020). Also, as only specific trees are removed, the transport costs are commonly higher when compared to the same harvest-volume from clear-cut forestry. Nevertheless, it should be noted that experiences from non-clear-cut forestry practitioners show that even though there is a loss of income, especially during the transition period, eventually the amount of large trees suitable for timber increases, partially compensating for this (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024).

Apart from the economics, there are some risks associated with non-clear-cut forestry. The risk of root rot increases due to more transport in the forests (Appelqvist, 2020). This also increases the risk of soil damage and damage to the remaining trees. Moreover, there is at least an increased risk of storm and bark beetle damage during the transition. These risks might decrease over time, though, as a multi-layered forest is established (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). Besides these practical challenges, there is also some lack of knowledge regarding non-clear-cut forestry practices (Appelqvist, 2020).

2.3.4 Forest management within the Church of Sweden

As mentioned above, the CoS owns around 400,000 ha of productive forests. Of this, ~350 000 ha are used for forestry (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024), while the other ~50 000 are left to preserve nature and wildlife. All the Church's forests are certified by either PEFC or FSC or both (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024), with the requirements ranging from working conditions and the rights of indigenous people to timber production, forest management, and environmental aspects (Forest Stewardship Council, 2020; Svenska PEFC, 2023)

Most of the CoS's productive forests are managed by clear-cut methods (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). Historically, the purpose of the Church's forests has been to generate income. This is seen in Swedish law which states, regarding the purpose of the clergy's salary assets (SFS 1998:1591 9 §): "to contribute to the financial conditions for the church of Sweden's preaching" (Socialdepartementet, 1998), (author's translation). Furthermore, in the church order, it said, up until January 1st 2026, that ([Chapter 46], 3 §): "The clergy's salary assets shall be managed as effectively as possible and in such a way that they provide the best possible persistent total return" (Svenska Kyrkan, 2026b), (author's translation).

2.4 Opposing views on the Church of Sweden's forestry practices

The CoS has received criticism regarding its forestry, partly due to its focus on economic gain, partly because of the negative effects of clear-cut forestry on, for example, biodiversity. Critics often focus on the lack of other values in forestry, such as social, ecological, and spiritual values. The critique comes from multiple different stakeholders, including congregations, NGOs like the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, scientists (Englund et al., 2023) and individuals (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). Some have also criticised the Church's lack of action, arguing that what is said on paper seldom results in any actual action (Sternudd, 2026; Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). Furthermore, they have been criticised by the Sámi as the CoS's forestry negatively affects the reindeer herding (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024).

However, other argue that the climate benefit of clear-cut forestry is higher than other methods as the pace at which the forest binds carbon is directly proportional to its growth, which is highest for clear-cut forestry. Thus suggesting that a transition to non-clear-cut forestry would increase carbon emissions to the atmosphere (Björheden et al., 2022). Although, recent studies show that the amount of carbon stored in untouched boreal forests is higher than in logged forests, regardless of the growth (Pascual et al., 2026). In addition, across the forestry sector, if all forests

were left untouched, emissions would increase because needs are met in other ways, e.g., through fossil fuels and cement (Bergh et al., 2020). Therefore, it is argued that forestry, and especially intensive forestry, decreases emission as wood-products can substitute fossil fuels, known as the substitution effect.

2.5 The new direction

In 2021, due to climate change and to align the forestry with its values (among other things) the General Synod ordered an investigation (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024) into the CoSs' forestry. The purpose of the investigation was to understand and showcase how the clergy's salary assets are managed and how the church order can ensure economic, social, ecological and spiritual sustainability within the CoSs' forestry.

Below, taken from a supporting document to the church order (Kyrkostyrelsen, 2026), the CoS's board interpretations of these terms are described. The board notes that its interpretation is not the only way to meet the regulations' requirements and that it does not exclude other approaches. All of the definitions are translated from Swedish by the authors.

"Economic sustainability, in this provision, means a well-balanced and sustainable use of resources so that they can be of benefit both in the short and long term without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It also means using and managing resources in a way that creates new value over time."

"Social sustainability, in this provision, refers to a use that contributes to strengthening people and social welfare, and that enhances participation and social inclusion. Social welfare reflects the forest value in promoting entrepreneurship, employment, and good working conditions for both Swedish and foreign labour. The social dimension also includes what is sometimes referred to as social values. The forest is valuable to people's quality of life, health, and personal well-being, and it also promotes entrepreneurship, employment, and good working conditions. This dimension also includes consideration for affected local communities, such as Sámi villages, and consideration for cultural heritage values."

"Ecological sustainability, in this provision, refers to, among other things, the protection of viable habitats and living environments for different species and habitat types, the qualities within those habitats and environments, the promotion of connected habitats, and the strengthening of structures that maintain ecosystem services. From an ecological

perspective, sustainability presumes the continuous availability of the required habitats over time, that is, without major interruptions to forest ecosystems and their structures and functions. Ecological sustainability also includes, for example, climate benefits as an ecosystem service."

"**Spiritual sustainability**, in this provision, refers to stewardship that carefully manages property in a manner that does not jeopardise the living conditions of future generations or the living conditions of other species. Finding a long-term balance between the different dimensions may also be an expression of spiritual sustainability."

2.5.1 What the investigation and the Church's missive propose

Table 2.1 shows what the investigation suggested, together with what the general synod later accepted. For the exact proposals see Syrjänen Schaal & Enander (2024) p. 33-35 and Kyrkokansliet (2025) p. 7-8. Most notable was the inclusion of social, ecological, and spiritual & existential values. However, these principles are to be balanced rather than ensured, as suggested in the investigation. Moreover, the missive accepted increased respect for, e.g., biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural heritage into the church order. Although this is done at a local level, i.e., it is still up to each diocese to interpret what this means in practice, and the Church has no real governing tools to ensure that this is respected. Nevertheless, these changes reflect a change in mindset at the national level.

The inclusion of free, prior and informed consent in connection with actions with a direct and significant impact on reindeer herding is also noteworthy. But still, this principle only applies in situations with a "direct and significant impact", what this means in practice remains to be seen.

As for the sustainability fee, it was rejected. The proposals that would grant the church board the authority to demand action from dioceses and withhold grants were also rejected. Besides this, the suggestion concerning the communication with the concerned congregation was weakened. The same goes for the possible land management council, which was said to require further investigation before any action is taken.

Finally, the investigation proposed how much of the Church's forests should be managed with clear-cut and non-clear-cut forestry, and how much should be set aside. The general synod did not accept this suggestion.

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Table 2.1

Comparison between the investigations' proposals and the new church order

	The forest investigation	The church's missive
Sustainability values	clergy salary assets shall be managed in a way that spiritual, economic, social and environmental sustainability is ensured . The church board shall decide goals and directions for the management of the clergy's salary assets.	clergy salary assets shall be managed in a way that spiritual, economic, social and environmental sustainability is balanced . The church board may issue more detailed regulations on the management of clergy salary assets and on the supervision of management.
National or local goals	The management of the clergy salary assets shall be conducted in a way that supports and promotes biodiversity and considers cultural heritage. Moreover, necessary action shall be taken to prevent damage to nature and culture.	The management of the clergy salary assets shall, based on local conditions , contribute to a varied and multifunctional landscape. The management shall protect and promote several values simultaneously, such as spiritual values, biological diversity, cultural environment, climate benefits, ecosystem services in general, social welfare, and sustainable total return.
Reindeer-herding	An action that has a direct and significant impact on the reindeer-herding activities cannot begin without free, prior and informed consent from the concerned Sámi village/population	The indigenous law principle of free, prior and informed consent shall be applied to land use measures that have a direct and significant impact on reindeer herding activities.
Sustainability fee	A congregation shall, if the general synod decides so, also pay a sustainability fee [besides the current fee]. The church board may issue further provisions regarding the sustainability fee.	Further investigation is needed to decide how the transition to a more sustainable forestry is to be financed. The dioceses are responsible for continuing to work towards a more sustainable management of the clergy's salary assets.
National governing	The church board have supervision over the diocese's management of clergy salary assets. This includes the ability to demand that action be taken as well as give support, advice and help. If the church board, in their supervision, find serious shortcomings in the diocese's management of the clergy salary assets, they can withhold the diocesan grant/subsidy until the demanded action is taken. The church board shall annually account for observations and measures taken by the dioceses and account for how these measures ensure spiritual, economic, ecological and social sustainability	The Church Board shall annually report observations from the supervision of the management to the general synod. The church board states that the trust-based governing, which is used today, rests on the organisational structure of the CoS and will continue to be used and developed.
Communication with congregations	The dioceses shall inform the congregations about planned consideration in the management measures. For large-scale plans, the congregations' views shall be gathered and considered .	In overall planning relating to the management of a clergy salary asset of particular importance to a parish, the diocese shall engage in dialogue with the concerned congregation .
Advice	The church board should create a land management council with the purpose of contributing expertise and aiding the church board in forest management transition.	Investigate if there is a need for a land management council , what role they should have and who should be on it.
Forests management	Set aside 20 % for nature preservation 47 % should be managed with clear-cut forestry and 33 % with non-clear-cut forestry (10 % thinning, 8 % adapted to reindeer-herding, and 15 % with other non-clear-cut forestry practices)	These goals can be a basis for the diocese's work towards sustainable forestry. But, it is still up to each diocese to decide, based on local conditions, on goals that are in line with the church order.

2.6 The forestry conflict in the church of Sweden

The response to the investigation and the church board's missive has been varied. On the one hand, the Church has been criticised for not fully accepting the investigation's proposals (Hillert, 2025; Sternudd, 2026). This critique has come from the Church's members, foresters (Lindgren, 2025), as well as from earlier archbishops who pleaded with the Church to adopt the investigation's proposals (Urisman Otto, 2025).

The decision has been described as unclear and lacking specific goals (Hillert, 2025). Members have expressed thoughts about leaving the CoS, as they believe the forestry practices do not align with Christian values by disrespecting nature and indigenous people (Sverker, 2025a). Critique has also come from the chairman of SSR (The National Association of the Sámi People in Sweden), who called the general synod's proposal a betrayal (Berg, 2025). He exemplified this by noting that the principle of FPIC applies only to situations with a direct and significant impact. They argue that the vagueness in the suggestion allows the CoS to continue as usual.

On the other hand, the investigation has been critiqued by the dioceses, only four of which are fairly positive (Sverker, 2025b). Critics among the dioceses worry about economic losses, especially opposing the idea that the church board gain more power over forest management, as well as the sustainability fee and the proposal that the church board may withhold the diocesan subsidy (Sverker, 2025b). Additionally, ENSO have ordered investigations into the economic effects of the proposals (ENSO, 2025), criticising the risk of economic losses.

Furthermore, supermiljöbloggen (SMB) reports on the conflict around the forest investigation (Lindsten, 2025a) claiming that the purpose of ENSO's investigations was to *stop the development towards a gentler forestry* (Lindsten, 2025b). According to ENSO, the purpose was to *make further facts and knowledge available to complement the investigation and the consequences of its proposals* (ENSO, 2025).

Some within the CoS are also concerned that ENSO's investigations might undermine the Church's trustworthiness regarding democratic processes and forest management (Lindsten, 2025b). Stressing that they should have gone to the church board instead (Lindsten, 2025c). In connection with these complementary investigations, there are also reports of threats (Lindsten, 2025d) and mockery in internal emails between diocesan foresters and consultants (Lindsten, 2025e). All of this highlights the conflict and tensions within the Church and its forestry.

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3

Theory

3.1 Transition Management

Transition management (TM) is, in large part, a framework for planning and implementing transitions in societies and organisations (Loorbach et al., 2010). First developed by Rotmans et al. (2001) in 2001, it was later refined by Loorbach (2007). The TM framework comprises three core phases: Strategic, Tactical, and Operational transition management, which are tied together by a fourth phase, Evaluation and Adaptation, thereby creating the *transition management cycle* (Loorbach, 2007). The different phases involve distinct actions, processes, and work at different spatiotemporal scales within the system in which the transition is intended. Actions taken in the strategic part of a transition are set on long-term time scales and at the system level, while the tactical level covers subsystems on mid-term time scales, and operational actions span short time scales and niche- or micro-level systems.

The different parts of the TM framework will be presented here as distinct "phases" of a transition process. However, the different phases do not necessarily follow a strict chronological order; rather, the TM framework is a continuous process in which the different phases are revisited as new knowledge and insights emerge (Loorbach, 2007).

In the strategic phase of transition management, the key activities are creating a shared vision for the system's future state and a common problem framing. The goal is to create a collective understanding of the challenge at hand and a common language and conceptualisation of the system and sub-systems (Loorbach, 2007). This process is described as being exploratory. The focus is on identifying shared problems and visions while learning from each other. To develop visions and principles to guide actors through the transition process, the first group of stakeholders should engage, be open to change, and look beyond the current regime. This means that the first group of stakeholders needs to be informed about the system at hand and be capable of engaging in innovative, 'out-of-the-box' thinking. This first group of stakeholders should have different backgrounds and represent multiple different stakeholder groups, which could be policymakers, experts, different

professional groups, NGOs and citizens (Loorbach, 2007).

Worth noting that there are multiple different approaches and strategies for sense-making, vision-setting and problem framing in complex systems. One of these is backcasting, as described in the paper by Holmberg & Robert (2000). As opposed to traditional forecasting, backcasting begins with a desirable future state and works backwards to determine which steps are necessary to reach it. Instead of working with current trends and projecting the future from those, a future state is envisioned and the question *how do we get there?* is asked. The authors mean that this is particularly useful when the problem at hand is complex, when large changes are required and when the existing trends themselves are part of the problem.

A feature of the method is that the envisioned future is not meant to be set in stone, i.e., the future state cannot be decided in detail during the planning process. Instead, Holmberg & Robert (2000) suggest that for complex problems, the future state should be based on a set of guiding principles, as this creates more flexibility. "The future cannot be foreseen, but its principles can." The authors also argue that individuals are often quite good at identifying guiding principles and working with them. The challenge, instead, according to the authors, lies in getting a group of individuals to work as a team with a shared set of guiding principles.

In the tactical phase, the vision and principles established in the strategic phase are translated into more specific goals and actions. Furthermore, different transition images (themes that contribute to the overall transition) are envisioned, along with different so-called *transition paths*, which are ways these images are to be reached. The different paths all include elements of fore- and backcasting, which in themselves involve setting intermediate goals and visions for sub-systems. Similar to vision-setting in the strategic phase, this process is also exploratory and goal-oriented, with transition paths that can change over time. By combining the overall vision and problem framing from the strategic phase with suggested intermediate goals and actions from the different transition paths, a *transition agenda* is created. The idea behind creating a transition agenda is to bring people together around a shared understanding and ambition to work on the specific transition path they are involved in. In no way do actors have to agree, as conflict and disagreement can create both innovation and social learning (Loorbach, 2007), which is a large part of TM (Loorbach et al., 2015). Social learning is achieved through meetings between people, or in this case, stakeholders. When structuring stakeholder participation, various factors can positively affect the meeting's social learning outcome (Ernst, 2019).

Ernst (2019) identifies a few of these factors. She suggests that social learning is supported when participants have access to clear and credible information, when skilled facilitators guide discussions, and when a representative yet diverse set of stakeholders is included. Moreover, the participants need to be able to question each other's positions and ideas. Individual characteristics, for example, openness and willingness to cooperate, are also said to affect social learning. Factors such as fairness and transparency, an efficient process, and participants' ability to influence

the final decision also boost social learning. Furthermore, clarity regarding the problem and the process, together with a clear purpose for participating, was also highlighted. Finally, things that can emerge in the process, such as trust within the group, network building and the ability to resolve conflicts, were meant to promote learning.

Lastly, the operational phase of transition management is where concrete actions and activities are done. These should include a broad array of various stakeholder groups and be done in a multitude of ways. Here, actions and experiments across the different transition paths are carried out, and the experiences gathered from these experiments are fed back into the TM process. As stated by Loorbach (2007):

”Transition experiments are by definition focused on experimenting and learning about different options and possibilities in the light of the long-term ambition and vision.”

Knowledge generated from experiments during the operational phase naturally affects the agenda and overarching visions by changing the ideas and values of individuals and actors. This means that the operational phase involves an iterative process in which experiments and new insights may change the direction of transition paths and agendas, while remaining within the guiding principles of the larger transition. In fact, the main priority of transition management in the operational phase is to ensure that the vision and agenda effectively guide the transition, while also designing experiments that create the best opportunities for the creation of new knowledge or new ways for the transition agenda to develop.

As briefly mentioned, throughout the operational phase, adaptation and learning occur continuously. This is also explicitly formulated as a part of the TM framework, namely *Evaluation and adaptation*. While not being a phase of the TM cycle, it is the glue which holds the TM framework together. The overall vision and transition span around 30 years, but within this timeframe, the transition process goes through multiple TM cycles. In each cycle, after several experiments and transition paths have been examined, the system’s state is revisited and reexamined. Among other things, mid-term goals within the transition paths are evaluated, and if these have not been achieved, the reasons behind this are analysed. In this process, the involvement of actors is also evaluated for compliance with agreements made at the beginning of the TM cycle. When all of these elements have been evaluated, a new TM cycle begins with a new strategic phase in which updated visions are set, and the TM process continues. A TM process, therefore, undergoes multiple cycles during the full transition.

Transition management is generally applied to societal change at the macro scale, namely, changes that span society and include policymakers, citizens, industry, academia, etc. However, even though this study only considers the Church of Sweden, the forest industry and the question of sustainable forestry is also relevant for society as a whole. In addition, the theories of TM can be applicable to organisations and therefore the case of the Church of Sweden. Loorbach et al. (2010) notes

that the TM approach can be used for organisational transitions that can serve as *forerunners* of a larger sustainability transition. As a significant forest owner, the CoS has the potential to be such a forerunner in the forestry industry. Therefore, the TM approach offers a lens through which the actions and operations the CoS undertakes during its transition process can be viewed and analysed.

3.1.1 Stakeholder management and involvement within transition management

All the different parts of transition management listed above require some stakeholder involvement. Which stakeholders that are relevant to which part of the transition arena, and how the connected actions and processes vary, shape the choice of which actors and stakeholders to involve; this choice is itself part of the first steps in TM. This is also similar to broader discussions around stakeholder involvement in sustainability and transition projects, where the classical questions are: When to include stakeholders, why to include stakeholders, who to include, and how to include them?

Luyet et al. (2012) provides examples of how to involve stakeholders and outlines the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches to stakeholder participation. They categorise different participation techniques based on whether the purpose of including stakeholders is to gather information, consult, collaborate, co-decide, or empower (Luyet et al., 2012). In the case of TM, participation in the early strategic and tactical stages will include internal stakeholders. For problem framing and vision setting, therefore, participation techniques that foster collaboration and co-decision-making, such as workshops, are necessary.

Moreover, Reed (2008) emphasise that for stakeholder participation to work, all stakeholders must feel heard and included, otherwise, there is a risk that they will lose trust in the participation process. The authors mean that poorly planned and executed participation processes might reinforce existing structures and undermine minority voices. This happens when stakeholders are repeatedly asked to participate in processes without feeling that they contribute or that they can influence the final decision. This effect can be amplified by the existence of actors with veto power, which might limit the influence of other stakeholders. Furthermore, the authors argue that a poorly conducted participation process can actually slow down decision-making. So, the quality of the participation process is highly relevant. It is not necessarily enough to include all relevant stakeholders. The way in which this is done is just as important.

To ensure successful participation, Reed (2008) outline a few necessities. Similar to the factors that promote social learning identified by Ernst (2019), he highlights that the participants must have the ability to influence the decision and the knowledge to engage in the process. Relevant and diverse stakeholders should be included in

the process as early as possible. Furthermore, he argues that the objective of the process and the group's purpose as a whole must be understood by the participants, that an appropriate method of interaction be planned, and that skilled facilitation be necessary. Finally, it is noted that both local and scientific knowledge should be integrated, and that participation processes should be institutionalised within the organisation.

3.2 Organisational theory

For the purpose of analysing the Church of Sweden's forestry transition, the TM framework might be insufficient on its own. While it is well-suited for analysing overarching actions and developments, it might not account for the apparent cultural and structural aspects of the CoS. TM assumes that a somewhat functional transition arena can be established, but the internal dynamics of the CoS might complicate this. Therefore, to further highlight the dynamics within the organisation during this transition process, an organisational-theoretical perspective is needed.

3.2.1 Cultural, functional and cognitive structures in organisations

The work by Syrjänen Schaal & Enander (2024) shows that the organisation of forest management in the CoS comprises multiple parallel organisational structures. Not only do the estate management departments work separately from the rest of the diocesan office, but in some cases, the environmental coordinators at the office are not included in the sustainability work of the estate management (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024). In addition, the political decisions that set the direction for the church's forestry also come from different levels of the organisation, including the General Synod, the Diocesan Council, and the estate committees. As previously expanded in this work, there are also clear conflicts within the organisation regarding this new direction. Not only is this noticeable in the different referral responses from the dioceses during Enander and Schaals' work, but also in the extensive debate in Kyrkans tidning and the articles by different journalists, for example Supermiljöbloggen, both of which are extensively cited in this report.

Since there are high levels of professionalism in the church, both political (Estate Committees, Diocesan Council, General Synod) and managerial (estate management, foresters, etc.), as well as a religious base for all activities, individuals in the SC's organisation can be assumed to be dominated by certain *institutional logics*, foremost that of differing professional logics or religious logics (Thornton et al., 2012a). The institutional logics perspective describes how symbols, cultures, and practices from our surroundings and the different institutions in which individuals

are situated (family, community, religion, state, market, profession, and corporation) affect our decision-making and attention in organisations and society (Thornton et al., 2012b). Besharov & Smith (2014) uses the institutional perspective to describe how different logics within an organisation interact and how these interactions can give rise to conflict. Their theory revolves around the two concepts of the *compatibility* and *centrality* of different logics. Compatibility is the extent to which different logics provide compatible descriptions of what action to take in a given situation, where centrality is the extent to which those logics are central to organisational decision-making (Besharov & Smith, 2014). Organisations with high centrality but low compatibility are more prone to conflict; conversely, those with high compatibility and low centrality experience less friction and conflict.

It is also worth noting that the different organisational structures in theCoSmight affect change and transition processes. Similar to the institutional logics perspective, the parallel structures in the church could also create *silos* in the organisation. Silos are conscious or unconscious structures of working groups, organisational functions, common logics, technologies, groups of expertise, or cultures that can either hinder or enable organisational efficiency (Bento et al., 2020). Following the categorisation by Bento et al., for the case of this study, the types of silos mainly considered are those of *knowledge silos*, silos as *units or departments* and *functional silos*. These represent silo thinking or behaviours that emerge as a consequence of areas of expertise, formal structuring and division of people and labour, and strict managerial and hierarchical structures, respectively. When Silos in organisations hinder efficiency and collaboration, it is often because they create organisational lock-in, where individuals identify more strongly with others within the same silo and alienate those in other organisational branches (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012). Considering potential Silos in the forest management organisation in the CoS is relevant because it encompasses more formal structures. In contrast, the institutional logics perspective addresses the cognitive and behavioural aspects of the organisation.

3.2.2 Change management for sustainability

When considering sustainability transitions in organisations, change management is often considered as a dominant theory. This is not unusual, since change management theory is broad and the various research topics are impossible to cover in full (By, 2005). However, Lozano (2022) takes an approach to change management that emphasises *change management for sustainability*. This type of change management requires changes in organisational culture, since the underlying principles of the organisation's operations need to shift.

Lozano also differentiates the drivers of change in sustainability change management from those in regular practices. In the case of sustainability change management, internal drivers can include leadership, risk management, protection of reputation, improvements in economic value, and a strengthened corporate image, while external

drivers can include national policies and regulations, and pressure from stakeholders and NGOs (Lozano, 2015). There are also barriers and resistance to sustainability change within organisations, both internal and external. External barriers include regulatory constraints, weak consumer interest, and insufficient information about how these changes affect customers and suppliers. On the other hand, internal barriers include an unwillingness to change, narrow views of sustainability, a lack of systems thinking, faith in technological solutions, a lack of management commitment, and a failure to incorporate sustainability into the organisation's norms and culture (Lozano, 2022). For organisations to succeed in sustainability transitions, there needs to be a commitment from leaders and employees within the organisation (Sancak, 2023). Resistance from employees and managers who do not support the intended change is a major source of failure in change attempts, with some studies finding it causes up to 70% of all failures (Sancak, 2023); however, Lozano (2022) also notes that internal resistance is easier to handle than external.

Sancak also notes the importance of interacting with stakeholders along the value chain. When aiming to achieve sustainability transformations or transitions, it is important to set a common vision that stakeholders can agree on (Sancak, 2023). Engagement of stakeholders is also important, as it can contribute to the creation of new knowledge and to all involved parties' ability to use that knowledge (Ernst, 2019). Stakeholders also have to believe that the reasons for the change effort are legitimate and rational (Sancak, 2023). This legitimacy of change can be increased by active and transparent stakeholder participation processes in which all or most stakeholder groups participate (Ernst, 2019). In the case of the SC, this would include both citizens and members, foresters, other church employees, and entrepreneurs working for the church. Nature can also be considered a stakeholder in such processes, and could be represented by, for example, NGOs or experts and the spiritual values of the forest could be represented by eco-theologians or priests and bishops. Ernst (2019) also emphasises the value of stakeholder participation in building trust, which in turn can benefit social learning within organisations. These processes can help transform adversarial relationships among stakeholders, increasing the perceived legitimacy of others' views (Reed, 2008).

4

Methods

4.1 Research Design

As the current literature and information regarding the CoS's transition mostly cover the events leading up to the decision about the new church order new data had to be collected to determine how the CoS will make this transition. Hence, a case study design was chosen, using an exploratory, qualitative approach for the analysis of data.

The organisational structure of the CoS provided a good opportunity to readily gain substantial knowledge and information from a relatively small number of individuals. Since the 13 dioceses are responsible for forest management, much knowledge about how the intended transition should proceed resides in the estate committees and the estate management departments. Therefore, interviewing individuals from these groups was thought to give a comprehensive picture of the current situation and the plan forward. In addition, the authors believed that workers such as forest managers and planners could hold information on this subject, particularly regarding the forestry value chain and the use of subcontractors.

The starting point of the work was *Sustainability transitions*. This means that even though the study was conducted in an exploratory manner in data collection, it was not done in a vacuum but rather in the context of transition research. When reviewing the different research strands within the area, the TM approach was chosen as a framework for analysis, based on its previous application on transitions in organisations (Loorbach et al., 2010).

4.2 Data collection

The interviews were done in a *semi-structured* format, Trost (2010), i.e., they were structured by subject, not by specific questions. The aim of this was to gather more nuanced, in-depth information about thoughts and ideas regarding the CoS's transition.

The interview selection process was conducted using purposive sampling, i.e., we, as interviewers, handpicked the interviewees, with interview subjects from the estate committees and estate management departments prioritised as these were assumed to have the most influence and knowledge regarding the intended transition process. However, because the estate management department managers at the first invite gave a collective response declining participation in the study, other church professions were invited, including sustainability administrators.

The interviewees were contacted either by mail or by telephone and briefly informed about us as authors and the thesis. Interviewees were informed that the interview would take approximately 60 minutes and that responses would be kept anonymous. No information about the other interviewees was disclosed, nor were the intended questions. In total, 66 persons within the church were contacted with 24 agreeing to partake in interviews. See Table 4.1 for an overview of the participants.

Table 4.1

Participant's professions and abbreviations (N=24).

Role	Abbreviation	Number of participants
Estate Committee member	EC	10
Sustainability Administrator	SA	5
Church Office professional	CO	3
Church board member	CB	2
Forester	F	1
Forest Manager	FM	1
Scientists	SCI	2
Total number of participants		24

The interviews were conducted primarily online, with three conducted in person. Most interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed with TurboScribe (TurboScribe, n.d.) and subsequently reviewed by the authors to ensure correctness and completeness.

During the interviews, the interviewees were first given short information about the study and that interview data would be stored and reported so that their answers could not be linked to them in the final report. They were also informed that they could end the interview at any time and decline to answer specific questions if they wished. Furthermore, they were asked whether they approved of our recording the conversation, and they were told that these recordings and the corresponding

transcripts would be deleted once the thesis was finished. The participants were also given the chance to ask questions before the interview began.

4.2.1 Additional data

While the results of this study are mainly based on interview data, other sources were also used. The investigation by Enander (Syrjänen Schaal & Enander, 2024) has been central to the study. Moreover, the church board's proposal, and articles about the ongoing debat were used as a supplement to the collected data. Supplementary data were collected by googling, searching on scientific databases, and following the debate on websites such as Kyrkans Tidning and other newspapers.

4.3 Interview guide

An interview guide, as described in Trost (2010), is a list of subjects or themes the interview will cover. The guide used in this study was created through discussion between both authors and ultimately boiled down to three different themes: *Practical challenges and opportunities*, *Perceptions and expectations*, and *Organisation, trust and cooperation*

As the interviews were semi-structured, a few specific questions were included in the interview guide, but most were follow-up questions. Furthermore, the questions were reformulated throughout the process as it became clear that some worked better than others. Hence, all interviewees were not asked exactly the same questions. However, the themes in the interview guide remained the same for all interviews. Moreover, as interviewees held different roles within the church, the interview guide was adapted to fit each interviewee's profession. For example, for a person working in forestry, the questions were focused more on this. Table 4.2 shows a few example questions which were asked in many of the interviews.

Table 4.2

Commonly asked questions.

Common interview questions
Can you describe your initial reaction to the decision (regarding the forestry changes) made by the General Synod?
How do you expect the estate management departments to work with this transition?
Are there competencies within the Church to balance all four sustainability dimensions?
Who do you see as having a key role in this transition?
How would you describe the leadership and governance in this process?
What do you see as obstacles to shifting toward the new direction?

4.4 Data analysis

The analysis of the data was done through thematic analysis as described by Braun & Clarke (2006). The authors outline six steps which are described below. Even though the steps are ordered on paper, in practice, the process was iterative and, to some extent, the different steps were done simultaneously.

Steps in thematic analysis

1. Familiarise yourself with your data: Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

The qualitative research software NVivo Pro was used to create codes and themes, organise, and categorise the data.

4.4.1 Initial coding

The transcripts were read line by line and sentence by sentence, and paragraphs were condensed into statements or codes that concisely described what was said. Initially, the idea was to use four transcripts to develop a set of initial codes to code the rest of the data. However, the semi-structured design of the interviews produced data that was too broad to be coded into a predetermined set of codes. Instead, the whole dataset was coded freely, allowing for a high degree of detail and diversity in the codes. Where possible, the data was still coded to existing codes, but the priority at this stage was to maintain the differences and nuances between the codes. This step of the coding process created a dataset of 535 codes.

4.4.2 Detailed coding

When all transcripts had been coded, the codes were reread, and duplicates and similar codes were merged. In part, this was done because of the great detail in the initial data set, which had resulted in many similar codes, but it was also done to ensure that both authors agreed on the codes and the material within them. Codes were also refined and revisited to ensure the coded data matched the transcripts. In this process, the authors reviewed the data and codes together, and when uncertainties arose in a code, they were discussed and resolved by consensus. The codes were also sorted into several categories based on common themes.

After detailed coding, the dataset contained 340 codes.

4.4.3 Initial and final themes

Based on the detailed coding, initial themes were created using an abductive approach. This allowed themes to emerge from observations of the empirical data, while the theoretical base and framework were used to structure and categorise patterns in the data. Much of the grouping and sorting of the codes into different initial themes was done independently by the authors. In practice, this often meant

working with the previous codes and categories from the top down and merging, removing, regrouping, and sorting them into new or existing themes. In the process of finalising the themes, the authors reviewed all the initial themes and most of the codes together, as was done during code sorting. The final themes were then developed through extensive discussion and consensus among the authors. Eventually, seven themes were identified with 195 codes. These themes were then refined until they sufficiently reflected the codes which they contained.

4.5 Ethical considerations

4.5.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

As with all interview studies, certain ethical dilemmas had to be taken into account. Above everything else, the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees were of high importance. This means that information shared during interviews was not disclosed outside the interviews, and that statements, answers, and comments used in the final report were anonymised so as not to be linked to individuals.

In this study, there are some additional issues. Firstly, this study aims to highlight differences between dioceses. However, when only a few key individuals are interviewed from each diocese, it could create a situation where information cannot be attributed to a specific diocese, as it can then be tied back to an individual. A potential solution to this issue is not to state in the report which dioceses participated in the study. In addition, information about differences among specific dioceses will not be presented, due to the small number of participants from each diocese.

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees, the interviewers adhered to the following:

- Raw data from interviewees was not shared outside of the research team and was not disclosed to third parties.
- Quotes used in the final report were anonymised and attributed to generic codes (e.g., EC1 or SA1).
- Information about who was interviewed was not shared outside the research team.

In addition, the following information was shared with the interviewees before the interviews.

- What the interview was to be about

- That the interview was done as part of a master's thesis, and the purpose of the thesis.
- That the interviewee could end the interview at any time.
- That the interview would be anonymous

4.5.2 Data storage

Audio recordings and transcripts were stored on password-protected drives and deleted upon completion and approval of the thesis.

5

Results from the thematic analysis

From the thematic analysis done on the transcripts, seven themes were identified. These themes and the following sub-themes aim to identify the most important aspects of the study's findings. They focus on the challenges the church faces, how it plans to achieve change in its forestry, what it needs to do to achieve this, and how the church's organisation is structured. The themes are:

- There is a will to work with the new direction
- Drivers and preconditions for adaptation of the new direction
- Confusion around the concept of sustainability within the CoS
- Perceived barriers in the transition process
- The church's needs in the transition
- Organisational structures affecting change
- Miscellaneous¹

The seven themes, along with their respective sub-themes, are presented below. Needless to say, there are some overlaps between certain themes. This is considered natural, since many of the subjects and ideas discussed in the interviews are interconnected. Also, as the interviews were held in Swedish, all quotes have been translated into English by the authors.

¹Not included as a separate theme in the result.

5.1 There is a will to work with the new church order

This theme is defined as the willingness to work with the new regulations while recognising differing opinions within the CoS. Interviewees across all professions expressed this willingness. As one person said:

”[...] that everyone agrees that we now have these new conditions in the church order. [...] I think I have heard that both among elected officials and managers at the diocesan and national level.” (CO1, Church Office professional 1)

The positive attitude towards the forestry-change was by some participants also exemplified as being present among congregations. *”The majority of the congregations I have contact with are very positive towards this transition. [...] Then, of course, there are some congregations that might not agree, but the majority does so.”* (SA1, Sustainability Administrator 1)

Some also added that there are many opinions within the CoS, that it is a democratic organisation and that it is necessary to compromise going forward. Showing that there is a will to work together and cooperate to achieve the common objective. One EC noted that within the church *”We must compromise. We cannot just stand on opposite sides and resist; we must find each other somewhere in the middle.”* (EC1, Estate Committee member 1).

5.1.1 Duty towards the Church of Sweden

This willingness was from several participants described more as dutifulness. Regardless of whether the person thought that the new church order should have been more business as usual or more towards the investigations’ suggestions.

”[...] I can agree that this compromise that was reached was perhaps a bit cowardly. But then you have to do what you want, what you can and what you can handle based on the current situation.” (EC2)

Another participant also emphasises the fact that they *”[...] have to abide by the decisions of the church order. There is not much more to choose from. Even if we disagree”* (EC1), noting that even though there are still disagreements about the new Church order, politicians and professionals in the organisation have to abide by this new direction. This showcases a sense of duty. Some people in the church might not be working with the new direction because they *want* to, but rather because they *have* to.

At the same time, it was also recognised that this decision must now translate into some type of action. This was made clear by the church board participants, who want to see concrete action from the dioceses, while still recognising that the tone of the investigation might not suggest this is the probable outcome.

"I expect to see concrete initiatives. And not just sit back. 'Yes, but this is what we have... It's business as usual.'. Because that's what we heard during the investigation: 'But it still doesn't make a difference, we're already working on these issues'. And that's what I still wish, that we see concrete measures. That there is a power to act. And that's what I expect." (CB2, Church Board member 2)

Overall, the above extracts show an apparent willingness to work with the new direction within the CoS's forestry. This can be based on a sense of duty towards the church as an institution or as an employer, or on underlying values and enthusiasm. However, if the Church is to succeed with this, it is crucial that this will to work is turned into concrete actions. How this is supposed to be executed is the topic of the next theme.

5.2 Drivers and preconditions for adaptation of the new direction

Although the church is only in the early stages of its transition, some elements that could affect the transition process were identified during the interviews. This theme examines how the church will shape and drive the transition.

5.2.1 Diverse forestry conditions suggests local control as governance method

One central finding from the interviews regards the importance of recognising that the different dioceses are spread out across Sweden, and that this naturally leads to large differences in the conditions for the dioceses. The main difference noted by the interviewees, was geographical, indicating a need for adapted forestry practices. One participant expressed: *"One must work incredibly seriously with site adaptation. It is a matter of having respect for the land [...] and the conditions that exist."* (EC3). Differences were also noted in terms of the returns that dioceses get from their forests, depending on the natural preconditions. One participant notes the effect that the *"natural conditions with fertility, altitude, how much it rains and so on [...] provide conditions [...] for forest and forest growth."* (EC4). Another described the differences in revenue that this leads to:

"If one looks at a return we have from our forest [...], it is relatively low if we compare with, for example, the diocese of Växjö, which has significantly more growth in its forest [...]" (EC5).

It is therefore clear that there is broad agreement among ECs that, regardless of how the new direction is implemented, they must be adapted to local preconditions. This is further reinforced by the forest manager, who notes that:

"[...] it is a big difference if you have a hundred hectare property [...] or if you have thousands of hectares. [...] the conditions are very different, and that must be understood, I think." (FM, Forest Manager)

The participating forester also notes that different forestry methods are suitable for different forest areas and that this must be taken into account.

"One can perhaps do selection cutting on a very small percentage [of the total area]. [...] But it is not possible to shift over completely to selection cutting. Then we lose our deciduous forests and pine forests. Then in the end it will just be spruce." (F, Forester)

They also ask themselves if this is really how to create value:

"What are the natural values in that? To just start moving towards more spruce-dominated. That is not what they want either in the end. It is in that case to try to increase the clear-cut-free, but that one gets to do it where it fits. And it will look very different." (F).

There was also broad agreement among participants that some dioceses have forests that are more suitable for set-asides than others, and that this is one reason the operational goals should be set by the dioceses rather than at the national level. One example is that *"The Diocese of Gothenburg lay fairly high, perhaps at 15% [set-asides]. But some of that land is also this kind of rudimentary land, which perhaps would not be suitable for forestry in an economic sense anyway."* (SA2). Another participant stated that: *"In Stockholm, one can just set aside a park area [...] While perhaps in Växjö, one has a great deal of production forest [...] and traded away one's park forest."* (CO1). Finally, the types of land that make forests more suitable for set-asides was noted to be more prominent in some dioceses.

"The Diocese of Luleå is sort of in a unique situation, perhaps compared to many of the other dioceses. [...] They have very large areas that are not directly usable. A lot of marshland, a lot of subalpine and things like that." (EC5)

Another type of difference between the dioceses is economic and organisational, and these are also matters of concern for the dioceses.

"I know that we have different conditions, some are where the forest is an important source of income, an important work tradition, it is job opportunities, and so on [...]" (SA1)

"And those who have the most forest, that is Härnösand and Växjö then. They are much, much larger today in that regard. Like the Diocese of Lund, they usually have agricultural land. Stockholm, Uppsala, Strängnäs; they have funds. They sold their forest, and then they brought in funds. So they are dealing with stocks and such." (EC1)

The differences among the dioceses have also affected how they have managed the forests to date. Participants highlight that the natural conditions in some dioceses have historically made it more common to set aside areas for environmental preservation.

"Because I know that in certain dioceses one is already quite far ahead and has actually already started with this. One might already have some goals that to some extent can just be filled into this model, so to speak. While within certain dioceses one might not have worked quite in that way and there it is more new. Then they will need to work a bit more from the ground up." (CO3)

The General Synod decided that the final decision-making power should remain with the dioceses. This was because the proposal for more central governance was criticised by the dioceses during the referral process. This is also highlighted by a participant, who emphasises the importance of local decision-making given the differences between the dioceses.

”We are very different from each other. Stockholm has almost only funds. Northern Sweden has only forests and a little funding. Lund has a huge amount of agriculture, a little forest and a little fund. So it is very different and it is well-suited for the dioceses to have that responsibility [decision-making].” (EC3)

5.2.2 The importance of trying out new methods

The scientists who participated in the study both emphasised the importance of using adaptive forestry methods and of conducting tests and on-the-ground trials to determine what can work in the long run.

”And then it is very important that it is also adaptive in that we partly still know quite [little]... we know some but there are knowledge gaps, but that one adapts how one manages the forest as one gains more knowledge.” (SCI1, Scientist 1)

”It is likely that one dares to start testing. And several dioceses have done that. It is not as if the dioceses today run 100% clear-cut forestry. Rather, one has started. I think one simply must dare to transition and test these new methods.” (SCI1)

They also emphasised the need for more variation in how the forests look and the forestry methods that are used.

”But what is needed is more variation in forestry methods so that we get more heterogeneous forests instead of these monotonous forests that we have today where all the trees are about the same age and one main tree species with a little mix of other species. But much more mix in ages and in tree species so that you don’t put all your eggs in one basket [...] (SCI2)

Trying out different methods was also mentioned by the forest manager who took part in the study, who added the importance of sharing knowledge with other dioceses in the process.

”So we have done a mapping in our diocese. Many other dioceses are on the same track and we test and we discuss “how... did this turn out well, can one do it in a different way?” or something like that.” (FM)

In addition, a sustainability administrator asked themselves if the church dares to try new methods and to take uncertain decisions that one might not benefit economically from but that could create other values in the long run.

”But on the other hand, there is no one who says with certainty that just if we change the forms of our forestry, we would... One might decrease initially of course [economically]. That is probably how it is. But in the long term, that one has the ability to see that it might actually get better. To dare to accept it. Do we dare to test as well, or do we dare to try something.” (SA2)

One of the ECs raised the possibility for the church to invest in independent research into forestry, in order to decrease the knowledge gaps.

”One has to be a bit pragmatic and try to move forward. Therefore, I think it is important that one invests some money in independent R&D. In order to be able to increase knowledge.” (EC4)

One of the scientists also points out the possibilities and the challenges around changing methods in Swedish forestry. Meaning that other parts of the world are more suitable for producing large timber volumes and that Sweden could focus on quality instead of quantity.

”I mean, like eucalyptus plantations and other types of trees in South America or elsewhere, [...] they’re ready to be harvested when the young forest [Swedish forest] is a few years old. So it will be difficult to compete with that going forward [...] So what Sweden would need to focus on is quality rather than quantity. But it will be a rather expensive transition. They have invested quite a lot in the industrial capacity they have now and, of course, want to continue to use it.” (SCI2)

Overall, these statements indicate that trying out various methods could be a good way forward. So as to not *”put all your eggs in one basket”* as one of the scientists put it. Especially considering climate change and the somewhat uncertain future of the Swedish forestry. Furthermore, this would increase knowledge of alternative methods, as well as communication and knowledge sharing between the dioceses.

5.2.3 Economic consequences do not have to be a barrier; there are other income sources

As previously noted, economic consequences for the dioceses were a source of debate during the referral process of the forest investigation and were also present in many discussions afterwards. However, during the interviews, even though the

economic concern was significant, different voices raised the point that the economic consequences might not be as big a problem as they seem in the public debate.

One EC notes that the church's forestry economy is already under pressure from decreasing timber prices and that most of the church is less economically reliant on the forest than it once was. They meant that this can be an opening for different practices and sources of income.

"And it is also the case that the forest, that is to say timber prices are falling now. And it is, the forest does not have the same significance as it has had purely economically. [...] And there my manager [estate manager] and I have started talking about this. [...] It might be that one should invest in other things. [...] as it is now, we get more return on capital if we put it in the funds instead." (EC2)

This is also noted by the interviewed forest manager, who suggests that a potential future income stream might be selling carbon credits.

"We hope that these new business models will generate revenue soon. Especially carbon sequestration, carbon credits." (FM)

"As said, we have worked with wind power for 20 years. It is a much more controversial industry. Solar power is also coming now in large-scale solar parks." (FM)

Several participants also mentioned the fact that the incomes from the CSA account for a small part of the CoS's economy, and that for some congregations, it is a very small source of income: *"The Church of Sweden has very many members who live in parishes where this does not affect anything."* (CB 1). Furthermore, some meant that it should be possible for the CoS to reduce its income by such a small percentage. One participant noted that the CSA accounts for under two per cent of the CoS's budget and that *"Most organisations can sort of have a savings target for that in a budget."*(CO2). They continued to point out that

"What never came out in that debate is that CSA accounts for less than two per cent of the Church of Sweden's total budget every year. 1.8 approximately. Most organisations can sort of have a savings target for that in a budget. And say that we do not need to, we shall not take this money now. I think that possibility existed for the church. We could have said, 'We do not touch the forest. We manage it. But we shall not take out any money from it.' " (CO2)

One participant also meant that this question has been made much bigger than it is and that it ought to be a trivial matter.

"We spend nine billion every year. It is completely unreasonable that we would not be able to cut down two percent of those nine billion. So for me it becomes like that, I think that one sets up a thing as if it were an insurmountable problem that really should be a trivial matter to solve for the church." (SA1)

One participant also noted that some parishes are prepared to reduce the economic gain from the forests: *"[...] but they [parishes] are prepared not to gain economically in this, in many cases. One wants to waive the economic profit for the theological diversity or for the protected forest."* (SA3).

Here, one can also note that none of the ECs mentioned that income from the Swedish forest accounts for only 2% of the Church's total income.

5.3 Confusion around the concept of sustainability within the Church of Sweden

During the interviews, participants made multiple statements about the nature of sustainability and the challenges of measuring it. This was mainly related to the interpretation and measurement of sustainability in the CoS, in line with the new church orders' four sustainability dimensions. As one rather honest participant put it: *"More sustainable, it can be anything. [...] if you're talking organisations, then it's a bullshit statement."* (EC4)

5.3.1 Changed purpose of the forest

Even though participants note that the new direction is a stark contrast to how the CSAs have been managed historically, there still seem to be disagreements about the importance of financial gain from the assets. One participant notes that the work now is *"[...] a matter of finding a balance [...] between these four dimensions. And then one must be clear about what the purpose of the clergy salary assets is."* (EC6). The balancing, therefore, might be not only about determining weights among different aspects of sustainability, but also about understanding what new purpose the CSA might fill for the CoS.

This is also supported by another EC who emphasises the change in the underlying purpose of the CSA, stating that previously the CSA's purpose was to *"[...] have as good a return as possible for our parishes. To be able to conduct Christianity, if one were to put it simply. [...] And now this concept has been changed."* (EC1).

One interviewee also discussed the possibilities of including new values into the

church order. And pointed out that the purpose of the clergy's salary assets and the pride in managing them well could shift from an economic one to something else

"The pride has been in showing that you can get good returns. What have you measured? Well, you measure the return? And now we have to find pride in something else." (CB1)

This new purpose is still a work in progress for the church. And exactly where one could find the new pride described above is also unclear. However, as it previously was found in how much income one generated, something very easily measured, one could argue that what is measured and how these things are measured is central to finding this pride.

5.3.2 Measuring and balancing the four sustainability-dimensions

Foremost, participants question or reflect on what the new sustainability-dimensions mean in practice, the problem of measuring sustainability, and, mainly, spiritual sustainability. *"One still wonders what spiritual sustainability is? And spiritual dimension?"* (EC7)

One participant also notes that there are various degrees of knowledge regarding the four sustainability dimensions. *"Compared to the economy, it is clear that we know less about ecological values. But compared to the spiritual ones, we know very much about the ecological values."* (SCI1).

One participant notes that a big challenge going forward is that the dioceses and the church need to agree on what and how to measure sustainability, in order for the church to measure *"not apples and pears, but that we compare apples to apples."* (EC1).

There was also some uncertainty about what it means to balance the four sustainability dimensions, as the new church order now says. As one participant said: *"One of the big questions if we talk about organisation: it is to be balanced. What does that mean?"* (EC4). Furthermore, it was noted that the focus is now on getting this to work in practice.

"[...] what became a rather long debate at the general synod last autumn was whether it was important that we should ensure four sustainability criteria or balance four sustainability criteria. Such a word one can of course discuss forever. But one can also realise that one fundamentally means the same thing: great respect for all four sustainability dimensions, but that one has to get this to harmonise and work in practice." (EC3)

So, even though the church has agreed on the new church order with new principles and values, there are still uncertainties regarding what these new terms mean in practice, how they are to be measured and balanced, and what the new purpose of the CSA is.

5.4 Perceived barriers in the transition process

During the interviews, the participants raised several challenges/barriers to the church's implementation of the new regulations. This includes anything that was considered a hindrance or difficulty when adopting the direction. The major ones are described below.

5.4.1 Lock-in

During the interviews, different signs of various types of lock-in were observed, i.e., things that make change in itself difficult and that make it easier to keep doing things as one has always done them.

5.4.1.1 Forestry lock-ins

An example of these lock-ins is that the church and the whole forestry industry are very adapted to clear-cut forestry. There is a lot of knowledge about this method, and it is how the current system looks. This makes change rather difficult and uncomfortable. As the forest manager said:

We are set up for clear-cut forestry. All of us. And it's quite effective. That's why it exists. Now that we're going to venture into unexplored areas and we're going to test our way forward, we don't have the right organisation. We don't have the right tools, forestry tools... There are lots of things missing. And that doesn't make it easy. But it will take some time." (FM)

What is more, the researchers, the forester manager and the forester that were interviewed brought up the point that the research behind alternative forestry methods has been somewhat neglected: *"But research into non-clear-cut forestry methods, for example, is very limited."* (FM). The forester also noted that they have some areas where they have been doing selection cutting for 30 years now, and that they can only now begin measuring the economic and ecological values in these forests. But that, *"It is more of those [selection cutting forests] that one would need to draw any conclusions about it. But we don't have that."* (F) So, there is a general lack of knowledge about the effects of various forestry methods.

"No, but I think there is a major lack of knowledge at all levels. We researchers have not researched these methods [other forestry methods] at the same level as we have researched the use of clear-cut forestry. [...]" (SCI1)

Some also highlighted the lack of knowledge about the current system in a changing climate.

"[...] what bothers me quite a bit in the debate is that it sounds like we know everything we need to know when it comes to clear-cutting. But there has been a lot of research on that, but now we have a changed climate and the climate will change more and more in the future, so it is not certain that these old truths will still be true in the future. Because clear-cutting also needs to be adapted in a changed climate." (SCI2)

"There was a report a while ago that within 80 years, 80 per cent of all spruce will be on land that is not suitable for spruce. If climate change continues at the rate it is. Spruce is still being planted in Småland. It is completely inappropriate. Yes, they [Estate management departments] have knowledge about the economic dimension assuming that the current climate remains, and it does not." (CO2)

The interviewed researchers also brought up the point that there is a culture in Sweden around forestry: *"And then there is an in-built scepticism towards alternative [forestry] methods. [...] And then maybe it's also because it's embedded in the walls. Many of those who work with the church's forest are kind of schooled in one way."* (SCI1) A few even spoke about the role of forestry education in Sweden and how this is affecting the methods within the industry.

"But I don't just want to blame it [the lack of a different mindset around forestry] on the church organisation itself, but also on SLU and the education. I also heard that many years ago from SLU, which was then following a different line, and a researcher. And that was only a couple of years ago. That it's tough there too. That you have a different view of logging methods. So it's so embedded in how you look at the forest and what the forest is for, and how you calculate." (SA2)

Also, some highlight that the industry is very used to the current way of doing things and that there is a strong incentive to maintain business as usual: *"[...] the forestry industry, just like the fossil fuel industry. They're strong industries that have financial interests that make it [change] more difficult."* (SA2).

"And then many have also been marinated in the forest industry's propaganda that it is so incredibly important that we continue to harvest at least as much as we do today and that we do it with clear-cutting and that clear-cutting might work in some marginal ways. But otherwise, clear-cutting is the philosopher's stone." (SCI2)

5.4.1.2 The church is already working with different values in their forests

However, even though the church is adapted to clear-cut forestry and that this method dominates the industry, several people meant that the church already works with different values and forestry-methods, that they have done so for a long time and that the forestry, to some degree, already is sustainable: *"Now, I don't think the church has been a bad forest owner, we are environmentally certified."* (EC8). This is not false, the church is, undoubtedly working with different values and methods in their forestry. As three participants exemplified:

"There are probably five dioceses that are working with carbon credits in some way. [...] Växjö is the first in Sweden to have done it within the framework of FSC. The first carbon sequestration project. So I would say that the Church of Sweden is very far ahead." (FM)

"So to reach the goals [goals proposed by the investigation] that have been set for how much forest should be set aside for different types of nature protection and so on. I would say we are already at home by a margin." (EC5)

"We have one or two areas where we have done selection cutting for 30 years" (F)

However, the idea or the perception that forestry is already sustainable is, in a way, a sign of a will to keep going as usual. As described above, it is important that these changes in the church order translate into some real action. As one participant put it:

"But now it is really up to the dioceses to transform this decision into practical action. And to show that there will be a change in how they use their forests. Because you can't come and claim that the way we have used the forests historically in the church. That it is the optimal way from all four perspectives. There has to be a change."(SCI1)

5.4.2 Economic consequences

Another barrier frequently brought up is the economic one. If the church were to change its forestry methods to, e.g., more non-clear-cut forestry, as suggested by the investigation, the income from the forests would decrease, which in turn would mean less money for the congregations. This economic loss is, understandably, a major argument against changing.

"I think one thing that prevents is this fear that you will lose financially by changing. You need to have the money for your operation, that's the way it is. Even though it may be a fairly small percentage in the total budget of the entire church, it is still... One million kronor is still one employee in the church for a year." (SCI1)

And that this money, even though it may be a small percentage of the total income, still contributes to the church's work

"There are those who feel that it is difficult to miss out on the money they receive. Some parishes do not have much money to spare and are dependent on the pennies that come in. The money that still comes from the yield from the forest goes into the parishes and can almost immediately be converted into soup lunches for lonely, poor people. So some see that perspective." (SA3)

However, as said above (section 5.2.3), some pointed out that this does not have to be as big of a barrier as one might think.

5.4.3 Forests take time

Another perspective that was common was that changes in the forest take time. For example, as one person said about changing forestry methods: *"Selection systems, then you need a multi-layered forest. That takes 100 years to fix"* (EC4). So, forestry is naturally done over very long time scales, which creates uncertainty around which methods to use and what to do.

"How do we know that an action will be better for something we want to achieve? How do we know that biodiversity becomes better? How do we know that it becomes better? So it will take time, I think. And you have to be humble about that, it's quite a long process." (FM)

Some also linked this to a lack of patience and understanding toward forestry.

"I think the biggest obstacle is that many people expect this to happen quickly and that they don't have the patience to... that we try to do it collectively. We already see that today that different dioceses are trying to adopt various different goals and then it spreads and we're kind of [back] at square one. I think a big obstacle is that there's no patience." (FM)

"And the transition will not happen fast enough for some decision-makers. And then the question is how long will that patience last? And how long will the understanding for that last?" (CB2)

Worth noting is also that some said that they do not see any specific barriers in the transition. Even though they talked about certain challenges.

These barriers, together with the uncertainty surrounding the concept of sustainability, lead us to what the church needs to implement the new church order.

5.5 The church's needs in the transition

This theme identifies some of SC's major needs in the ongoing transition. These were often things that the church needs to improve or do more of to work with the challenges and uncertainties described above.

5.5.1 Clear goals and guidelines

During many interviews and from various roles, the need for more clarity regarding the new church order was raised. For example, the confusion surrounding the practical meaning of spiritual sustainability was often discussed: *"Spirituality is one of those things. How do we measure if you're a little more spiritual... It just doesn't work. But at the same time, we have to set some indicators."* (CO2). Furthermore, several interviewees called for coordination and clearer national-level guidelines on interpreting the new church order and measuring the different values in the forest.

"In my mind, it will be difficult if you don't get clearer guidance on what it means to balance these four sustainability dimensions." (SA4)

"[...] then you think that you want to measure a number of parameters, and if you want to ensure that all thirteen dioceses deliver, then it is good if you measure the same, and develop a system for this." (EC3)

"And it's absolutely crucial that, if you're going to work with an organisation, you have to get the organisation to understand. And also be reasonably in agreement about why you're going to." (EC4)

One interviewee also talked about the challenges with having clear guidelines from above when the dioceses look so different. But that it is still necessary to have some type of concrete goal.

"I also understand that you can't go into too detailed percentages for everything and just apply it straight across the whole of Sweden. I don't think it works. I think you need to think differently about northern Norrland and Skåne. But regardless of that, I think it's important that we decide that this is how many per cent we should set aside. This is how much logging should be reduced." (CO2)

The national level was also described as having a role in leading or guiding the church through this transition. As one interviewee put it: *"That they [National level] keep this together. That they hold the rudder. So that something happens."* (EC7).

At the same time, many still pointed out that the church is a bottom-up organisation and that the final decision-making power should and will remain at the diocese, as described above.

"But that there are frameworks that we can keep within, but we [the diocese] still have local decision-making right." (EC9)

"The whole church is a bottom-up organisation. It would be very strange if we had that (top-down) in the whole organisation. But in the forest issue, we should lead from the top down (this was proposed by the investigation). It's a little strange when the basic principles of the whole church are the congregation and upwards." (FM)

So, there is a need for clarity surrounding how to interpret the new church order. At the same time, there is agreement that the power should remain with the diocese, as this is how the church has traditionally been run and because dioceses look very different.

5.5.2 The inclusion of other competences and new knowledge

Building on the above, many meant that to interpret and realise the new values (social, spiritual, ecological, and economic) in SC's forestry, there is a need to include other competences when deciding how the forestry is to be conducted. *"Because otherwise there will be no change if it just continues to be the forester together with the estate committees [who work with the forestry]. Then it will be like before."* (SA2) Some examples of the type of competences that are relevant to involve were discussed by some participants

It's probably everything from ecology, biology, species, theology, and more forest [knowledge] too. Depending on whether you're talking about carbon sequestration, biodiversity, or what we're talking about. It's just...are we talking about restoration or developing nature conservation, or what are we talking about? There are just so many areas of expertise." (FM)

"We have the ecological expertise. We have the theological expertise. You can list all the expertise that needs to be included. These four sustainability foundations. Then you read the comments on the decisions,

they are indivisible. Spiritual sustainability should permeate everything. Then we have to bring in [knowledge]. It is not a job for just those who work with forests and land today. Then we have to bring in all the expertise that is within the organisation. And if they are not within the organisation, then you have to bring them in from outside. ” (EC10)

As described above under section 5.4.1 (lock-in), there is also a need for new competences in alternative forestry methods, as well as greater knowledge of current methods in a changing climate.

”We researchers have not researched these methods [other forestry methods] at the same level as we have researched the use of clear-cut forestry. [...]” (SCI1)

” [...] so it is not certain that these old truths will still be true in the future. Because clear-cutting also needs to be adapted in a changed climate.” (SCI2)

These citations highlight a few different competences that the church could include in their forestry. But, they also show that the church need to introduce competences within the organisation at large into the forestry and that they might also need to bring in external knowledge.

5.5.3 The need for dialogue

The importance of talking with one another within the church was highlighted by multiple participants. Improved dialogue among various parts of the church was considered important for sharing knowledge and perspectives and finding a common direction. This need can also be seen in the barriers above, especially those mentioned under section 5.4.1 (lock-in).

Worth noting is that the purpose of the dialogue differed depending on which actors the dialogue was suggested between. The communication between the diocese and parishes/congregations was said to be important, as they are often the ones affected by forestry (both financially and by the forests surrounding them). As one participant stated *”It is important that they [parishes/congregations] also have the opportunity to express their opinion.”* (EC8) in regard to changes that might affect them.

” [...] we have said that it is important that the parishes that have forests and that feel a sense of involvement, that they are also consulted. So that the dioceses do not run over the parish and the parishes are left without them.” (CB2)

However, when it came to communication between other parts of the church, i.e., within the diocese, between the dioceses and between dioceses and the national level, the emphasis was instead placed on finding a common direction of where the church is going with its forestry, either on a national level or on the diocesan level. As one person noted: “[...] *it’s really important that the levels are connected. So that the church is doing this job together.*” (EC3). As discussed above, the dioceses all look very different and have different preconditions and possibilities regarding their forestry. Hence, finding a common direction is widely seen as a way forward in the transition, and improved communication is cited as a means of achieving it.

”One challenge is that we are thirteen different estate management departments, thirteen different legal entities, thirteen different ways of managing the operation. The challenge is probably to try to identify and establish certain things that we can have in common. At the moment, we don’t have any central staff function or overarching organisation. Instead, we have relatively lean, small organisations in thirteen different locations. So the biggest challenge I think is to find a consensus between the estate management department.”

Q: ”What do you think are the keys to being able to do that?”

”It’s probably to have close dialogue with the national level, with the church board, with the other estate management departments. That we try to do it together.” (FM)

”Then of course it will go down. There will be a dialogue with the church board, but then there will also be a dialogue with the estate committees. When a model for this has been found, then we can start to tackle this at the diocesan level as well.” (EC10)

In addition, the parallel structures within the church were brought up. Further showing the need for improved communication across different parts of the organisation.

”I hope there will be more transparency so that we can work through the silos. I really do. But it’s very much a question of understanding, because we partly live in such different worlds.” (SA2)

An example of communication between the dioceses that was lifted is ENSO: *”But this ENSO group is in no way a decision-making body; it’s really about meeting and creating a whole. We benefit from each other.”* (EC1). However, there seems to be a lack of formally established communication forums for people of different professions, as the statements above indicate

5.6 Organisational structures affecting change

Theme 6 tries to identify factors within the organisational structure and culture that might affect the Church's transition process. Multiple such factors were identified by participants, and covered areas such as organisational cultures around governance, inherent parallel structures in the dioceses and in the church, as well as potential openings and possibilities in these structures.

5.6.1 The church is a bottom-up organisation

As mentioned before, the participants often described the church as a bottom-up organisation. That is, decisions are taken at a local level and national, central governance is, and should be, limited. The idea of some form of central control/governance was often critiqued, even though clearer guidelines were desired, as described above. One participant from the Church board noted about the church: *"Unlike other organisations, we have no one above the organisation. Where the national level decides that this is how it should be done. [Instead,] the national level says that this is where we are going."* (CB2). An EC also clearly stated that *"[...] the parish and diocese that are the primary unit in the church. [...] one cannot come with a corporate mindset here."* (EC10), further enforcing the view that the power in the Church should come from the local and regional levels. Taken together, this showcases the basic church view that's been visible throughout the interviews: central governance sets the direction, and the regional and local levels take action and implement policies and decisions.

Two of the ECs also emphasise that this view of the CoS is one of the reasons that the General Synod refused the proposals related to centralised control.

"And it is like that centrally, it is like a church principle that you should not control too much centrally, but that it is the dioceses and parishes that should do it. And in the same way, if you reason here, then. They [the general synod] didn't accept these suggestions for central control that the investigation proposed. It was very much against the church's way of working." (EC4)

"And I think that one of the things that I thought was the best that the church board put forward as a proposal, and that the general synod was very much in agreement with a broad consensus, was that the responsibility and the objectives and the decisions for it [the forestry] should remain at the dioceses. Because that's how the Church of Sweden is structured, it's not the central level that's important, but these are 13 CSAs that are to be managed within the 13 dioceses." (EC3)

Several also brought up the point that the forestry competence is primarily located at the dioceses and that it is therefore good that the power remains at the diocese: *"But what was important to me was that we retain local administration. Because that's where we have great expertise within the Church of Sweden."* (EC6).

Interestingly, when discussing the church's structures, one participant recalled a conversation they had with someone from another diocese.

"I talked to someone [...] who said that: The church is very fascinating because it is extremely decentralised, but at the same time, it is crazily hierarchical. And [...] it really is like that. If you have a clerical collar, then you are high up. If you don't, then you are lower down in all parishes." (CO2)

This highlights an interesting part of the Church's organisation. Even though power is said to come from the lower levels, there are clear hierarchies within the church, particularly in its religious side. This might also be something that the church could use to drive change in the transition endeavours.

5.6.2 Parallel organisational structures in the church

Furthermore, during the interviews, participants raised several elements of the organisational structure that suggest parallel structures in the church. It seems that the estate management is somewhat disassociated from other parts of the organisation, judging from among others a SA who stated that: *"Estate management is a separate organisation, they are part of the diocese but still stand alone."* (SA5). As will be shown below, several roles, including one forester, noted that the estate management departments are, to some degree, independent. In addition, foresters on local levels might not even share offices with their departments *"[...] we don't have an office where we sit together. We sit alone in our little corner. We are very spread out geographically."*(F). In other words, there can be geographical distances alongside cultural and organisational differences, with the former influencing and reinforcing the latter.

5.6.2.1 Strong professionalism

One element that might reinforce the parallel structures in the church is the knowledge-intensive nature of forest management and forestry. One of the Scientists interviewed noted a strong sense of professional pride among foresters and that adapting to new knowledge as forestry changes might put this pride into question, potentially causing friction.

"[...] there is sort of such a strong professional pride within the forester profession as well [...] you have your knowledge, and it is, after all,

energy-consuming to take in new knowledge and it perhaps to some extent also questions your identity” (SCI2)

This is emphasised by several participants at the church’s central level. When asked about why the structure has become so divided, one of the Church board members answered that:

”I think it’s because the question of the clergy salary assets [...] is an issue that has been [...] a little aside from the normal operation. It’s experts who have worked on it, and the dioceses have let them work for themselves, and they have built up a different way of working.” (CB1)

One of the interviewees working at the central level of the church also talked about how this feeling of forestry as an area of expertise might be felt not only by those outside the forestry department but also by the people within it.

”Many people feel that forestry is such an incredibly expert area of knowledge. No one else is allowed to think anything about the forest because no one knows anything except for the foresters. [...] You don’t know the species, and you don’t understand that about habitat and nature inventory. [...] then it all becomes some kind of foreign matter; ‘it’s best to let the experts handle it.’ ” (CO2)

The feeling that the forest management departments might overlook competence in other parts of the diocese is also noted by a sustainability administrator who said that the forest management department *”don’t see the need for my competence. I think they feel that they already have it at their level.”* (SA5). This could be yet another sign pointing towards the historical isolation of the forest management departments. Being built on the expertise of foresters, the departments might have long overlooked other competences within the diocese, and, as a result, there is no historical trust-building. One of the participants from the national office also noted this and stated that *”And that is probably how it looks in quite a few dioceses, [...] they do not ask for the climate knowledge.”* (CO2).

5.6.2.2 Tension within the church

Some of the participants brought up the fact that there are a lot of tensions within the dioceses, surrounding the forest management departments and the committees. These tensions might have arisen from the forest investigation, which brought the departments’ work into the spotlight. As one sustainability administrator described it: *”I think it’s most likely [the fact that] they’ve been independent. And then someone new steps in, and then it’s [interpreted as] criticism.”* (SA1). Another SA also noted that *”I think [...] this investigation has become a threat to them [estate management departments]. They have felt threatened and questioned and quite confused about that.”* (SA3).

However, as described above, many point out that the estate management departments are very competent and that they have done a good job, and that what is perceived as critique is not necessarily that.

”Swallow your pride. Because that was a lot of it, as we have heard during the investigation, almost all the CSA managers said that this is offensive to our employees and they felt threatened, attacked, because they are not doing a good job. And it was not about that at all. But the experience, or the said experience, was that anyway. And my CSA manager said that many times, too. That they felt attacked and threatened.” (SA2)

This response to other people’s opinions about the forestry is also a sign of the parallel structures the interviewees discussed. One interviewee even gave an example of hostility in meetings:

”We [Sustainability Administrators] could come into meetings and simply say, “We want to talk about this [the forestry].” And immediately, people would get angry. And we were just like, “What happened?” And then they would say, “No, we [Estate management] have been so heavily criticised.” And, of us in the room, none of us [SAs] had even said anything. I mean, there were very strong reactions very, very quickly. So we had a hard time expressing ourselves.”

”One has minded one’s own business for so many years and one has done a good job from the outside. One has had one’s rules and one has followed them and one has over-delivered. [...] But one has done it on one’s own for so long. I don’t know if they don’t see us as a resource or if they instead see that they are letting conflicts in.” (SA1)

Some also lift the mistrust that exists within the church

”There is an incredible amount of mistrust toward each other right now. The property managers are certain that we want to stop all forestry—those of us who have been against [their methods] and who think the forestry investigation was good. And we are certain that they just want to clear-cut everything. When that is the case, it is naturally very difficult to find common ground.” (CO2)

This attitude towards other people intervening in the forestry is also evident in the study. Only two from the estate management departments were willing to take part in an interview. And some who first agreed later cancelled, often saying it was too early in the process and that the decision had just been made. This can, of course, not be argued with. It is still early in the process. Regardless, this unwillingness to discuss forestry reflects what was described in the interviews: that forestry is a very sensitive topic and that many of the people who work with it are, for whatever reason, not very willing to let others in. The next subtheme identifies a few roles within the church which could help drive the process forward and perhaps help bridge the gap between the various silos

5.6.3 Roles that could bridge the organisational gaps

The interviews lifted roles that could potentially help close the gap between the parallel structures. These were often roles that had a significant influence within the organisation and people who speak the organisation's language, i.e., people who understand it. Examples of these roles include the people at the top of the two lines of responsibility within the church, i.e., *"In the church we have a double line of responsibility with bishops and elected representatives who govern the church."* (CO3) As one person described it: *"Those who hold high positions, diocesan directors, bishops, when they speak out, it gives an extra push."* (SA1)

Some spoke about the importance of these roles as drivers of the new direction:

"That is why I think it is good that one could get this operation closer to the diocesan boards and the bishop. That they become... help to be a motor in the work. That I think would really be needed." (CB1)

In addition, some raised the possibility that these roles can help anchor the work in the church's values.

"So they [bishops] can contribute by dressing the work in another language that is rooted in the church's fundamental values regarding the creation-oriented worldview, which is not this anthropocentric one, but rather is more about the stewardship idea that we are here on Earth to care for creation and one another." (CO3)

But also to make the work more efficient, know which people to call and how to make progress.

"But I think it is important to have someone who knows the language, [...], understands how it works, sort of. I have a manager now as well who has worked for a very long time in the Church of Sweden and understands hierarchies, who to approach on which issue. [...] I think that type of person is important.

It is a very tradition-bound organisation with its own language and its own concepts, its own decision-making paths. I think you have to crack that code a bit."(SA3)

Some also discussed the influence that bishops and diocesan directors can have on the inclusion of various competences in decision-making. And that in the end it comes down to if these people are willing to push for the inclusion of other professions.

"I think it could happen [that different groups within the church are included when determining the operational goals]. I think it depends a lot on whether bishops and diocesan directors, that is, those who are heads of the diocesan offices, if they push for that to happen." (CO2)

Or as one person exemplified:

”[I was] involved in the referral process, by direct directive of the bishop and the diocesan director. I had a voice there. But I probably wouldn’t have had it if the bishop hadn’t pushed for me to be included.” (SA5)

So even though the parallel structures are strongly cemented, there are ways that this could begin to dissolve, and there are roles that could facilitate this.

5.7 Distribution of themes among participants

Even though this study was conducted qualitatively, some observations can be made about the collected data. Table 5.1 shows the distributions of codes from each role or profession divided over the different themes, and there are some notable things here. Note that this is in no way a statistical analysis of the data; it only highlights the code distribution between the interviewed roles.

Firstly, when looking at the sustainability administrators, it is apparent that they discuss organisational needs and perceived barriers to change in greater detail. This could be because the SAs are less knowledgeable about forestry and silviculture, but also because they might have another perspective on the sustainability challenge. On the other hand, when looking at participants who directly work with the forest system, namely the forester, the forest manager and the different ECs, it is clear that these participants are coded more heavily to theme two (Drivers and preconditions for the adaptation of the new direction). This is most likely just a consequence of these professions having more direct insight into forestry practices.

Table 5.1
Percentage of each profession coded to each theme. SA - Sustainability Administrator, FM - Forest manager, EC - Estate Committee member, CO - Church Office professional, F - Forester, CB - Church Board member, SCI - Scientist.

Interviewee	Theme 1 ^a	Theme 2 ^b	Theme 3 ^c	Theme 4 ^d	Theme 5 ^e	Theme 6 ^f	Theme 7 ^g
SA (5)	10%	11%	2%	26%	5%	29%	18%
FM (1)	2%	37%	15%	26%	4%	13%	2%
EC (10)	10%	26%	16%	13%	9%	17%	8%
CO (3)	7%	33%	1%	26%	9%	13%	11%
F (1)	13%	32%	16%	5%	3%	24%	8%
CB (2)	28%	16%	2%	16%	14%	14%	9%
SCI (2)	7%	21%	14%	21%	0%	23%	13%
Total (24)	10%	25%	11%	18%	7%	19%	10%

^a There is a clear will to work with the new direction
^b How is the church going to execute the transition
^c The concept of sustainability within the Church of Sweden
^d Organisational needs in the transition process
^e Organisational structures affecting the transition
^f Perceived barriers in the transition process
^g Miscellaneous

5.8 Summary of Results

Overall, the results show that many different dynamics are at work within the church and the new forestry direction. Even though there seems to be a clear willingness to work with the transition, this willingness is sometimes based more on a sense of duty toward the church, and how to turn this willingness into concrete action is unclear. The challenge is that the church's approach to balancing the newly established four sustainability dimensions is unclear, with tensions largely stemming from fears of economic losses for parishes, congregations, and the church as a whole. In addition, the concept of *existential and spiritual sustainability* is not well-defined within the church, and it is drawing attention from multiple participants.

The church's forestry is also largely dependent on regional variations in landscape and geography, leading to large differences in how dioceses engage in forestry. Important examples include the fact that some dioceses have forests better suited to production, while others have forests better suited to natural reserves and set-asides. This means the preconditions for the transitions vary widely across dioceses.

In addition, the church faces challenges with several lock-in mechanisms. And changing their forestry will, to some degree, include working against the current system and forces within the forest industry. But also challenging the view of the forest as something that primarily generates income to something that balances the four sustainability dimensions.

Finally, the CoS faces significant organisational and structural barriers. The management of the CSA has historically been situated outside the rest of the diocesan organisation, and this structure might now be challenged as voices advocating other values seek to take part in how the church manages its forests. Foresters and forest managers have also received considerable criticism, which might have made them less inclined to invite other parts of the diocese. However, there are areas where these separated organisational structures could be bridged. For example, bishops are highlighted as roles that could push for and facilitate this.

6

Discussion

6.1 The Church's transition through a TM lens

The current transition in the Church of Sweden is, in nature, split in two: it is both a cultural and organisational change and a shift in forestry practices. To answer **RQ1**, this section evaluates the church's progress using the different phases of the TM framework in Loorbach (2007), namely *strategic, tactical, and operational*. By mapping the findings of this study against the TM framework, it is possible to see where the church's efforts align with transition theory and where there are gaps and opportunities for improvement.

In addition, to answer **RQ2**, organisational challenges related to the CoS and the forestry transition are discussed in relation to the new direction. The main challenges being related to internal organisational structures and lack of stakeholder involvement.

6.1.1 Strategic transition management

The church has, to some extent, knowingly or unknowingly begun the transition through actions similar to those described in the strategic phase of the TM. By including the balancing of economic, social, ecological, and spiritual sustainability in the church order, they have established these as forestry values that span the whole organisation. It is therefore possible to argue that the church has already set a common vision for the future state of the forestry system within the organisation. Something that is described as necessary for a sustainability transition (Loorbach, 2007; Sancak, 2023).

However, the church has a long way to go in order to internalise these new values and visions within the organisation. The confusion surrounding *spiritual sustainability* shows that even though the church has set a vision, it is not understood throughout the organisation. Several participants lifted individual interpretations of this idea, and many were very unsure about what spiritual sustainability means, especially in

practice. This means the vision cannot be said to be shared among stakeholders, and is not shared among central stakeholders in committees and forestry departments within the dioceses. People within the dioceses tend to place the responsibility for creating clarity on this at the church's central level, arguing that central leadership and guidance are required to hold the transition together. This highlights the need for a sufficiently clear, shared vision and interpretation of the church order that can permeate the whole church, while still enabling the individual dioceses to adapt it to their specific conditions.

In connection with this, one area that is missing, at least in our study, is a *shared problem definition* (Loorbach, 2007). Loorbach (2007) emphasises the importance of a shared problem definition, as different stakeholders often have contrasting views of what the problem is. And that many times stakeholders will state that they are well aware of the problem at hand, when in fact they have their own individual interpretation of it. Loorbach (2007) also points out that in these types of transitions, there is never only one big problem, but a multitude of problems. Hence, agreeing on clear problem definition(s) creates a shared language for the situation and a common urgency and rationale for the transition. This then opens the possibility of discussing the shared desired state the organisation seeks to achieve through its transition.

So, even though the CoS appears to have a shared vision, they have not developed a shared problem definition. Therefore, a question that remains is what the background and motivation for going in this direction is. Why has the church set these visions? What problem are they trying to solve? One possible explanation is that it is a response to landscape pressures, that is, uncontrollable macro-level external forces from society or nature. These pressures could come either as societal pressures from the population or as a result of climate change that in turn forces the forestry regime to change (Geels et al., 2004). But it could also be due to internal pressures, such as the drive to live up to the church's values. This also creates areas for further debate and conflict in the church, as there are varying opinions on what "sustainable" forestry entails and even differing scientific opinions on what type of forestry is best for climate change mitigation.

A reason why the CoS fails in creating a shared problem framing at this point of the transition could be that the extent of the system is not understood by the leaders of the transition process. As the transition involves actors spanning from local congregation members to foresters at the dioceses and all the way to members of the General Synod and the church board, it is understandable that the full complexity of the problem is hard to grasp. In addition, parts of the system are barely visible to stakeholders outside of it. For example, the CoS does not practice forestry in a vacuum, but rather is connected to the greater forestry system in Sweden, which involves a multitude of actors within the forestry sector, including vendors, contractors and entrepreneurs. It is reasonable to assume that these connections are known to the forestry departments, but for the CoS to create a *shared* problem framing, this knowledge needs to be shared across departments and stakeholder groups. Here,

the silo structures in the dioceses can hinder this process.

Apart from the above, the key point at which the church deviates from the TM framework is its approach to including diverse stakeholders. As described in Loorbach (2007), the stakeholders in the strategic phase should have diverse backgrounds, be informed about the current system, and be capable of questioning it. Furthermore, it is recommended that both regime actors, for example, people with experience from the current forestry industry, as well as niche actors, people working somewhat outside the current system, are included in the process. In addition, there should ideally be a mix of personalities, e.g., creative and communicative people. All this is to ensure that the perspectives relevant to the system are represented and that ideas can be developed and communicated. Moreover, as pointed out by Reed (2008), it is not sufficient to simply involve a variety of stakeholders. The actors must also feel that they can influence the final decision and that they have some legitimacy to be included.

Preparation for the transition should also be led by a group of experts (Loorbach, 2007). The investigation by Syrjänen Schaal & Enander (2024) could serve as expert preparation, but, as shown in this work, there are widely divergent opinions on the legitimacy of their work. In addition, the ongoing task of interpreting the new church order and developing a model for its implementation is carried out by a few forest managers from different dioceses, together with a forestry expert at the national level. These actors are surely informed about the current system, and they might even be able to question it, but they do not represent all the stakeholder groups affected by the transition. This means that the task of establishing a framework for dioceses to set local goals is being carried out without including diverse stakeholder groups. As mentioned above, this means there is a risk that certain perspectives may be overlooked.

This raises the question of who to include when interpreting these new values. As seen in this study, there are clear silos within the church's forestry, i.e., the estate management departments have historically managed the forests somewhat independently. The forestry has been managed by the forestry professionals. This is reasonable given the old church order, which focused on economic gain. However, with the inclusion of new values, this is in question, and other professions and stakeholders could claim legitimacy for inclusion in the process. As noted above, the forest manager and the national-level forestry expert have legitimate technical expertise. But, for example, bishops could claim legitimacy based on spiritual knowledge, or parishes could claim legitimacy as the church's primary unit. Similarly, sustainability administrators can be argued as legitimate in a sustainability transition. The idea is that, with the inclusion of several distinct values, each value needs to be represented in the decision-making process. So, one could ask why more competencies are not included.

In addition, the prevailing view within the CoSs' organisation is that power and influence in the church are rooted in congregations and parishes, creating a bottom-

up organisation. What stands out is that these groups are rarely mentioned as relevant stakeholders by participants in this study and seem to be overlooked in some forums. When interaction with local actors in the church is mentioned, it is in terms of information rather than co-creation or collaboration. It therefore seems that the ambition for dioceses is to set the framework for the transition and local goals, and then communicate downwards within the organisation about what the transition will mean. Stakeholder involvement, at least when it comes to the parishes, therefore seems to be intended only for the later stages of the transition process, and not in the early strategic phase.

Compared with the TM framework, the risk is that the CoS will miss important aspects of the conditions and underlying problems in their transition. For example, emphasis is placed on the economic effects that the transition might have, yet no broad dialogue seems to be planned with local dioceses or parishes. This question, which appears to be the source of internal tensions and friction, might be better understood if those really affected were included earlier in the process. As described by some participants, some parishes/congregations were willing to reduce revenue in exchange for other values. Including parishes and congregations could also help anchor this new direction for the CoS among its members, thereby creating a stronger sense of legitimacy for the transition (Sancak, 2023).

At this point, it should be noted that parishes and congregations were included in the referral process following the investigation and took an active role. So, these stakeholders have not been completely excluded from the process. Although, based on this study, they seem to be somewhat excluded. And they are not yet represented in the interpretation of the practical meaning of the new church order.

6.1.2 Tactical transition management

An argument can be made that the CoS is currently somewhere between strategic and tactical transition management phases. As a vision has already been set, the church is now working on how to implement it across the different dioceses. TM means that, at this stage, the focus is on developing transition images (more local visions) and transition paths (ways to reach them). The targets in this phase must become more quantitative while remaining anchored in the common vision set in the strategic phase (Loorbach, 2007). The decision-making power for setting concrete operational goals and visions lies at the diocesan level. In relation to the TM framework, this presents a natural opportunity to work with different transition paths, which could also be a way to address the diverse conditions posed by the geographically varied nature of the CoSs' forestry. Here, it is important for the dioceses to again create a common problem framing which is true to their local conditions within the forestry. As with the strategic phase, this also requires the participation of diverse stakeholder groups, and to fully understand the conditions, goal setting cannot be left solely to estate management departments and committees.

Instead, inclusion of stakeholders both within the dioceses and in local parishes and congregations is needed.

This inclusion of stakeholders is also important for social learning to take place Ernst (2019), and, as noted by Loorbach (2007), and by some participants, social learning and knowledge sharing are necessary for a successful sustainability transition. In turn, this also means that the parallel structures previously described between the estate management departments and the rest of the dioceses must be addressed during this phase to enable knowledge sharing and creation. Otherwise, there is a risk that the new operational goals are set based on traditions, knowledge and ideas from the old regime.

The operational goals, even if guided by the overarching vision for the new forestry direction, are the final decisions that will guide operations within the church and dioceses as they work through the transition. These decisions are set by either the diocesan board or estate committees, and therefore these groups play a key role in including diverse competencies and stakeholders in the process. Within the dioceses, actors identified as having the power to facilitate broader stakeholder and cross-silo interactions are diocesan directors and bishops. Both of these wield official and unofficial power through influence and executive authority, and multiple examples show that these actors can facilitate the inclusion of sustainability advisors. Bishops are also said to be able to help with translating actions for sustainability into the church's religious values and language. This could also help consolidate the new direction within larger groups of stakeholders and keep the organisation on the same path.

Also noteworthy is how the perception that the church's forestry is, to some extent, already sustainable might affect concrete goal-setting in the tactical phase. Even though the church has agreed on new values that reflect their idea of a more sustainable forestry, this broad definition of the idea, which might have enabled consensus on the strategic level, might hinder actions at the tactical (and later operational) level. Despite the common decision, people still have different ideas about what sustainability is, as shown in the results and theory. And even though there is a strong will to work with the new direction, given multiple values and stakeholders, there is a risk that practical actions and goals will be difficult to agree on. This further emphasises the need for improved dialogue and compromise within the church. To actually create clear operational goals that can later become actions.

At the same time, the now-established multiple values in the church order effectively reduce the demands on dioceses to generate economic returns. It opens the possibility of arguing for the inclusion of other values. This might make it easier to set operational goals (and later achieve them) that include all values, since one is justified in reducing economic gain in exchange for increased other values.

6.1.3 Operational transition management

As for the operational phase, which has not yet begun, the theory emphasises experimentation and learning by doing (Loorbach, 2007). This is, however, rather difficult in the forest, given the long time scale. As described in the theory, several TM cycles are preferably done in a period of, say, 30 years. In the forest, the results of one experiment using another method might take at least 30 years to compare. Hence, experimentation with forestry methods, even though it is needed, takes too long and must be viewed on a longer time scale than the organisational transition. Furthermore, the long timeframe creates uncertainty about which forestry methods to use, especially in a changing climate. As one of the researchers in the study stated: "It is not certain that these old truths will still be true in the future." That it is hard to know which methods will be suitable in the future makes it easy to avoid risks and keep doing what has worked in the past. Therefore, forestry-wise, the church could, instead of trying to find the right methods, focus on using a multitude of methods adapted to the geographical preconditions, as stated by the scientists in this study, the forest investigation, as well as in the new directives in the church order.

So, the experimentation and iterative learning by doing in this phase could instead, for example, come from how the church works with including various stakeholders, both external and internal, and how one communicates and works with the transition as an organisation. However, the church faces another challenge or opportunity regarding the learning in this phase. That is to say, there is a possibility to learn within the dioceses along their individual transition paths as well as between the dioceses from each other's transition paths. This will, again, require improved communication on all fronts.

Another challenge that will likely become apparent in the operational phase concerns the various lock-ins identified in the study; see 5.4.1. Many of these lock-ins effectively function as institutional logics. They describe how things are done today and serve as a basis for people's decisions. In the operational phase, the goals set in the tactical phase are translated into concrete actions, and here the lock-ins regarding forestry knowledge and industry, as well as how one views the forest, will become more apparent. These barriers were also identified by Hertog et al. (2022). The challenge lies in working against these lock-ins, i.e., establishing the use of other methods and creating a new mindset around forestry, based on other values. So, there is the possibility that the practical actions in the transition will halt, not because of technical barriers, but because organisational actors continue to take decisions based on the current institutional logics. Hence, it is vital that this be addressed from the beginning, during the strategic and tactical phases.

6.2 Organisational challenges

Throughout the TM cycle, the challenges identified in the Church of Sweden concern stakeholder involvement, organisational and cultural structures, and the lack of processes for overarching visions, a common problem framing, and a collective agenda for the sustainability transition (Bento et al., 2020; Loorbach, 2007; Sancak, 2023; Thornton et al., 2012b). As noted previously, there is a contrast between the bottom-up nature of the Church of Sweden's organisation, as reported by participants in this study, and the church's approach to its forestry transition. While power is said to come from members at the congregation level, the result points to these not being included until later in the process, when visions, goals, targets and operational activities are already decided. The church here misses the opportunity to leverage knowledge from the entire organisation and its stakeholders, who should ideally be involved as early as possible in the process (Reed, 2008). Extensive stakeholder involvement is important not only within the TM framework (Loorbach, 2007), where relevant perspectives might otherwise be missed, but also in organisational transformations for sustainability (Sancak, 2023).

Secondly, the Church of Sweden faces significant challenges related to its organisational structures, most notably the disconnect between the estate management organisation and the rest of the dioceses. There are different institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012b) across professions (theologians, sustainability professionals, and forest managers) that are also embedded in the current organisational structures of local forestry management, as well as newly accepted sustainability dimensions that formally establish logics for ecological, social, and spiritual values (economic could be argued to already exist).

As noted by Besharov & Smith (2014), in organisations where multiple logics are important for their functioning, as in the case of the Church of Sweden, this leads to a high degree of *centrality* (Besharov & Smith, 2014). The Church of Sweden explicitly states that it stands on two legs: the elected officials and the theologians, led by the bishops. In the forestry system, these are also complemented by the logics of forestry professionals, who play a central role in the system and in managing the church's properties. Therefore, it is clear that there are high levels of centrality among logics within the church's forestry system. In addition, the tensions evident between estate management departments, theologians, and sustainability professionals suggest that there may currently be low *compatibility* among the different logics, with groups strongly believing in their own values and bases of work. This means that the CoSs' organisation around forestry falls into a *contested logic multiplicity*, as defined by Besharov & Smith (2014). Organisations in this category risk extensive conflict, as has been apparent in the church.

Furthermore, there are signs of organisational silos (Bento et al., 2020) based on the formal expertise of different professions, as well as on functional units such as estate management departments. These constructs have been formed over a long time, as

the departments have had little need to interact with the rest of the diocese, and, similarly, the rest of the diocese has not seen the need to, or felt the legitimacy to, contribute (as noted by some participants). This hinders collaboration across silos, as exemplified by the interviews: some groups encountered resistance when approaching estate management departments. These highlight the types of lock-ins that organisational silos can create, as found by Cilliers & Greyvenstein (2012), that can hinder organisational efficiency. However, understanding these silos as a consequence of organisational culture and people's behaviour might reduce their negative effects regarding cooperation (Bento et al., 2020).

Lozano (2022) also emphasises that not uncommonly organisations fail to create lasting change because the new mindset has not made its way into the norms and culture. The change needs to be adopted over time and by a large share of the organisation to eventually become part of the culture. He means that it is not uncommon for organisations to fall back into old patterns, as the change has not made its way into underlying structures and people's behaviour. In forestry, this becomes more difficult given the unusually long timeframe. As a result, the church cannot rely on visible changes in forestry to guide organisational change; instead, the reverse applies. The organisation and behaviour must change first, and with enough patience, the visible changes in forestry will start to emerge. This was identified as one of the bigger barriers in the study: the lack of patience.

Even though there are major organisational (and other) challenges regarding the transition. What is positive is the clear will to work with this and a sense of duty within the church. As pointed out by Sancak (2023) (and common sense), this will make the workflow much smoother and increase the chance of a successful change. Hence, based on this study, it seems more likely that the transition will stagnate due to the barriers identified here, rather than from resistance within the church.

Finally, the vision and goal-setting process taking place in the CoS is not as widespread and shared within the organisation, compared to what is recommended in the sustainability transitions literature. For envisioning, creating principles for sustainability, shared problem framing, sensemaking and understanding of complex systems, stakeholder participation is necessary (Loorbach, 2007; Luyet et al., 2012; Reed, 2008; Sancak, 2023). Similar to the strategic phase of the TM framework, Sancak (2023) also notes that organisations that fail to establish a shared vision among stakeholders risk failing in their transformation attempts. Even though participants from the church do point to the importance of dialogue in the transition process, it is most commonly mentioned in terms of communication within the dioceses or between the dioceses and the national office. When communication efforts with congregations or parishes are mentioned, they are typically framed as information rather than as proper dialogue. The CoS might thereby miss important parts of the forestry system that lie outside what professionals and elected officials within the dioceses assume. In addition, the actions taken in efforts to create more sustainable forestry from the perspective of the four dimensions might not be as well anchored within the wider organisation and therefore lack legitimacy among the organisation's

grassroots stakeholders.

These findings demonstrate that the church has several organisational challenges related to their intended change in forestry practices. These include creating a shared vision and clarity regarding concepts among their employees, working against lock-in mechanisms and across silos, and improving stakeholder involvement and communication within the organisation. Taken together, this highlights that sustainability transitions are not just technical but also organisational and cultural.

6.3 A potential way forward - Building local transition arenas within the Church of Sweden

Drawing on the above discussion of how the CoS's actions compare with those proposed in the TM framework, while also considering the organisational challenges, a somewhat trivial solution or way forward presents itself. As this study has discussed extensively, stakeholder participation and involvement appear to be limited compared with what is proposed in the TM framework and the wider sustainability transition literature. The church also needs to bridge gaps within the organisation and create new spaces for dialogue and meetings across different professions, actors, and stakeholder groups. Therefore, creating local *transition arenas* (Loorbach, 2007) across different dioceses could be a path not only to bridge organisational gaps but also to create a clear structure for stakeholder participation.

For local transition arenas, a first step would be to create a locally anchored group of actors to oversee the process, a so-called *transition team* (Roorda et al., 2014). In dioceses, this could include forest managers, sustainability professionals, bishops, local priests, and diocesan directors. By including these roles, knowledge and competences across all sustainability dimensions are ensured, as is local anchoring. In addition, some competence in change management, transition management, facilitation, or similar areas is necessary for the process to proceed smoothly (Notermans et al., 2022). If such competence can't be found within the diocese, it should be brought in.

This first group of actors then invites a larger group of stakeholders they consider important to the transition. Drawing from the results, these could include, for example, forest entrepreneurs, people from local communities, members of congregations and parishes, scientists, NGOs, local decision-makers, and others. The important part is that there is a diversity of stakeholders, with different backgrounds, competences and logics (Notermans et al., 2022). This group should consist of 15-30 people (Loorbach, 2007). Holding in-person workshops enables the diocese to develop a real, shared problem framing and a vision for the diocese's future forestry system.

In this process, conversations would be held across different professional and organisational silos (Bento et al., 2020), enabling social learning (Ernst, 2019) and fostering understanding of different perspectives on the forestry system. In turn, this provides professionals within the church with a new forum to discuss ideas freely, outside their departments and in collaboration with broader stakeholder groups. Not only does this help build trust within the dioceses, but it could also build trust between the dioceses and local stakeholder groups, congregations, and NGOs. In itself, this new forum for dialogue and knowledge creation could help break organisational silos by creating a more collaborative environment within the organisation (de Waal et al., 2019). Building shared goals and agendas, as well as trust-building, is also an efficient method for breaking organisational silos (Jones et al., 2024).

A space for reflection and dialogue with theologians could also help create a shared understanding of spiritual sustainability and, in the process of developing shared visions for the diocese's forestry, clarify the relationship between spiritual sustainability and the other three dimensions. This could also help the church and dioceses create a shared language when addressing the four dimensions, so that the transition to and concept of sustainability within the organisation can be understood across professions and backgrounds. Finally, building local transition arenas where congregations, parishes, and church members are represented directly would more closely align with the shared view of the church as a bottom-up organisation. Including these grassroots stakeholders yields both interesting and necessary perspectives on the role of forestry within the church, while strengthening ties between the congregation and the diocese, thereby building legitimacy for the transition.

6.4 Research limitations

The primary limitation of this study was that forest managers from all dioceses initially declined to participate. In the end, one forest manager agreed to participate, and one forester also took part in the study. However, this means that this thesis lacks data from most dioceses' property management departments and from the professionals working within them. This might mean that the results presented are skewed away from opinions on the operational proposals and ideas, and instead focus heavily on strategic and tactical operations from the perspective of elected officials and workers at the national level. In addition, while the inclusion of sustainability administrators does provide a broader picture of operations within the church, it might also have resulted in an angled view of the organisation's apparent parallel dynamics. Had more managers from the property management departments chosen to participate in the study, a more accurate depiction of the organisational structures and tensions might have been possible.

Something else lacking in this study is how forestry and the new direction affects the Sàmi people and how the church works with them. This is a fairly large question within the church, especially in the northern dioceses, following the Church of

Sweden's Apology to the Sami people in 2022. However, because participation from these dioceses was low, the data for this question were limited and are therefore excluded from the report.

It should also be noted that one sustainability administrator did not want to be recorded; hence, the data from this interview are limited, although not excluded from the results.

Finally, just as the authors note in this study about the lack of stakeholder involvement in the CoSs transition, the choice of participants also excluded broader stakeholder groups. The results are therefore focused solely on how the transition process is perceived and planned internally within the diocese and the church.

7

Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Key takeaways

This study examined how the Church of Sweden's intended change in forestry practices is translated into plans, visions and actions. Using the TM framework as a benchmark to compare the church's transition attempts enabled the identification of barriers and opportunities in the transition process. The major takeaway from the study is that the ongoing work is not just a forestry transition but an organisational transition as well, involving needs such as bridging organisational structures, improved stakeholder participation, questioning existing lock-ins and finding a new mindset around forestry.

Addressing the first research question, the Church of Sweden has agreed on certain values that shall guide its forestry (social, ecological, economic & spiritual), which can be seen as a form of vision. However, there is still some uncertainty about what these mean in practice, and, going forward, the church will need a clear interpretation of these values. The findings indicate that stakeholder inclusion has been limited in the early stages of the process, potentially leading to the oversight of certain perspectives. Moreover, the church's bottom-up organisation clashes somewhat with the stated need for clarity. Hence, the Church will from here have to find a balance between a common vision and local freedom. In addition, improved inclusion of various stakeholders is necessary to ensure that the four sustainability dimensions are balanced as the operational goals are set and that the existing silos are not reinforced.

With respect to the second research question, this study has shown that organisational structures can affect change or transition efforts. The historical parallel structure between estate management departments and the rest of the diocese makes the forestry work somewhat isolated. This leads to organisational and knowledge lock-ins, and poor inclusion of other stakeholders and perspectives, ultimately making the adoption of other values, and therefore the transition, more difficult. The study therefore calls for collaboration across these structures by creating locally governed transition arenas within the dioceses.

Finally, regarding the major challenges the CoS faces, the study identified several lock-ins that might hinder the transition, as well as challenges related to organisational structures and stakeholder involvement. These include knowledge and culture regarding established forestry practices, industrial forces, organisational structures, and perceptions of the Swedish forest. This further emphasises that sustainability transitions in large organisations are not only about technical processes but also about how organisational structures and cultures need to be set up for change.

7.2 Implications for future research

Specifically for the church, future research should follow up on its current transition. To see how the tactical and operational phases progress and how transition stands against transition management theory and organisational theory. This would also highlight how the early decision in the strategic phase affects the practical actions in the later stages. In particular, how and whether the church's new direction is implemented in practice, and how the dioceses choose to include stakeholders, are two highly interesting areas of study, since the CoS is a large organisation with clear connections to the forestry regime.

The connection to the forestry system also paves the way for studies of the effects the CoS will have on it. It is not unreasonable to assume that actions taken in the CoS can affect how society views Swedish forestry, which might create new landscape pressures on the regime. One scenario is that if the Church of Sweden continues to experiment with alternative forestry methods across diverse geographical areas, it can act as a forerunner for the wider forestry sector. This, in turn, would place them among *niche* actors and therefore make the church a case for a broader MLP study of the forestry regime in Sweden.

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