



Impact of Swedish and European Union Forest Policies on Small-scale Forest Owners in Sweden

Berlinda Birago Owusu

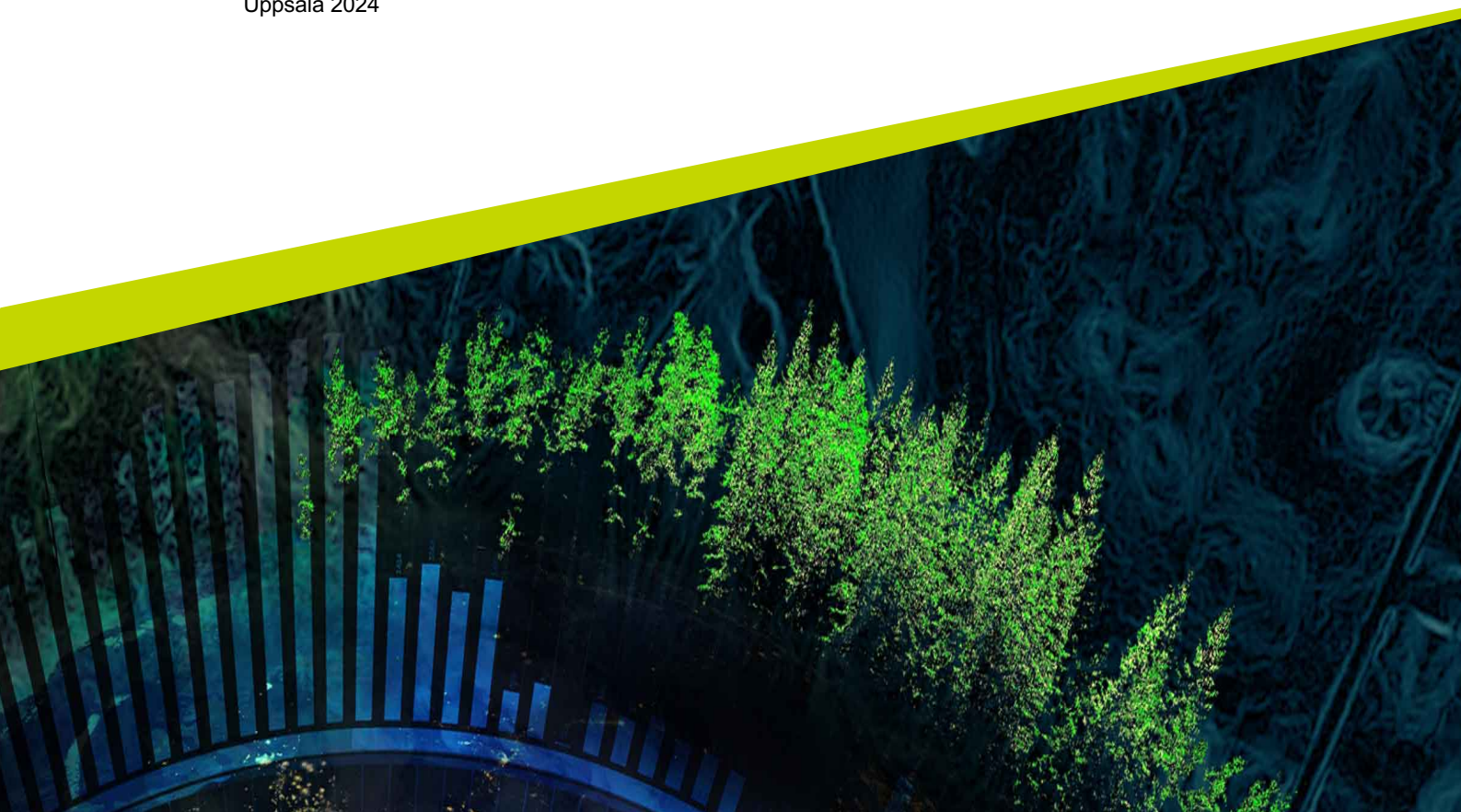
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Abstract

The forest industry is a significant contributor to Sweden's economy, with small-scale forest owners managing a substantial portion of the productive land (over 47% of productive land). This study explores how Swedish and EU forest policies impact these owners, particularly those prioritizing environmental concerns. Former studies have shown a divergence between policy objectives and tangible results especially in terms of wider environmental goals thus indicating that policies may not fully recognize the intricacies of forest management among knowledgeable actors.

Using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields and a phenomenological approach, the research examines how these owners navigate policy demands, adapt their practices, and manage the balance between economic viability and ecological sustainability. Through semi-structured interviews with these environmentalists who are small-scale forest owners themselves, the findings reveal that while policies promote sustainable practices, they also impose economic and operational challenges.

The interviews also reveal their strategies for coping with policy changes, the challenges they face, and the broader implications for Swedish forests. Owners adapt through diversification, financial support mechanisms, and strategic adjustments in forestry practices. The study underscores the dynamic interplay between economic viability, environmental sustainability, and regulatory compliance, providing insights for more effective policy formulation and sustainable forest management.

Keywords: Small-scale forest owners, Swedish forest policies, EU forest regulations, Sustainable forestry management.

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Abbreviations

EU	European Union
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
PEFC	Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
SEA	Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolage
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

1.0 Introduction

In Sweden, one-tenth of overall export earnings comes from the forest industry, a major contributor to the nation's economy. Over 300,000 people own small parts of this sector in Sweden; they control 47% of productive land (Lidestav & Westin, 2023). In Sweden, the concept of small-scale forest ownership is not strictly defined by a fixed land size. While some studies use a threshold of around 20-50 hectares to be classified as such, this size can vary significantly, with many owners possessing larger holdings.

The average size of small-scale forest holdings is approximately 50 hectares, but this differs between regions due to historical and ecological factors. Importantly, small-scale forest ownership in Sweden often emphasizes cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and family legacy over purely economic gains (Eggers et al., 2014; Ingemarson et al., 2006; Wiersum et al., 2005). Swedish small-scale forest owners are important in forestry because their lives are entwined with resource use and rule systems governing forests (Swedish Forest Agency, 2021).

The European Union has its policies on forests while at the same time there is also state legislation which governs it in Sweden. Anderson and Bartholdson (2006) assert that the EU and Swedish forest policies have three main objectives: provision of ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation as well sustainable management for forests. These policies may impact small-scale forest owners' means of subsistence and decision-making, as well as the general well-being and preservation of forest ecosystems.

They directly affect small-scale forest owners' capacity to obtain financing for sustainable forest management techniques, gain access to markets, and navigate intricate laws about the ownership and management of forests. Several policies have been implemented by the Swedish government and the European Union to encourage sustainable forestry methods and safeguard forest ecosystems, including regulations on carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, forest certification, and wood trade (Alarcón-Aguirre et al., 2020).

While global pressures for sustainable development continue to increase, there are several shifts in the Swedish forest industry that create opportunities and challenges for small scale forest owners. One research paper by Lidestav & Westin (2023) shows that these forest owners'

values and goals play a significant role in their forestry management strategies which directly affect the efficiency of political measures.

The study revealed that though Swedish small-scale forest owners often reach their wood or timber production targets, they hardly meet environmental objectives. The study also revealed that social values such as community and recreation often override economic profits thus motivating them to focus more on consumption than on production. More so, the outcomes show that present voluntary policy measures might not be enough to attain ecological goals. Lidestav & Westin (2023) suggest combining economic incentives with existing policies can foster better ecological sustainability.

Currently, traditional forest management methods are being looked into in relation to sustainability and sustainable development within the primary forest industry. As a result, there is scrutiny by authorities of these forest management practices that has led to implementation of certification programs such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) which seek to confirm that sustainable practices are taking place in privately owned forests (Thorning & Mark-Herbert, 2022).

Several small-scale Swedish forest owners have decided to certify their lands despite the complexities and requirements associated with certified forests. The process of certification presents unique challenges for these owners which include strict rules and regulations as well as ever-changing market conditions concerning certified forest products.

Through participating in certification programs, these owners demonstrate commitment towards sustainable forest management thus attaining global sustainability goals. They are compelled by two main factors; the first being market expectations while the second one is policy recommendations advocating for voluntary certification schemes (Thorning & Mark-Herbert, 2022).

Nonetheless, there is scarcity of research on how small-scale forest owners, particularly the environmentalists (thus, those who prioritize environmental concerns and also knowledgeable within the field), in Sweden interact with, react to, and are impacted by these policies. The delicate interplay between governmental directions, economic considerations, and ecological effects poses a multifaceted task that necessitates detailed research.

The policy norms and requirements imposed by both national and European Union bodies may provide difficulties for forest owners who operate on a smaller scale. Former studies have shown a divergence between policy objectives and tangible results especially in terms of wider environmental goals thus indicating that policies may not fully recognize the intricacies of forest management among knowledgeable actors (Lidestav & Westin, 2023).

Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social fields, this study explores how small-scale forest owners (focusing on the environmentalists) navigate the complexities and constraints imposed by national and EU policies. Their habitus, shaped by both their professional backgrounds and personal experiences in forest management, influences how they perceive and interact with these policies, potentially revealing unique coping strategies and insights into the sustainability of forestry practices.

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study purpose is to explore the navigation and management practices of Swedish small-scale forest owners, particularly those who can be categorized as 'environmentalists'. In this context, 'environmentalists' refer to forest owners who prioritize environmental concerns and possess substantial knowledge and education in environmental sciences or related fields. This group is particularly interesting because they represent a segment of forest owners who are highly informed about sustainable forest management practices and potentially more proactive in implementing this form.

Focusing on these people (environmentalists) is crucial because existing research often overlooks this highly educated group. Understanding their experiences and challenges can provide valuable insights into how policies are interpreted and acted upon by those with a strong environmental ethos. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the perspectives and management strategies of these owners, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and impact of forestry policies on different types of forest owners.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of this study is to explore how environmental experts among small-scale forest owners cope with and manage the demands to implement Swedish Forest Policies and EU forest regulations and the effects this interaction has on the forests.

The question I seek to answer is:

- How do small-scale forest owners in Sweden cope with and react to Swedish and European Union Forest policies, and what are the impacts on their forest management practices and livelihoods?

To explore this, the study will also touch on:

- How the effects of these policies on Swedish forests and landscape are perceived by these owners.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The thesis starts with an Introduction part that contextualizes the study by emphasizing the significance of forestry in Sweden and the role played by small-scale forest owners. It maps out what this research covers and why it is important, framing the discussion around how Swedish and EU policies affect those proprietors. Additionally, the introduction contains the problem statement embedded, followed by the purpose, objectives, and research questions.

The theoretical Framework comes next, which bases its roots in Pierre Bourdieu's social field theory. This part aims at showing why the ideas like social fields, habitus, capital and doxa are important when dealing with policy instruments in relation to forest management practices. Such a body of thought helps to interpret empirical data using certain lenses.

Following this is the Methodology chapter, where the research design is outlined including data collection and analysis methods employed as well as their justification thereof. Moreover, it also looks into ethical considerations entailed by carrying out studies whose outcomes may affect people's lives directly or indirectly.

In addition, Background provides an expansive overview on different themes relevant to this inquiry. Herein there is a review done about past events and socio-economic status related to forestry industry in Sweden among other things that can help place findings into wider perspective.

Next, empirical results are given – these offer a comprehensive representation of the information amassed through interviews. The chapter is based on research questions which makes for easy reading on findings that reveal practical effects of forest policies. Moving on to the Discussion chapter; here the researcher analyze the findings having in mind theoretical framework as stated before in this paper. This part brings together data with already existing literature by making comparisons as well pointing out where they tally or not. It also widens our understanding about policy environment outside narrow confines set by any single study such as this one.

The Conclusion section of the thesis reviews the most important results and points out their importance in terms of theoretical contributions. It assesses the methods' productivity in relation to other possible approaches and indicates directions for future inquiry or policy formulation. This last part puts into context general relevance by underscoring what it means for sustainable Swedish forest management.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields and its Application to Forest Management

Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework is instrumental in understanding the dynamics of power within various social contexts. His theory of social fields provides a robust lens through which to analyze the relationships and power structures that define specific areas of human activity. A field, according to Bourdieu, is a network, or a configuration of objective relations between social positions.

These positions are defined by the distribution of power and assets (labelled capital by Bourdieu) and dictate the structure within the field (Bourdieu, 1986). This theoretical approach is particularly useful for examining how small-scale forest owners navigate the complexities introduced by Swedish and EU forest policies.

2.1.1 Definition and Importance of Social Fields

According to the theory of Bourdieu, fields are social areas, focused on the production and circulation of specific aims, norms, values, and practices. Within the fields groups and individuals try to accumulate as much as possible of the specific coveted material and symbolic capitals of the field. The fields display their own rules, schemes of domination as well as legitimate opinions which are often battled over (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014).

Each field functions autonomously with its set of regulations that govern how participants should behave. For instance, in the academic field, professors compete for specific cultural and symbolic capital through research funding (economic capital), publication of books, book chapters and papers (cultural capital) prestigious awards (symbolic capital), and influential networks of researchers (social capital).

The scholars' habitus, shaped by years of education and academic training, guide their behaviors and decisions within this field (Free & Macintosh, 2008). In the field of political ecology, researchers like Husu (2013) apply Bourdieu's concepts to analyze identity movements. These movements are examined based on the positions agents occupy in social spaces, resources they utilize, and their cultural competence, which offers a new perspective on the interrelatedness of class and identity movements (Husu, 2013). In the case of forest

management, it involves different actors such as the owners of forests, regulatory authorities, policymakers at national level or international organizations dealing with forestry issues among others like industry groups and environmental NGOs (just to mention a few), who compete for power and resources hence influencing policies regarding this sector.

The Swedish forestry field may be seen as a bureaucratic field that is strongly influenced by EU regulations and national policies. It is not just concerned with physically managing forests but also managing symbolic capital attached to sustainable practices and conservation efforts. For small scale forest owners in Sweden, finding their way through this space means that they must try to strike a balance between what economically benefits them most and what society expects from them in terms of sustainability taking into consideration all legal requirements needed to ensure compliance.

2.1.2 Application to Forest Management Context

Applying Bourdieu's theory to the Swedish forestry sector involves considering how different capitals enable forest owners to exercise power and influence in this specific area. This can be illustrated by:

- **Economic Capital:** In this case, economic capital refers to financial resources owned by individuals engaged in forestry which might affect their ability or willingness for investing in sustainable practices and complying with new laws among other things. Also, it determines whether they withstand such pressures as those caused by market forces or policy shifts.
- **Cultural Capital:** Cultural capital refers here to knowledge about forest management and ways of managing forests as well as educational background that informs people's understanding about these matters while guiding their actions towards them. It is through having cultural capital within forestry that one can easily adapt or adopt any new technology brought about by changes in policy towards sustainability.
- **Social Capital:** Social capital implies connections between different actors within an organization or across several organizations dealing with related activities/programs, which may include government bodies; international agencies; non-governmental organizations (NGO); community-based organizations (CBO), among others working towards conserving forests. Through socializing agents like politicians, bureaucrats,

activists and many more, forest owners can gain support from various quarters during policy implementation processes thus pushing for desired outcomes.

A study by Aaken et al. (2013) on corporate social responsibility (CSR) demonstrates how Bourdieu's theory can be applied to understand why corporate actors engage in pro-social behavior (actions intended to help others). This study highlights the interplay between economic and non-economic motivations, shaped by the features of the social field, managers' dispositions, and their stock of various forms of capital (Aaken et al., 2013).

Thus, to comprehend the problems and prospects faced by forest owners at the local level in Sweden, it is necessary also to investigate the interrelationship between different capitals within this sector. For instance, modifications in EU forest policy may necessitate owners to adapt their methods to meet new environmental requirements which can affect their cultural and financial capital through demanding investments in new skills or technologies.

Basically, Bourdieu's idea of social fields provides an important tool for understanding how economic, cultural, and social forces interact to shape Swedish forestry management practices. This framework helps explain how forest owners can draw on various forms of capital to exercise power and influence within the forestry sector.

For example, economic capital (financial resources) impacts the ability of forest owners to invest in sustainable practices and comply with new regulations (Stanislovaitis et al., 2015), while cultural capital (knowledge and skills) facilitates the adaptation to new technologies and policies (Guillén et al., 2015). Social capital (networks and connections) provides support and information crucial for policy implementation.

By examining the interplay of these capitals within the forestry field, we can uncover the dynamics of power and competition that influence policy decisions and management practices (Debrah, 2011). This approach illuminates not only structural aspects of managing forests but also the impacts of future policy changes towards sustainability within the field of conservation.

In "Bourdieu's Field and the Sociology of Welfare," Peillon (1998) adapted Bourdieu's framework to analyze welfare activities, emphasizing the conversion rates of different types of capital within the welfare field. The study concluded that this model effectively situates welfare activities within broader social contexts, highlighting the role of political capital and the

dynamic interactions of various forms of capital. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of welfare practices, demonstrating the utility of Bourdieu's concepts for the analysis of complex social systems (Peillon, 1998).

2.1.3 Capital, Habitus, and Field in Forestry Management

2.1.3.1 *Capital: Forms and Influence in Forestry*

In the expansive field of forestry management, capital, as delineated by Bourdieu, transcends mere financial wealth to encompass social, cultural, and symbolic forms, each significantly structuring social relations within this sector. Economic capital, particularly, plays a pivotal role by directly influencing management practices; it enables forest owners to invest in sustainable technologies and comply with stringent environmental regulations. According to Rimmer and Lundkvist, (2019), financial stability can either facilitate or constrain adaptive management practices aligned with EU conservation goals, highlighting the essential role of economic resources in sustainable forestry management.

Simultaneously, cultural capital, which includes specialized knowledge, skills, and educational attainment relevant to forestry management, equips owners to adeptly adapt to regulatory changes and implement advanced sustainable practices. Bezrukova et al. (2021) underscore that cultural capital significantly shapes forest owners' decisions concerning biodiversity conservation and sustainable management.

Furthermore, social capital, through networks and relationships with other forest owners, policymakers, and environmental groups, grants access to critical information and support. This type of capital profoundly influences policy outcomes and fosters collective action. Knoot and Rickenbach (2011) have observed that robust community networks considerably enhance the effectiveness of environmental management programs.

Lastly, symbolic capital in the forestry sector is often represented through the prestige owners gain from engaging in or endorsing environmentally sustainable practices. This form of capital can also stem from certifications that affirm sustainable practices, thereby enhancing the reputation of forest owners among peers and consumers. Trevlopoulos et al. (2021) discuss how symbolic capital, acquired through certification, can yield market advantages and bolster influence in policy discussions.

2.1.3.2 Habitus: The Shaping of Forest Owner Practices

Habitus, referring to the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions shaped by individual and collective historical conditions, plays a critical role in how forest owners perceive and interact with their ecological and regulatory environments. This concept is evident in the way forest owners' upbringing, educational background, and professional experiences influence their management practices and their responsiveness to environmental policies. Lizardo (2004) illustrate how the habitus of agricultural managers affects their acceptance and implementation of biodiversity conservation measures.

Moreover, habitus determines owners' attitudes towards risk, innovation, and conservation, impacting how they balance economic interests with environmental responsibilities. Carfagna et al. (2014) and Valdivia and Poulos (2009) argue that the habitus of landowners affects their willingness to adopt new practices that might present economic uncertainties but offer environmental benefits.

2.1.3.3 Field: The Arena of Struggle and Compliance

The field of forestry management is defined by a struggle among various actors (forest owners, government agencies, NGOs) to maximize their capital and influence the rules that delineate the field itself. This field is structured by both national and EU regulations, which mandate sustainable practices and conservation efforts, compelling forest owners to navigate these rules to optimize their economic and symbolic capital. Studies by Ekroos (2005) examine how EU policies impact national forestry practices, redefining what is valued and legitimized as "good" forestry practices.

Additionally, the power within the forestry field is contingent upon the distribution of capital. Owners with substantial economic resources or superior networks (social capital) often exert more significant influence on policy developments. This dynamic is explored by Leśkiewicz (2020), who analyze how power relations within forestry governance affect policy implementation and forest management outcomes.

Understanding the interplay of capital, habitus, and field offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing forestry management in Sweden, highlighting how various forms of capital influence forest owners' capacity to respond to and shape forestry policies, while habitus shapes their dispositions and practices within the structured field of these policies.

2.1.4 Bureaucratic Fields and Regulatory Influence

In Bourdieu's framework, the concept of the bureaucratic field specifically examines how institutions wielding power (such as government bodies, regulatory agencies, and large corporations) impose and maintain their dominance and influence over particular domains, including environmental and forestry management. This examination is particularly relevant for understanding the dynamics at play in the forestry sector or management in Sweden, where small-scale forest owners navigate complex regulatory environments shaped by both national laws and European Union directives.

2.1.4.1 Bureaucratic Power and Small-Scale Forest Ownership

Bourdieu's notion of bureaucratic fields involves the struggle among different agents to gain control over valuable resources, in this case, the forests and the regulatory frameworks that govern them. These fields are sites of power where capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) is both used and accrued. In the context of Swedish forestry, the bureaucratic field includes various stakeholders such as government agencies, environmental organizations, and forest owners themselves.

2.1.4.2 Regulatory Compliance and Bureaucratic Power Dynamics

Studies like those conducted by Zellei et al. (2005) reveal how EU environmental policies impact the daily operations of small-scale forest owners. These policies necessitate adjustments in traditional forestry practices to align with broader conservation goals, demanding significant shifts in operational routines. Similarly, Nabuurs et al. (2018) explore the trickle-down effect of EU-level decisions, illuminating the layers of bureaucratic oversight that affect local forestry management, thereby complicating the compliance process for owners.

These bureaucratic structures not only mandate compliance but also redefine power dynamics within the forestry sector. Small-scale owners, as Wiersum et al. (2005) point out, often find themselves marginalized in policy-making processes that disproportionately favor larger industrial players, reflecting Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence where dominant groups enforce their norms and interests.

2.1.4.3 Resistance, Adaptation, and Economic Impacts

In response to these regulatory pressures, small forest owners deploy their social and cultural capital to forge alliances and resist unfavorable policies. Scudder et al. (2019) provides an account of how these owners use their collective strengths to challenge and negotiate the constraints imposed upon them.

This resistance is crucial not only for preserving their traditional ways of managing forests but also for protecting their economic interests. The economic implications of these policies are significant; as Mizaras et al. (2020) discusses, changes in regulatory frameworks can destabilize the financial foundations of small-scale forestry, influencing market strategies and financial sustainability.

2.1.4.4 Structural Constraints and Innovations Within the Bureaucratic Field

The bureaucratic field does more than impose constraints; it also prompts innovation and adaptation. Nabuurs et al. (2017) details how the EU's Habitat Directive shapes what is permissible within Swedish forests, promoting certain types of forest utilization while limiting others. This regulatory environment forces forest owners to innovate within these boundaries. Lier et al. (2022) highlights how owners are adopting new technologies and strategies to optimize yield while complying with environmental standards, demonstrating a dynamic interplay between imposed structures and entrepreneurial response.

2.1.4.5 Cultural Norms, Economic Policies, and Bureaucratic Capital

The influence of cultural and social norms on regulatory interpretation and application varies across different regions, as noted by Primmer and Karppinen (2010). These norms dictate how regulations are implemented on the ground, often leading to diverse adaptive strategies. The role of bureaucratic capital, particularly knowledge about regulatory environments and proficiency in legal discourse, is critical in navigating these complex fields. Kubo (2010) discuss how possessing bureaucratic capital empowers forest owners to effectively maneuver through regulatory landscapes.

2.1.4.6 Implications for Small-Scale Forest Owners

The ongoing adaptations to regulatory changes require forest owners to invest more in compliance and reporting mechanisms, as observed by Rimmer and Lundkvist (2019). These adaptations, while necessary, come with significant socio-economic impacts, potentially altering the viability of small-scale forestry operations, and affecting rural economies, a concern echoed by (Nambiar, 2019). Engaging in policy advocacy and participating in stakeholder meetings are strategies that Bruña-García and Marey-Pérez (2014) suggest could enhance the influence of small forest owners within the bureaucratic field, potentially leading to more favorable regulatory outcomes.

2.1.5 Critical Examination of Bourdieu's Theories in Forestry Management

2.1.5.1 Strengths

Bourdieu's theoretical framework, which integrates the concepts of capital, habitus, and field, offers a comprehensive analytical tool for examining the complex interplay of economic, social, and cultural factors that shape individual behaviors and decisions within the forestry sector. This framework is particularly adept at exploring how various forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) interact to confer advantages or power within the forestry field, influencing both policy and practice (Bourdieu, 1986).

For instance, Caine (2013) utilized Bourdieu's theories to elucidate the natural resource governance dynamics in Canadian Aboriginal communities, demonstrating how different forms of capital contribute to shaping governance responses and community resilience in the face of governance challenges. Similarly, Ballet et al. (2007) applied Bourdieu's notion of social capital to understand the power dynamics and social structures within communities that affect natural resource management, highlighting the role of social capital in mediating power relations and enhancing or hindering community cohesion and collective action.

Raedeke et al. (2009) applied Bourdieu's concepts of "field" and "habitus" to better understand the practice of farming and the role of agroforestry in farming systems. Their analysis, based on interviews with farmers, highlighted how economic, family, and rental relations shape the field of farming. Different interpretations of what constitutes farming and forestry were crucial habitus considerations. This study underscores the potential of agroforestry to transform farming practices through social change driven by field and habitus dynamics (Raedeke et al.,

2009). Wilshusen also, used Bourdieu's theory to analyze the role of social capital in community forestry in Quintana Roo, Mexico. His study explored how elite actors maintain dominance within social networks over time, illustrating the downside of social capital. This perspective on elite persistence provided insights into the everyday politics and power relations within community forestry, highlighting the tensions between long-standing practices (habitus) and formal and informal social interactions (fields) (Wilshusen, 2009).

Everett's commentary explores the applicability of Bourdieu's approach in organizational studies. By contrasting Bourdieu's concepts with historical materialism and comparing his view of power with Foucault's, Everett linked Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, habitus, and symbolic violence to current organizational literature. This study emphasizes the utility of Bourdieu's framework in understanding organizational practices and power dynamics (Everett, 2002).

These insights are crucial for forestry management, where understanding the influence of various capitals can help reveal how certain groups may dominate forestry policies and practices, potentially skewing benefits towards certain stakeholders over others. Moreover, Bourdieu's concept of the field is critical for understanding the specific social arena of forestry management, where different stakeholders (government agencies, local communities, commercial forestry operations, and conservation groups) compete and cooperate within the defined rules of the forestry sector.

This approach not only highlights the structured nature of these interactions but also the power struggles and potential for conflict or cooperation within this space. Through such a lens, researchers and policymakers can better understand the underlying forces that shape forestry practices and thus develop more targeted and effective management strategies that consider the nuanced realities of forest governance.

2.1.5.2 Limitations

While Bourdieu's theories are instrumental in delineating the power structures and dynamics within the forestry sector, they also present certain limitations that merit consideration. A significant critique is the overemphasis on conflict and competition, which might obscure the collaborative or cooperative dynamics that are also prevalent within forestry management.

This aspect of Bourdieu's theory can lead to a somewhat skewed understanding of the sector, where cooperation often plays a critical role in sustainable practices. For example, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) critique Bourdieu for not sufficiently accounting for the potential of transformative alliances and partnerships that can arise in fields characterized by mutual interests, such as joint management ventures or community forestry initiatives aimed at sustainability.

Additionally, the practical application of Bourdieu's complex constructs (capital, habitus, and field) can be daunting for forestry practitioners and policymakers who may find these concepts abstract and difficult to translate into actionable strategies. This complexity potentially reduces the accessibility of Bourdieu's theoretical insights to those directly involved in forestry management, as noted by Hilgers and Mangez (2014), who argue that the academic depth of Bourdieu's concepts often necessitates simplification to enhance their practical applicability without sacrificing their analytical depth.

Furthermore, Pretty and Smith (2004) emphasize that while structural determinants are crucial, there is an underestimation of the agency of individuals within these frameworks. This oversight can be critical in fields like forestry, where the actions of individuals and communities significantly impact conservation and sustainability outcomes.

Despite these limitations, Bourdieu's framework remains a powerful tool for analyzing the forestry sector, particularly for its ability to uncover the underlying power relations and capital exchanges that shape forestry policies and practices. However, this research acknowledges the necessity to temper Bourdieu's emphasis on conflict with an understanding of the collaborative efforts that characterize much of sustainable forestry management.

By integrating Bourdieu's insights with perspectives that highlight cooperation and individual agency, this study can offer a more rounded and practical analysis that aligns with the realities of forestry management in Sweden. This approach not only addresses the limitations inherent in Bourdieu's theories but also enriches the theoretical framework, making it more relevant and applicable to the contemporary challenges faced by the forestry sector.

Such an integrated approach enhances the framework's utility in guiding both scholarly analysis and practical policymaking in forestry management, ensuring that it supports sustainable practices that are both socially equitable and environmentally sound.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Generally, a research project leans on its methodology for direction during the investigation process. This part describes the design of the study and methods used in investigating the experiences of small-scale forest owners in Sweden regarding European Union (EU) as well as Swedish forest policies which affect them.

Because this topic is multi-faceted (covering environmental, economic, and social aspects), it takes up a qualitative research approach. Such an approach enables one to get detailed information from people who have to deal with different layers of managing forests under EU and national laws.

A constructivist-interpretive worldview provides a basis for this study according to which reality is seen as being socially created through personal or group interactions. Given this philosophical position, therefore, what becomes suitable is a phenomenological research design. This philosophical stance informs the phenomenological research design, which aims to delve into the lived experiences of forest owners, uncovering the meanings they ascribe to their interactions with forest policies.

Through this lens, the study seeks to provide a deep, empathetic understanding of the forest owners' experiences, highlighting the subjective interpretations that quantitative methods might overlook. It must be noted that this philosophical view was not chosen by personal preference. It is the researcher's view that research philosophy adopted for any study should align with the nature of the research problem.

Alan Bryman (1984) emphasizes the importance of matching research techniques to the problem at hand. He argues that the suitability of a research technique is determined by its ability to address the specific research questions, rather than by strict adherence to a particular philosophical stance. Bryman suggests that research problems should dictate the methods of investigation, advocating for a pragmatic approach where the choice of methodology is guided by the nature of the inquiry. Well, except the problem originates from a particular philosophical view.

For instance, Bryman highlights those quantitative methods, such as sample surveys, are effective when the research goals require quantitative data, the information sought is specific

and familiar to respondents, and the researcher has prior knowledge of the issues and potential responses. Conversely, qualitative methods like participant observation are more suitable when exploring complex social relationships or intricate patterns of interaction, where firsthand behavioral information and qualitative contextual understanding are necessary.

Bryman (2012) further elaborates on this perspective in his later work, emphasizing that the philosophical bases of methodologies, while significant, should not overshadow the practical requirements of solving research problems.

3.1 Worldview and Research Design

This study investigates EU and Swedish forest policies as experienced by small-scale forest owners in Sweden using a constructivist interpretive paradigm. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) and Schwandt (2000), under a constructivist worldview, reality is interpreted through human perception and enacted through social interaction; thus, implying that people create knowledge about the world through their engagements with others rather than it's existing independently of them.

Phenomenology, as an offshoot of interpretivism, further holds that we should try to comprehend events via direct involvement in them, that is, through personal experience (Van Manen, 1990). It is necessary because it helps us see how different individuals may be affected by policies in ways beyond what official stories tell.

Throughout this research, subjective experiences will be focused on when using phenomenology method which involves finding out what things mean to people. It tries its best to get at the heart of what an event or moment was like from the perspective of someone who participated in it; hence this corresponds with our interest in knowing how policy influences are felt among owners regarding daily routines and management practices within forests.

This technique has been chosen due to its ability to bring out richness and intricacy inherent in personal encounters often overlooked by quantitative approaches or more objective research plans (Laverly, 2003).

3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

This research has employed semi-structured interviews as its key method for collecting primary data to gain insight into the experiences of small-scale forest owners and how they interact with European Union (EU) and Swedish forest policies. The format used allows for some flexibility within a structured framework, which is particularly suitable for phenomenological research because it helps gather in-depth qualitative information reflecting individuals' personal views and lived experiences (Kvale, 1998; Moustakas, 2011). Among other things, semi-structured interviews enable participants to express their thoughts in an open-ended manner, providing the researcher with the opportunity to probe deeper into significant topics that emerge during the discussion.

Interviews were conducted with a purposively selected group of six participants, all of whom are knowledgeable individuals from various fields within rural development and environmental sciences, including geography and environmental policy. These participants were identified using a snowball sampling method, which began with initial contacts and expanded through referrals from these contacts, effectively utilizing their networks to identify other potential interviewees who meet the study's criteria (Bryman, 2006, 2016). This method is particularly useful in accessing a specialized population that is knowledgeable about the nuances of forest policy and its impacts.

The selection criteria ensured diversity in terms of geographical location, size of forest ownership, and engagement levels with forest management practices, enriching the study with a range of perspectives on the varied impacts of policies. Such diversity is crucial for understanding the complex ways in which policies affect different stakeholders in the forest management sector (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

The interview guide was meticulously developed based on key themes derived from the literature, tailored to elicit detailed responses about how policies influence management practices and personal experiences. Questions were designed to probe into the effectiveness of policy measures, the challenges faced by forest owners, and the strategies they employ to navigate these challenges (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

This approach ensures that the data collected are directly relevant to the research questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Snowball sampling was particularly

effective in this study as it facilitated access to a specialized group of participants who could provide informed, expert opinions on the subject matter.

By reaching saturation with six interviews, the study achieved a depth of understanding and insight into the topic, which is a key goal in phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Saturation was deemed to have been reached when no new information was observed in the data, suggesting that the collected data were sufficient to understand the themes fully (Saunders et al., 2019).

To ensure ethical integrity, this study adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the designated supervisor. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, their rights, and the confidentiality measures in place. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were aware of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Data anonymization was achieved by assigning codes to participants instead of using their real names, and any identifying information was removed from the transcripts. This process ensures that participants' identities remain confidential, and their privacy is protected throughout the study (World Medical Association, 2013).

3.3 Data Management and Analysis

Once the data has been collected, interviews are transcribed word for word to ensure precise qualitative analysis that upholds the fullness of what participants say. Phenomenological analysis is a process with several stages including reduction where unnecessary data is filtered out and then followed by singling out important statements which are related to the objectives of this study.

This involves giving close attention to coding at a low level before looking across all these codes seeking patterns in them as suggested by Smith's (2009) method of interpretative phenomenological analysis that asks for connections between reflections generated during an analysis and wider theories or concepts about things. These utterances are then clustered together into larger chunks of knowledge or themes representing main shared experiences among forest owners concerning forest policies according to Creswell (2012).

The qualitative data were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The coding process began with an initial reading of the transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the data. Next, detailed coding was conducted, focusing on identifying statements that reflect the participants' experiences related to forest policies.

These statements were then categorized based on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and power relations. Habitus was identified through references to ingrained practices and perceptions, the field was identified through discussions about the structured social space of forestry management, and power relations were examined through statements about interactions with policy and regulatory bodies. This thematic analysis allowed for the extraction of patterns and the development of a comprehensive understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Themes for the analysis were defined based on Bourdieu's theoretical concepts and the research questions. Initial themes included economic impact, sustainability practices, and policy compliance. As the analysis progressed, additional themes emerged, such as power dynamics and social networks, reflecting the complex interplay of habitus, field, and power relations. These themes were refined through iterative coding and comparison with the theoretical framework, ensuring they accurately represented the participants' experiences and provided insights into the influence of forest policies on management practices.

Every theme is investigated to bring out its hidden meaning which calls for interpreting what people have gone through in relation with policy making systems around them. Prior to that also, each theme is looked at closely in terms of how much it contributes towards meeting the objectives for this research by following Giorgi's (2000) step whereby one identifies structure involved using narratives provided by participants themselves while reflecting upon their lived experience within such contexts.

3.4 Reflections and Limitations

Reflective practices are crucial in phenomenological research to address the researcher's biases and assumptions that might affect the study (Finlay, 2002). The research acknowledges the subjective nature of interpretive research, which, while providing depth, limits generalizability (Lincoln et al., 1985). This study acknowledges the inherent subjectivity of the interpretivist approach, which could influence the findings.

However, this subjectivity is also a strength, as it allows for a deeper immersion into the personal experiences of the forest owners. Potential biases are mitigated through reflexive practices where the researcher continuously examines their assumptions and preconceptions. The study's findings are not universally generalizable but provide in-depth insights into the experiences of a specific group of people under specific conditions, which can inform policy adjustments and implementations in similar contexts.

Several potential biases were acknowledged in this study. First, there is the possibility of selection bias due to the snowball sampling method, which might have led to a homogenous group of participants. To mitigate this, efforts were made to ensure diversity in the sample by including forest owners from various regions and backgrounds.

Additionally, interviewer bias was addressed through reflexive practices, where the researcher continuously examined their own preconceptions and how these might affect data interpretation. Difficulties included accessing a diverse range of participants and the potential reluctance of some individuals to discuss their experiences candidly due to the sensitive nature of policy impacts on livelihoods. These challenges were addressed by building rapport with participants and ensuring a safe, confidential environment for the interviews (Finlay, 2002).

By following this methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and empathetic understanding of how forest policies are experienced at the ground level, contributing valuable insights into policy formulation and adjustment processes that could enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of forest management in Sweden and similar contexts globally.

4.0 THEMATIC BACKGROUND

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the critical themes underpinning this study, focusing on the influence of Swedish and EU Forest Policies on small-scale forest owners. It is important to understand these policies to comprehend the various issues associated with forest management including socioeconomic impacts, policy dynamics and the pursuit for ecological sustainability within Sweden's distinct forest landscape. The latter are fundamental to unraveling the intricate relationship between forest management practices and policy frameworks, highlighting their impact on Sweden's sociopolitical economy while at the same time revealing how this element has affected their environmental strategies.

This chapter will probe into how this changing legislative shape operational landscape for small scale owners, defining both its difficulties and chances for sustainable handling of forests as well as for conservation efforts too. Moreover, it will demonstrate that such a historical development is consistent with global environmental challenges over time and Sweden's own forestry sector needs specifically.

4.1 Historical framework of forest ownership in Sweden

The forests in Sweden exhibit a diversified ownership environment, with multiple entities possessing rights over the forested land. Small-scale forest ownership has a considerable impact, making a substantial contribution to the overall management and care of forests throughout the country. Private individuals, family estates, and cooperatives are the main stakeholders in forest ownership. Each of them has different ownership structures and management practices (Joa and Schraml, 2019).

Traditionally, forest ownership in Sweden has been influenced by a blend of cultural customs, land utilization methods, and legal structures. Private forest ownership has a long history, tracing back to many centuries ago. Over the decades, Swedish forestry laws have undergone significant transformations, shaping the current practices of sustainable forest management. Lindahl et al. (2017) describe the evolution of the 'Swedish forestry model,' which was significantly influenced by the 1993 revision of the Swedish Forestry Act.

This model aimed to integrate economic productivity with environmental sustainability, although it often prioritized economic aspects, indicating a need for ongoing policy refinement to better balance these goals. Similarly, Siiskonen (2013) provides a historical overview of the

forestry debates in Sweden and Finland, showing how shifts from purely economic to more environmentally sustainable practices were influenced by changes in forestry laws and societal values. These historical insights underline the importance of legislative evolution in shaping the sustainable management of forests in Sweden. In the past, landowners often oversaw the management of forests for the purpose of meeting their basic needs, producing lumber, and supporting their livelihoods.

In Sweden, the historical context of forest ownership may be traced back to the medieval period, during which forests were regarded as communal property. During this period, local communities collaboratively utilized and regulated forest resources. Over time, the idea of private ownership developed, leading to the eventual division of forests into separate parcels (Adzah, 2024).

Sweden also has cooperative organizations that possess and oversee woods, contributing to the diversity of ownership forms. These cooperatives, referred to as ‘skogsägarföreningar’, are established by forest owners who collaborate to cooperatively oversee and promote the sale of their forest products.

They have a crucial function in facilitating small-scale forest ownership and providing opportunities to access professional knowledge, equipment, and markets for forest commodities. Over time, the aggregation of small-scale forest holdings has taken place through mechanisms such as inheritance, land consolidation, and land transfers, resulting in a diverse range of ownership patterns across the landscape (Weiss et al., 2019).

To comprehend the allocation of forest ownership in Sweden, it is crucial to grasp the historical and legal frameworks that regulate forest ownership and management rights (Keskitalo, 2019). In Sweden, forest ownership has traditionally been based on the notion of “*allemansrätt*”, which translates to “the right of every person”. This principle ensures that individuals have the entitlement to access and experience nature, such as forests, irrespective of who owns the land.

This principle also acknowledges the obligation of forest proprietors to engage in sustainable land management and guarantees public accessibility for recreational activities. In Sweden, the legal regulations regarding forest ownership are principally established by the Forestry Act and the Environmental Code.

The Forestry Act, initially implemented in 1903 and subsequently modified on many occasions, establishes the guidelines for the administration of forests, encompassing stipulations for the extraction of timber, the restoration of forests, and the preservation of natural habitats. In addition, the Environmental Code, which was established in 1999, outlines legislation pertaining to the protection and preservation of the environment with regards to the management of forests. In Sweden, the Forestry Act and the Environmental Code establish regulations for the utilization and control of forest ownership, outlining specific standards for land use and management rights.

The legal framework regulating forest ownership and management rights in Sweden is based on legislation such as the Forestry Act (Skogsvårdslagen) and the Environmental Code (Miljöbalken). The rules delineate the entitlements and obligations of individuals who own forests with regards to the sustainable management of forests, the preservation of biodiversity, and the safeguarding of the environment (Hasselgren & Eriksson, 2018). Furthermore, forest management techniques and land-use decisions inside wooded areas are influenced by rules pertaining to land use planning, zoning, and environmental permits (Ingemarsson et al., 2006).

In Sweden, inheritance rules have a direct influence on the ownership and management rights of forests. These laws also have a substantial impact on the overall structure of forest ownership in the country (Keskitalo, 2019). In accordance with Swedish inheritance legislation, forest holdings are commonly transmitted from one generation to another within families. These rules guarantee that forest ownership remains within the family and establish a degree of stability and continuity in forest management methods.

The prevalence of small-scale forest ownership in Sweden is a prominent characteristic of the distribution of forest ownership in the country. The study conducted on small-scale private forest owners in Sweden found that most owners prioritize the preservation and development of their properties. This is due to a principle of hereditary succession that governs the transfer of forest assets from one generation to the next. Specific rules and regulations dictate the division of estates and inheritance rights (Johansson, 2014).

Moreover, legal frameworks provide the boundaries and regulations for property rights related to forestland, encompassing access rights, easements, and user rights. These frameworks serve as the basis for the distribution and administration of forest resources (Eriksson, 2018).

To summarize, the distribution of forest ownership in Sweden is influenced by an intricate combination of historical, cultural, and legal variables. To fully grasp the dynamics of forest management and governance in Sweden, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the extent to which small-scale forest ownership is common and the various ownership arrangements that exist. Through an analysis of the historical and legal frameworks that dictate forest ownership and management rights, we may obtain valuable knowledge about the institutional structures and regulatory environment that influence forest management practices and land-use choices in Swedish forests.

4.2 The influence of policies on small-scale forest owners in Sweden

The influence of Swedish and EU policies on small-scale forest owners is a subject of considerable significance and relevance in forestry management. The Swedish forestry approach places a strong emphasis on voluntary participation and cooperation between forest owners, industry stakeholders, and the government. The aim is to achieve a balance between timber production and environmental conservation objectives (Lidestav & Westin, 2023).

Recent discussions around the European Green Deal have raised questions about the alignment of EU forest policy with broader environmental and climate objectives. Aggestam and Giurca (2021) argue that while the Green Deal provides a strategic direction, its implementation in forest policy requires greater emphasis on the multifunctional role of forests, encompassing not only carbon sequestration but also biodiversity conservation and socio-economic benefits. Similarly, Alexandrov and Iliev (2021) highlight the Green Deal's ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse emissions, which necessitate transformative changes in forestry practices across Europe.

These changes aim to enhance biodiversity and promote sustainable use of forest resources, aligning closely with the objectives of Sweden's forestry policy. The management of these small-scale woods is of utmost importance in Sweden's forestry sector, as it significantly contributes to the country's economy, cultural heritage, and ecological sustainability. Nevertheless, the actions and choices made by small-scale forest owners are progressively impacted by an intricate network of rules and regulations, both at the domestic level, governed

by Swedish Forest Policies, and the international level, formed by European Union (EU) Forest Policies.

Europe has over 42% of its total land area covered by forests (Stockmann et. al., 2024; Eurostat, 2018) and over 3 million employments from the forest-based industries (Forest Europe, 2015) proving the socio-economic value of the forest (Stockmann et. al., 2024). It is estimated that over 60% of European forests are privately owned with small-holder private individuals constituting the majority holders (Weiss et al. 2019; Schmithüsen and Hirsch, 2010).

Generally, the number of private forest holdings and the area of private forests increased significantly from 1990 (Forest Europe, 2015; Živojinović et al., 2015). In most of the European countries small-scale forest ownership has been historically associated with small-scale farming (Hogl et al., 2005).

It is important to guide the different interests and conflicting demands involving forest, forest management and forest policies across governments, institutions, organizations, or individuals. The new EU forest strategy (European Commission 2020) sets the guidelines for forestry within the union. However, each member state is responsible for its own forest policy. The strategy thus takes its source from the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (European Commission 2020) that highlights the crucial role of forest for viable societies in the future, as a means of combating climate change and toward the achievement of a climate-neutral EU by 2050 (Lidestav and Westin, 2023).

Policy expectations on forest ownership and management are changing (Lawrence et al., 2020) with significant management practices and goals existing between countries (Feliciano et al., 2017). The decisions as to what management approach adopted are known to be driven by the interaction between individual factors such as passive, conservation, intensive, save and productivity (Eggers et. al., 2014) and structural drivers, such as the market, social norms and policies (Deuffic et al., 2018).

The Swedish forestry policy principles are reliant on voluntarism¹ and a mutual interest among forest owners, the industry, and the state that timber production continuously be kept at a high

¹ In Swedish forest policy, the phrase “reliant on voluntarism” explains that the policy is based on voluntary cooperation and common interest among different actors; these may include forest owners, timber companies and the government itself. It means that instead of using strict rules or orders to ensure its implementation, this approach allows for flexibility by motivating stakeholders to contribute towards sustainable forest

level at the same time as environmental goals are achieved (Lidestav and Westin, 2023). According to the Swedish Forest Industries (2022), 47% of production forestland is privately owned by small-scale forest owners distributed across 221,852 management units covering about 11.5 million hectares of productive forestland.

Significantly, this plays a key role in national policy interest, management practices and forest conditions. The 2020 Report of forest statistics (SLU, 2021), reports that Sweden's forests have a growing stock of 155 cubic meters per hectare, with an average productivity of 6.3 cubic meters per hectare per year. This shows a growing stock of 10% higher and 15% site productivity higher than the average for all forest ownership categories in Sweden. Interestingly, about 60% of the harvested volume originates from small-scale forestland (SLU, 2021).

Forest management, which involves planning interventions to meet specific environmental, economic, social, and cultural objectives, is being challenged by the behavior of private forest owners (Huff, 2017). Meanwhile, societal expectations for forests and their owners to provide services beyond wood, such as recreation, tourism, health and wellbeing, and carbon sequestration, have increased. These expectations arise from various stakeholders – including local communities, environmental NGOs, tourists, and government agencies – each prioritizing different forest values and services (Ficko et al., 2019; Price et al., 2002).

Due to their low level of involvement in silvicultural activities (such as soil scarification, seeding or planting for regeneration, fertilization, and herbicide application), forest owners have often been described as "passive" by policymakers and forest scientists, according to Ficko et al. (2019). The Swedish Forest Policies have undergone a gradual transformation, aiming to balance the various objectives of stakeholders, including economic advancement, environmental preservation, and social factors (Karlsson & Gilek, 2019).

These policies cover several areas of forest management, such as restrictions on cutting down trees, initiatives to protect biodiversity, and frameworks for land use management. Sweden, as a member of the European Union, is obligated to adhere to EU Forest Policies. These policies

management which also seeks to achieve ecological objectives. Such a strategy depends entirely upon parties' readiness to participate in proactive partnerships.

have the objective of advancing sustainable forest management, conserving biodiversity, and mitigating climate change in all member states.

The interaction of Swedish and EU forest policies generates a dynamic regulatory framework that directly affects forest owners operating on a small scale. Although these rules have the goal of achieving broad objectives like sustainability and conservation, they can also present difficulties and possibilities for small-scale forest owners. The main problems encountered by small-scale forest owners in navigating this policy landscape include adhering to legal requirements, gaining financial incentives, and adjusting management techniques to align with policy objectives (Blomquist and Schlager, 2005).

4.3 Policy frameworks and regulatory context of Swedish and EU forest policy

The development of Swedish Forest Policies and EU Forest Policies demonstrates an increasing acknowledgment of the diverse functions that forests serve in promoting societal and environmental sustainability. The Swedish Forest policy has traditionally focused on the Forestry Act, which has developed to achieve a balance between production and environmental objectives. This demonstrates the country's dedication to the sustainable management of forests.

The integration of diverse policy goals such as biodiversity conservation, bioenergy production, and climate mitigation present significant challenges for EU forest policy. Recent studies have highlighted the need for a nuanced understanding of how Swedish forest policies have adapted to integrate diverse objectives. Sotirov and Storch (2018) analyze the shift in domestic forest policies in response to pressures to integrate biodiversity conservation with bioenergy use and climate protection.

They find that the pressures to integrate these diverse environmental objectives have led to varied policy changes, reflecting the complex interplay between national interests and EU-wide sustainability goals. This analysis reveals a dynamic policy landscape where shifts toward multifunctional, sustainable forest management occasionally revert to prioritizing timber harvesting. Additionally, Angelstam et al. (2011) critically assess the effectiveness of protected areas established under these policies, noting that the current extent and connectivity of

protected forests fall short of achieving the long-term biodiversity conservation goals set by Swedish and EU policies.

These insights suggest that while policies are well-intentioned, the practical implementation and outcomes on the ground often require further enhancement to meet the stated environmental objectives effectively.

Throughout the centuries, shifts in ownership, such as the emergence of "new forest owners," have impacted the perception and implementation of these regulations in Sweden (Keskitalo, 2019). The EU Forest Policy, although not a widely addressed policy issue due to subsidiarity principles (which means that member states have primary control over forest policies), has developed via the implementation of environmental and rural development policies, along with important directives and plans.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy and the EU's Renewable Energy Directive have a substantial influence on forest management in member states. Their objectives include the preservation of biodiversity and the promotion of renewable energy generation through forestry activities.

The EU's Habitats Directive and Birds Directive establish crucial foundations for safeguarding forest biodiversity by providing regulatory frameworks. In addition, the European Union (EU) has played an active role in advocating for sustainable forest management. It has supported the Forest Europe initiative and has developed the EU Forest Strategy, which serves as a comprehensive framework for the conservation, restoration, utilization, and monitoring of forests across Europe.

The formation of Swedish and EU policies has been influenced by international conventions and agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and most recently, the Paris Agreement. The management of forests for carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation has been shaped by these international agreements (Agrawal et al., 2011).

Furthermore, governments are now acknowledging the connection between rural development and forest management, considering the significance of small-scale forest ownership patterns and the potential for biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation and mitigation. The integration of circular economy and bioeconomy strategies has influenced both Swedish and

EU policies, leading to the development of regulations and rules that control the exploitation of agricultural waste and residue (Duque-Acevedo et al., 2020).

Within the realm of climate change mitigation, policy instruments are undergoing changes. These changes include the implementation of measures such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). These measures emphasize the significance of flexible policymaking and global cooperation (Agrawal et al., 2011). Within EU rules, the pulp and paper sector is expected to focus on energy efficiency and sustainable resource use. This involves adhering to strict laws to limit emissions, as stated by Szabó et al. (2009).

The Swedish and EU forest policy frameworks have a dynamic and adaptable nature, reflecting changing environmental, economic, and social goals. They prioritize the prevention of habitat degradation.

4.4 Environmental considerations and biodiversity conservation

4.4.1 Ecological Importance of Swedish Forest

The Swedish forests play a crucial role in the environment by providing important ecosystem services, including the storage of carbon, management of water, and supply of habitats for a wide range of animals. These services are not only vital for the well-being of the environment but also possess significant economic worth (Myers, 1996).

Forests function as carbon sinks, which means they help reduce climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (Lindner et al., 2014). Additionally, Swedish woods play a crucial role in water regulation by controlling hydrological cycles, purifying pollutants, and preserving the quality of water in rivers and lakes (Lagergren et al., 2006).

4.4.2 Ecological Impacts of Forest Management Practices

Forest management strategies, such as clear-cutting, selective harvesting, and afforestation, can have substantial ecological implications. Clear-cutting is a forestry practice that involves completely removing all the trees in an area. This leads to negative effects such as habitat fragmentation, soil erosion, and a decrease in biodiversity (Valkonen et al., 2017). Uncontrolled clear-cutting can result in the destruction of habitats, the reduction of biodiversity, and the

erosion of soil. Selective harvesting, in contrast, enables the precise extraction of tree species or age groups, reducing ecological disruption and safeguarding the functions of the ecosystem (Gundersen et al., 2006).

When conducted in a sustainable manner, selective harvesting can effectively alleviate these impacts by minimizing disturbances and preserving habitat structures. Afforestation, the act of planting new forests on land that is currently not covered by trees, can restore ecosystem services. However, the specific species chosen for planting and the management strategies employed might have an impact on the result (Myers, 1996).

4.4.3 Role of Forest Policies in Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience

The Swedish and EU Forest Policies prioritize the preservation of biodiversity and the promotion of ecosystem resilience. The Swedish Forestry Act seeks to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between output and environmental sustainability. The Biodiversity Strategy and Habitats Directive are important guidelines at the EU level that help member states improve the conservation of forest biodiversity. The EU Habitats Directive and the Swedish Environmental Code impose regulations on the protection of habitats, conservation of species, and restoration of ecosystems.

These regulations are designed to conserve areas with high biodiversity and endangered species (Elbakidze et al., 2010). Forest certification schemes supported by Swedish Forest Policies, such as FSC and PEFC, establish guidelines for sustainable forest management practices. These guidelines include measures to conserve biodiversity, promote landscape connectivity, and restore ecosystems. The policies acknowledge that forests serve as habitats for numerous species and are vital resources for addressing climate change and safeguarding watershed areas (Sayer et al., 2004, Angelstam et al., 2011).

To enhance the preservation of biodiversity, management strategies are being modified to ensure the maintenance of both economic value and ecological services. This involves allocating specific regions with significant ecological importance, rehabilitating land that has been damaged, and adopting sustainable forestry techniques that prioritize the preservation of the forest canopy and reduce soil disruption (Sayer et al., 2004).

To summarize, the significance of Swedish forests in terms of their impact on the environment highlights the necessity for strong policies and management approaches that prioritize the preservation of biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems.

Through the assessment of the effects of forest management techniques and the analysis of the influence of Swedish and EU Forest Policies in advancing sustainable forest management, we may strive to protect the ecological soundness and enduring viability of Swedish forests. Furthermore, the preservation of the resilience and well-being of forest ecosystems necessitates the implementation of policies that incorporate sustainability, conservation, and practical management strategies to safeguard their many functions within the environment and society.

4.5 Governance structure and stakeholder engagement

The management of forests in Sweden is governed through a complex set of institutional arrangements and governance procedures that engage multiple stakeholders and players. This section examines the institutional framework that governs forest management in Sweden, focusing on the functions of governmental agencies, forest owner groups, indigenous populations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Moreover, it assesses the level of involvement of stakeholders, cooperation, and settlement of conflicts in the management of forests, considering the distribution of power, decision-making methods, and systems for ensuring responsibility and openness.

4.5.1 Institutional Frameworks

Swedish forest management is governed by a complex institutional framework involving actors from both the non-state and state sectors. National level government agencies like the Swedish Forest Agency (Skogsstyrelsen) and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket) are essential in this system; they develop forest policies, give licenses, and ensure adherence to environmental regulations (Keskitalo, 2013). Moreover, these organizations not only regulate but also advocate for sustainability and educate people about it.

For instance, the Swedish Forest Agency works with forest owner associations in promoting best practices through knowledge sharing among other ways since forestry is not just an economic activity but also cultural and environmental in Sweden (Bjärstig & Kvastegård,

2016). Forest owner associations, such as the Federation of Swedish Family Forest Owners (Föreningen Skogen), play a pivotal role in representing the interests of forest owners. They provide support in areas such as forest management, certification, and market entry, which are crucial for maintaining the competitiveness and sustainability of forests under private ownership (Ingemarson et al., 2006).

These associations also serve as a critical link between individual forest owners and government agencies, ensuring that the voices of forest owners are heard in policy-making processes. These associations contribute to the governance structure by advocating for policy changes that benefit small-scale owners and by participating in public debates on forestry issues. This engagement helps to balance power dynamics between large industrial players and smaller entities, ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources and influence within the forestry sector.

In enhancing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of forest governance, Sweden has also implemented multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together various interests, including non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector. These platforms are designed to facilitate dialogue and build consensus on key forestry issues, thereby improving policy coherence and implementation (Eriksson, 2018).

Overall, the institutional arrangements in Swedish forest management exemplify a well-integrated approach that includes diverse stakeholders. This comprehensive governance structure not only supports sustainable forest management but also adapts to evolving environmental, social, and economic challenges.

4.5.2 Forest Owners Association

The participation of individuals within the local community and the acknowledgment of personal connections can have a substantial impact on the levels of trust and decision-making in local forestry situations, as trust towards various key individuals or groups may fluctuate. Such dynamics are highlighted by Guillén et al. (2015) who noted the variability of trust in different stakeholders within Swedish forestry, affecting social relationships and management outcomes (Guillén et al., 2015).

Enhancing the authority and influence of local stakeholders, such as giving individual forest owners greater responsibility in managing forests, can lead to improved forest governance and

sustainable results. This approach aligns with global observations where increased local stakeholder empowerment correlates with enhanced sustainability in forest management (Bayara, 2023). Moreover, the role of forest owners' associations in Sweden has been pivotal in adapting their strategies to meet the changing needs of forest management, increasingly focusing on sustainability.

Associations like the Federation of Swedish Family Forest Owners are crucial in supporting forest owners through management support activities and educational programs to adapt to modern forestry practices and sustainability standards (Kronholm, 2016).

The associations also play a significant role in advocating for forest owners' rights and influencing policy through their active participation in policy debates and formulation. This involvement ensures that the interests of forest owners are well-represented in national forestry policies, thereby fostering an environment conducive to sustainable forestry practices and the promotion of environmental stewardship (Bjärstig & Kvastegård, 2016).

In summary, forest owners' associations in Sweden play a critical role in enhancing forest governance through advocacy, education, and direct engagement with forest management practices. Their efforts contribute significantly to the sustainability and adaptability of forest management practices in Sweden, aligning with both national economic goals and global sustainability standards.

4.5.3 Non-governmental Organizations

Swedish forestry relies heavily on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to attest for environmental conservation and promote sustainable management, among others. They participate in different activities such as suggesting new policies and participating directly in forest management as well as certification processes. Several studies conducted recently have shown how multifaceted their involvement can be when it comes to shaping the policy on forests:

Policy Advocacy and Development: Policy Advocacy and Development: According to Bjärstig and Kvastegård (2016), these groups have played significant roles towards advocating for an EU forest policy. They employ diverse tactics including working via cross-border networks or associations to ensure that policies are integrated with one another besides

promoting coordination; this they do by underlining benefits associated with such moves vis-à-vis their own interests.

Forest Certification: In most cases, NGOs in Sweden take part actively during formulation stages of various forest certifications programs while insisting on performance criteria which reflect sustainable practices in management. Apart from just advocating, it is also common for them to influence content of those standards alongside other things like putting into effect (Elliott & Schlaepfer, 2001).

Local Engagement and Legitimacy Challenges: Johansson (2014) explains that at local levels some non-governmental organizations challenge legitimacy around decisions made by certification systems within forests, not only because they feel left out, but also due to power imbalances; thus, calling for inclusion into long-term governance planning for effective natural resource management.

4.5.4 Indigenous Community

In relation to indigenous populations, it is noted that Sweden possesses a relatively substantial indigenous population, particularly when compared to most other Western European countries (Jernsletten & Beach, 2006). The Sami Parliament, known as Sametinget, functions as the governing body that represents the interests of the Sami people in the management of forests. Its primary role is to advocate for the acknowledgment of traditional land utilization techniques and the right to be consulted in the decision-making process. However, the Sami people are officially acknowledged as an indigenous group inside Sweden, and they are granted unique rights pertaining to the practice of reindeer herding, which, in certain instances, encompasses forested regions (Hofverberg, 2022).

4.5.5 Stakeholder Participation, Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

Stakeholder participation is an essential element of Swedish forest governance, where cooperation among different players is promoted to guarantee the representation of diverse interests and values. Nevertheless, these cooperative alliances can also be susceptible to power disparities, which can impact the processes of making decisions and the level of authority that various groups of stakeholders can wield. The issue of conflict resolution in Swedish forest governance is tackled by establishing platforms that facilitate communication and discourse

among parties. Diverse procedures, such as consultative processes, roundtable talks, and participatory planning, are utilized to establish agreement and handle divergences.

The Swedish government ensures transparency and accountability by enforcing laws and regulations that require unrestricted access to information related to forest management. This guarantees that individuals or groups with an interest in the matter can demand that those in power and other involved parties are responsible for their actions and choices related to the management of forests.

In general, Swedish forest governance has a strong and well-organized system that involves various stakeholders. However, there is a need for ongoing efforts to address power imbalances and promote inclusive decision-making to enhance sustainability and conservation outcomes in the sector (Guillén et al., 2015).

5.0 Empirical Findings: Interviews with small-scale forest owners

This part of the study presents the findings obtained from interviews with Swedish small-scale forest owners. It emphasizes their experiences and views shaped by interaction between national forestry policies and those of the European Union. The material is arranged in such a way that it distinguishes between direct observations made by interviewees themselves and interpretations put forward by the researcher, also, between participants' personal accounts and analytic perspective employed in this study.

Given that these forest owners operate within legal framework heavily affected by legislative actions, it is important to know their individual narratives to understand wider implications of forestry policies. The interviews have been categorized based on their responses, which are analyzed to elucidate common themes and divergent views within this group.

5.1 Definition and Identity of Small-Scale Forest Owners in Sweden

Habitus: Cultural and Familial Identity

In Sweden, the concept of small-scale forest owner implies many different opinions shaped by such factors as inheritance within families, size of landholdings or emotional attachment. Usually, such owners have close kinship with the areas they live on which they value not only as an economic resource but also a cultural heirloom integrated into their identity and history.

A lecturer and participant (just like all of them are within different environmental sciences field) in the study, defines a small-scale forest owner in a way that emphasizes the personal and familial aspects of ownership. He describes these owners as

"Private owners, you know. Often, they're families who've inherited the land. It's not just about profit or industrial use but more about preserving it... passing it on as a kind of...erm... inheritance" (Participant 1).

This definition highlights the non-commercial motivations that characterize many small-scale forest owners in Sweden, where the forest serves as a cultural and familial inheritance rather than merely a source of income.

In contrast, a professor in Geography, provides a more technical perspective based on land size, which varies significantly from other European definitions. She explains,

"Well, it's not really because in Europe in general there's sometimes some 5 hectares to small scale forest owner. We don't in Sweden. I think the average is 50 hectares in Sweden, but it differs between south and...and north" (participant 5).

The response of *Participant 5* highlights the variations within Sweden and questions the "maybe conventional" European standards by pointing out that small-scale forest holdings are bigger on average in Sweden than in most other EU countries. The reason for such a difference lies in various growth cycles as well as economic needs across different areas, particularly between those located in South and North region as she explains it:

"Traditional people needed larger holdings up north to make a living because of the snow growth circle, it takes 120 years to...to harvest a tree for a tree to grow so you can harvest it, so it was necessary to have bigger holdings up here. But around 200+ in [Lapland] is very common, little less by the coast I would say 100 hectares down in south of Sweden of I think" (participant 5).

Further enriching the understanding of small-scale forest ownership, another participant, connects the concept directly to family history and legacy. He articulates,

"Well, a small-scale forest owner here, it's often a family affair. We're not just managing forests; we're caring for a piece of our family's story. The land is not just about profit... it's about legacy. About 50% of us are like this in Sweden, holding onto our patches of green, large, and small" (participant 4).

His definition brings a poignant insight into the emotional and historical bonds that link owners to their forests. His mention of "caring for a piece of our family's story" resonates with a common theme across the narratives of these forest owners – that of deep-rooted connections and responsibilities that transcend mere economic considerations.

5.2 Perceptions of Policy Impact on Forest Management: Impact of EU and Swedish Forest Policies on Forest Management

Field: Navigating Policy Frameworks

The impact of European Union and Swedish forest policies on forest management practices among small-scale forest owners in Sweden reveals a complex interplay of adherence to regulatory frameworks, adaptation strategies, and personal attitudes towards sustainable forestry. Participants in this study shared detailed insights into how these policies have influenced their day-to-day management practices, often highlighting the shift towards more environmentally friendly methods like selective cutting, and the challenges and adaptations necessitated by these regulations.

One participant, reflecting on the direct implications of EU and Swedish forest policies, notes significant changes in forest management practices aimed at enhancing biodiversity and reducing environmental impact. He states;

"We are now trying out what the EU recommends, like selective cutting, which is better than the clear cutting we did before. It had too many negative aspects, you see. Personally, I've moved away from just growing pines. Now, I include spruces too, helps with the biodiversity" (participant 1).

This shift indicates a move away from more invasive forestry practices towards methods that are thought to be more in harmony with natural processes, suggesting a significant influence of policy on practical forest management.

Another interviewee also discusses the potential future impact of new EU policies on her management practices, especially concerning biodiversity conservation and the restrictions it might impose on timber harvesting. She expresses concern about how these policies could affect those who rely more heavily on forestry for their income, stating;

"It hasn't so far with me, but it has been discussed a lot among my...my friends up in the village where I come from. What's going to happen when a new habitat...when you can't harvest if you find certain birds nesting" (participant 5).

This highlights a prevalent uncertainty and mixed feelings among forest owners regarding new and upcoming policies, reflecting a broader concern about the balance between environmental conservation and economic viability.

Consequently, one participant provides a particularly detailed account of how policy-driven changes have required adjustments in forest management strategies, specifically through the introduction of endangered species protections. He explains;

"Endangered species protection has really changed the game. It influences how we harvest, making us think twice about where and how we cut. My daughter, she's getting involved, and we're shifting towards selective cutting to align with these conservation efforts" (participant 4).

His narrative underscores a generational shift towards more sustainable practices, influenced by both familial succession and regulatory requirements. Furthermore, a participant's husband elaborates on the adaptation strategies employed in response to policy changes, discussing the operational challenges they face:

"Directly? Well, they push us towards practices like selective cutting. I wasn't much into clear cutting before -it's harsh on the land, you know? But now, it's more about what the EU recommends. We're trying to increase biodiversity, not just sticking to pines but bringing in spruces too, trying to mix things up a bit" (participant 3).

His perspective reflects a pragmatic approach to adapting management practices in line with policy directives, albeit with some operational challenges due to the nature of selective cutting and its impact on the land.

These insights collectively reveal a nuanced picture of how EU and Swedish forest policies are reshaping forest management among small-scale owners. While the movement towards more sustainable and biodiversity-friendly practices is evident, it also comes with challenges. Forest owners are required to navigate a complex landscape of regulations that dictate not only the types of forestry practices permissible, but also engage with broader economic and ecological considerations.

This balancing act, while aimed at promoting sustainability, often requires significant adjustments from the forest owners, illustrating the direct and profound impact of policy on the everyday management of forests in Sweden.

5.3 Impact on Livelihoods: The Influence of EU and Swedish Forest Policies on Small-Scale Owners

Power Relations: Economic and Cultural Impact

The livelihoods of small-scale forest owners in Sweden are intricately tied to the land they manage, with forest policies from both the European Union and the Swedish government playing a significant role in shaping their economic and cultural realities. The participants in this study offered diverse perspectives on how these policies affect their lives, focusing on the economic implications, cultural significance, and personal strategies for adapting to policy-induced changes.

One participant touched on the economic aspect of forest ownership, noting that while his main income is not derived from forestry (like all the interviewees), the cultural and familial importance of maintaining his forest is paramount. He states;

"Economically...erm... uh...I'm ... I am not ... not too affected, thank goodness ...haha ... I am a professor at the University so... I have other income sources, so the forest is more about maintaining a legacy than anything else. It's... it's about continuing what's been trusted to us" (participant 1).

This statement highlights a common theme among the forest owners I have interviewed: the forest as a legacy and cultural asset rather than solely a source of income.

Another professor provides a detailed description of how forest ownership contributes to her livelihood. She explains that while the forest does provide some economic benefits, such as supplementary income from timber sales, it also offers social and recreational values, stating,

"It gives me an extra income though. I always replant everything if I harvest. And I can't do much up there with the house though, but I can do a few things with the money. One thing is I have told my two sons that they will inherit this one day... they can do whatever they want, they can sell the house, I don't care, but keep the forest because it's like a pension, it's there and it's always a guarantee. It's a security and I think they understand that" (participant 5).

She added again that;

"... uh, and it, with that holding comes a house. So, I have a second home with a barn. Where we spend a lot of good time. Um, so, um, it has more values. You could say that's an economic value too because I don't have to buy a second home I just got one, and I also use that place for, I do moose hunting, because I have the right

to moose hunt since I have 220 hectares, so I moose hunt... and then I get moose meat, and that's also economic value, although I don't hunt for the value, but I do get a darn good meat" (participant 5).

Her narrative underscores the multifaceted role forests play in the livelihoods of owners, encompassing financial, familial, and recreational dimensions. One other participant discusses how policy changes have necessitated shifts in forest management that directly affect his livelihood. He points out the adaptation to selective cutting as a response to policy changes, which although more costly, aligns better with new environmental standards. He says,

"We've innovated...you can say... experimenting with selective cutting, even though it's costlier. It's...uh...it's about finding a balance, using our understanding of the...the land to meet new ...uh... regulatory standards without compromising on uhm... environmental values" (participant 4).

This adaptation strategy reflects a proactive approach to managing both the forest and its economic yield under shifting policy landscapes.

Lastly, one professor discusses the impact of policies on her perspective of forest management as part of her livelihood. She emphasizes the importance of conservation efforts and the need to adapt practices to sustain both the forest and its cultural value. She states,

"Financially, I'm stable... I have other income. But this is about preserving a legacy, you know? It's not just business. It's about maintaining a way of life... one that respects our traditions and the environment" (participant 2).

Her comments highlight the deep connection between forest ownership and cultural identity, showing that for many owners, the forest is more than just an economic asset; it is part of their heritage and a key element of their lifestyle.

The impact of EU and Swedish forest policies on the livelihoods of small-scale forest owners is profound and multifaceted. While economic factors certainly play a role, the cultural and personal values associated with forest ownership are equally significant. Owners are navigating a complex terrain of maintaining economic viability while adhering to policies that encourage sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. This dynamic underscores the ongoing challenge of balancing economic interests with environmental and cultural sustainability in forest management.

5.4 Effects of Policies on Swedish Forests and Landscape

Field and Habitus: Environmental and Structural Changes

The implementation of European Union and Swedish forest policies has had a discernible impact on the Swedish forests and landscape. These policies, which aim to promote sustainable forest management and conservation, have influenced not only the ecological aspects of the forests, but also the visual and structural changes in the landscape. The participants in this study provided insights into these effects, emphasizing both positive and negative outcomes.

The first participant highlighted the shift from traditional clear-cutting practices to more selective cutting methods, driven by EU recommendations. This change aims at minimizing the negative ecological impacts associated with clear-cutting, such as loss of biodiversity and soil degradation.

He utters,

"Mostly, I used to do a lot of clear cutting, but now, it's more about selective cutting, getting closer to what nature intended, yeah, forest close to nature. It's better, I think" (participant 1).

His observation suggests an overall improvement in forest health and structure, aligning with the goals of environmental sustainability.

Another discussed the challenges and successes related to biodiversity conservation, particularly how these policies have led to a more varied forest composition. She points out the increase in species diversity, stating,

"Now I think people are also keeping birch trees and aspen, which was always clear cut, taken away before the forest agency told us to take... take it away. We just need pine trees and... and spruce up here. Take everything that have the leave on it off! Off! Off! But now they say keep it and people understand or like it. To have a mixed... mixed species in their holdings" (participant 5).

This shift not only enhances the ecological resilience of forests but also improves their aesthetic and recreational value. One other prominent participant offers a broader perspective on the landscape changes, emphasizing the gradual but significant shift towards more mixed and biodiverse forests. He mentions,

"The kind of symbiosis between the industry and the small forest owners, I mean the industry needs the wood supply, so they own a lot of forests themselves. I think the [SCA], they have over 2,000,000 hectares forest land. That's the biggest private owner in Sweden. And [Holmen], I think is the second one with a million hectares or something like that. But their own properties cannot produce enough wood to you, you know to put into their industry, so they need to buy it from someone else and usually they buy it from the private forest owners" (participant 6).

His insight underscores the economic and industrial factors that also influence forest management practices and landscape outcomes.

Lastly from the many similar responses, one participant reflects on the long-term effects of these policies on the landscape, particularly concerning sustainability measures and their efficacy. She argues,

"If we don't commit fully to sustainable practices, I worry the forests won't recover. We might end up losing more than just profits... we could lose the forests themselves" (participant 2).

Her concerns highlight the critical balance needed between environmental management practices and the traditional economic uses of forests.

The overall impact of EU and Swedish forest policies on the Swedish forests and landscape is profound. These policies have led to more sustainable management practices, increased biodiversity, and changes in the forest structure that aim to enhance both environmental health and aesthetic value.

However, the transition also presents challenges, particularly in balancing economic objectives with conservation goals. As these policies continue to evolve, their long-term effects on Sweden's forest landscapes will be crucial in shaping the country's ecological and economic future.

5.5 Coping Mechanisms and Responses to Policies

Power Relations: Adaptation Strategies

Small-scale forest owners in Sweden have developed various coping mechanisms and responses to adapt to the EU and Swedish forest policies. These strategies range from innovative forestry practices to engaging in policy discussions and applying for financial support. Each participant shared unique insights into how they handle the regulations affecting their forest management.

Some participants illustrate a proactive approach towards coping with the changes brought by forest policies, particularly in adapting forestry practices to align with new regulations as one words out,

"Coping mechanisms...coping mechanisms... Well, we sometimes apply for state or EU grants to help with the management. And after clear cutting, I've started growing oaks to preserve the land, which isn't really a common practice, but it helps, you know?" (participant 1).

His method involves both seeking financial aid and experimenting with biodiversity-friendly practices. Another also mentions the use of grants and a shift in forestry techniques as a coping mechanism:

"Many of us apply for state or EU grants to help manage the costs. Innovatively, some have started planting oaks after clear cuts to help restore the land. It's not traditional, but it's becoming more common" (participant 2).

Like the former participant, she points out that adapting forest management practices to policy requirements is a necessary strategy for compliance and sustainability.

One professor of geography provides a critical view of forest owner associations, highlighting a potential conflict of interest due to their connections with industrial operations:

"I think that members of a forest owner association also own sawmills and pulp industry. So, they are very industrialized. So, they say that they will listen to the forest owner and that they pay more attention to social and ecological values. And when they give advice to forest owners, they not only tell them to cut and harvest, but also ask them what your long term are.

What's your ambition? What's your strategy? Do you want to have the forest for recreation or is it for biodiversity? So, they say that they listen to the forest owners, but, and this is just my idea, my very private opinion that they are industries.

They have sawmills and pulp mills, so they won't entirely help" (participant 5).

She expresses her distrust in these organizations, suspecting that their industrial ties may compromise their commitment to truly supporting the ecological and social values important to forest owners. This skepticism influences her decision not to join any associations, as she doubts their agenda aligns with her environmental values:

“When they have sawmills and pulp industries, I know what their agenda is”.

These coping mechanisms demonstrate how small-scale forest owners are not just passive recipients of policy impacts but active participants in shaping their responses to these challenges. By applying for grants, engaging in community and association activities, and innovating their management practices, they are seeking to maintain their livelihoods and the ecological health of their forests in the face of regulatory changes.

The varied strategies highlight a resilience and adaptability among forest owners, who are keenly aware of the need to balance their economic needs with environmental responsibilities.

5.6 Economic Impact: Balancing Regulation and Livelihood in Small-Scale Forestry

Economic Capital and Regulatory Impact

The economic impacts of EU and Swedish forest policies on small-scale forest owners reveal a complex interplay of conservation needs and livelihood sustainability. Owners express diverse views on how these policies shape their economic reality, reflecting both challenges and strategic adaptations.

One participant and her husband both discuss the direct economic impacts tied to policy-induced restrictions. She highlights the operational difficulties caused by selective cutting:

"I tried selective cutting, as in picking 25% of the trees to harvest but the machinery used caused a lot of damages, they create holes on the lands" (participant 2).

She further elaborates on the financial repercussions when parts of their forest are designated as 'endangered species areas', leading to prolonged and often insufficient compensation for restricted areas:

"Mostly people do not get enough compensation for the trees when some parts of their forest are being branded 'endangered species area', some of the cases even prolong to a long time causing them to lose a lot of avenues invested into the area" (participant 2).

Her husband articulates a coping strategy utilized by owners during the winter months to circumvent policy restrictions, thus maintaining their ability to harvest without legal entanglements:

"...Policies on endangered species conservation, it makes it difficult to harvest so people wait for winter season to harvest because the snow mostly prevent the exposure of extinct species as in covering it from being exposed" (participant 3).

Another adds to this discourse by noting the seasonal harvesting patterns that have emerged as a response to policy enforcement, which inadvertently encourage forest owners to time their activities to avoid detection of endangered species:

"People tend to harvest most of their timbers during winter because it prevents the officials from citing endangered species which prevents them from harvesting" (participant 4).

These insights collectively paint a picture of small-scale forest owners navigating a terrain marked by regulatory pressures that not only affect their economic stability but also challenge their cultural practices and social relations within the forest community. The economic implications are closely tied to operational restrictions, leading to significant adaptations in harvesting practices. These adaptations, while necessary, bring forth debates on the viability and fairness of current forest policies, particularly in terms of compensation and operational freedom for local owners.

5.7 Challenges and Concerns

Challenges in the Field

The challenges and concerns faced by small-scale forest owners in Sweden under EU and Swedish forest policies are multifaceted, touching on economic, regulatory, and operational difficulties. These challenges shape the everyday lives of forest owners, affecting their management practices, economic stability, and engagement with conservation efforts.

One participant highlights a prevalent concern among forest owners regarding the new EU laws, particularly around habitat protection that prevents harvesting in areas with nesting endangered species. She articulates the uncertainty and anxiety that pervades the community:

"It hasn't so far with me, but it has been discussed a lot among my friends up in the village where I come from. What's going to happen when a new habitat...when you can't harvest if you find certain birds nesting" (participant 5).

This policy, while environmentally motivated, stirs significant unrest among owners who fear substantial impacts on their livelihoods if they are unable to harvest. Further elaborating on the communal concerns, she describes the sentiments of forest owners who feel overly regulated by EU directives:

"I don't know. I haven't seen any results of that yet. Among the private forest owners that I talked to, they have harvested recently... a few of them, but very small plots, but the discussion is more like, 'no one should come and tell me what to do. Don't come here from EU and tell me what to do... I know how to handle my forest, we've been doing this for five generations, we know how to do it!'" (participant 5).

Another discusses the practical and financial implications of selective cutting, a method encouraged by policy makers to reduce environmental impact. However, this method introduces significant operational hurdles due to the high costs and technical challenges associated with less invasive machinery:

"Well, when we do cutting, the trees are in old age so it's kind of clear cutting, OK? but the commercial thinning I talked about that's kind of when the trees are younger, smaller. Have smaller machines going into the parcel and you know removing some of the trees. I mean, that's kind of close to the... what do you call it? The selective cutting" (participant 6).

He further addresses the economic tension between maintaining environmental integrity and fulfilling the economic needs of the forest industry, which is a significant contributor to Sweden's economy:

"So maybe people in the future will just say that, OK, I'd rather you know, have my trees and I don't need that money, and that could be a problem for the industry, for the forest industry, because they need this this input".

These challenges, coupled with the distrust in regulatory bodies expressed by participant 5, who recalls past misguidances regarding forest management, paint a picture of a sector at a crossroads. She vividly encapsulates this sentiment:

"No, we don't see the long term yet. So, we don't know. But then, sometimes I think we don't trust the...the politicians or no, not the politicians, but the forest Agency and so forth. Because in the 60s and 70s they told forest owners to plant [contorta] pine that it's fast growing. And now that... it was shown... it was not very smart, it's invasive species. So, you don't do [contorta] anymore, so suddenly, we forest owners did what [they] were told to do and now they told us ohh that was so bad... and then in some places, they were supposed to go into energy wood that could be for biofuel, and then suddenly, no no... you're not supposed to do that because it's an invasive species. So, they did what they were told to do, and then they were slapped on their hand because they did what they had been told to do. And that was wrong. So, I think there might be some distrust when it comes from, especially the forest agency. You told us before what to do... and then you say it was wrong. So why should I trust you this time? Yeah" (participant 5).

Forest owners are caught between adherence to progressive environmental policies and the preservation of their economic and cultural heritage, leading to a landscape riddled with contention and a quest for viable pathways forward.

6.0 DISCUSSIONS

Bourdieu's framework helps us understand what happens between regulatory agencies and forest owners because it considers such concept as power relations or different types of capital (economic, cultural and social) which determine people's positions within the field. In addition to this, the phenomenological stance adopted in this study aligns with this by focusing on the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of the forest owners, providing rich insights into how policies are interpreted and acted upon at the ground level.

This section discusses the research questions from the viewpoints and experiences of environmentalist forest owners:

- How do small-scale forest owners in Sweden cope with and react to Swedish and European Union Forest policies, and what are the impacts on their forest management practices and livelihoods?
- How do forest owners perceive the effects of these policies on Swedish forests and the landscape?

Integrating Bourdieu's theoretical concepts with a phenomenological approach, this discussion will elucidate the intricate relationships and power dynamics that define the forestry sector, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of policy implementations and the resultant responses within the social and bureaucratic fields of forestry. This will offer valuable perspectives for refining policy approaches and enhancing the sustainability of forest management practices in Sweden.

6.1 Forest Owners' Perception of Swedish and EU Forest Policies

Small-scale forest owners are profoundly and extensively impacted by Swedish and European Union Forest policies, thus altering their management approaches, decision-making mechanisms, and overall quality of life. This analysis examines the perceptions and response mechanisms that small-scale forest owners have in relation to policy regulations on forestry. The distribution of different types of capital; economic, cultural, and social among the forest owners is governed by these policies hence affecting their abilities to adopt sustainable practices as well as meeting both economic and environmental goals.

6.1.1 Regulatory Impact on Management Practices

Forest owners interpret Swedish and EU policies as drivers for adopting sustainable practices, such as selective cutting, which aim to enhance biodiversity and reduce environmental damage. However, this shift often requires acquiring new knowledge and investing in equipment, which reshapes the owners' cultural capital. Many of the participants in this study expressed how the policies disrupted their traditional methods, particularly among those relying on clear-cutting practices.

As a result, they needed to adjust their cultural capital by adopting new forest management techniques to comply with conservation goals. As noted by participants in this study, adapting to these practices often involves significant learning curves and investments in new equipment, which can be financially burdensome. This requirement for new skills reshapes the cultural capital within the forestry community, as owners must align their practices with emerging sustainability paradigms (Bourdieu, 1986; Hilgers & Mangez, 2014; Lizardo, 2004).

It can be noticed clearly that people of the environmentalist group understand this better, however, they cite their peers who do not have this insight or knowledge to be very agitated, because of them depend on the forests for their income, full time.

For instance, owners who previously relied on traditional methods like clear cutting find themselves needing to understand and implement selective cutting techniques to comply with conservation goals. This shift not only impacts their operational routines but also necessitates

a reevaluation of economic strategies due to potentially lower yields and higher operational costs associated with less invasive methods.

6.1.2 Economic Impacts on Livelihoods

Economically, small-scale forest owners face considerable challenges under the new regulatory regimes. The policies designed to protect the environment can, paradoxically, impose financial strains on those they aim to help. Several study participants expressed concerns about the economic viability of their forestry activities due to increased compliance costs and reduced flexibility in timber harvesting.

The economic capital of these owners is directly affected by policy changes that dictate when and how trees can be harvested, especially if parts of their forests are designated as protected areas. These restrictions can delay or decrease the income from timber, which for many small-scale owners is a significant source of revenue. Moreover, the policies can affect land values and the ability to leverage forest assets for economic gains, thus influencing the owners' overall financial stability.

6.1.3 Social and Cultural Impacts

On a social level, these policies influence the relationships and networks (social capital) that owners maintain within the forestry community. Policies that are perceived as top-down impositions can lead to feelings of disenfranchisement or resistance among owners. This aspect is particularly salient in the context of the cultural capital of forest owners, which includes traditions, values, and the inherited knowledge of land management. As the policies change, they may clash with traditional practices and values, leading to a cultural recalibration among owners (Bourdieu, 1986).

Furthermore, forest owners' responses to these policies can also reshape their habitus – the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions shaped by their backgrounds and experiences. As owners adjust to new regulatory environments, their habitus evolves, reflecting new strategies and attitudes towards forestry management. It could be seen in the results presented that some of the participants have turned to harvest in the winter to bypass policy restrictions, in effect, avoid detection of endangered species.

6.2 Forest Owners' Perception of the Effects on Swedish Forests and Landscape

The effects of Swedish and EU forest policies on the forests and landscape of Sweden are profound, reflecting a deliberate shift towards sustainable management practices that prioritize environmental integrity alongside forestry operations. This section examines how these policies reconfigure the field of forestry, influencing both the physical landscape and the symbolic meanings attached to forest management.

6.2.1 Environmental and Ecological Changes

At the heart of the policy impact is the shift towards more sustainable practices, such as selective cutting and the preservation of biodiversity hotspots. These changes are intended to mitigate the adverse effects of traditional forestry practices like clear cutting, which has historically dominated Swedish forestry. Such practices are now increasingly viewed under the lens of sustainability, with a strong emphasis on maintaining ecological balance and enhancing forest health.

This ecological shift is not merely a change in physical practice but also a symbol of broader environmental stewardship – a form of symbolic capital that forest owners can accumulate. This capital is not only environmental but also social, as sustainable practices often garner positive recognition from the community and regulatory bodies, enhancing the owner's reputation.

6.2.2 Landscape Aesthetics and Public Perception

The policies have also led to changes in the visual aesthetics of the forest landscape. By reducing the prevalence of clear cutting, the landscape retains more of its natural heterogeneity, which is crucial for the tourism and recreation sectors that rely on Sweden's natural beauty. The diversified forest structure contributes to a landscape that is not only more pleasing to the eye but also better suited to withstand the pressures of climate change and pests.

Moreover, these landscape changes influence public perception of forestry. Forests managed under sustainable guidelines reflect a commitment to future generations, reinforcing the social

responsibility of forest owners within the broader societal field. This aspect ties back to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, where the perception of sustainability can enhance or diminish the social standing of forest owners within the community.

6.2.3 Biodiversity and Resilience

Enhanced biodiversity is another significant impact of these policies. By promoting a mix of species and age structures, the policies foster ecosystems that are more resilient to disease, pests, and climate variability. This biological diversity is crucial for maintaining the ecological functions of forests, such as carbon storage, water regulation, and habitat provision.

The increase in biodiversity also reflects a shift in the cultural capital of forest management, where knowledge and practices that promote ecological complexity are increasingly valued. This shift is crucial for the sustainability of forestry practices, as it aligns with global environmental goals and the local benefits of a healthier ecosystem.

6.3 Coping Mechanisms and Adaptations to Policies Pressures

The introduction of Swedish and EU forestry policies has significantly impacted the management practices of small-scale forest owners. These owners face the dual challenge of aligning with environmental goals while maintaining economic viability. Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital provide a useful framework for understanding how these owners navigate the changing policy landscape.

6.3.1 Adapting to Regulatory Changes

The empirical findings from the interviews with small-scale forest owners reveal a significant shift towards more sustainable practices, primarily influenced by new Swedish and EU forestry regulations. For instance, one owner described the transition to selective cutting to enhance biodiversity, a move prompted by both personal conviction and regulatory requirements. This shift aligns with Guillén et al. (2015) emphasis on the importance of trust and social capital,

where owners rely on strong relationships with forestry agencies to navigate these changes effectively.

Bourdieu's concept of field is pertinent here as it illustrates the regulatory environment as a field of power where different stakeholders (government agencies, NGOs, and forest owners) interact. The owners' adaptation strategies can be seen as maneuvers within this field to maintain or enhance their capital (both by complying with regulations and by seeking ways to innovate within these constraints). This adaptation is not just a response to regulatory pressure but also an active engagement with the field to redefine their practices and positions within it (Guillén et al., 2015).

6.3.2 Economic Strategies and Diversification

The economic impacts of forestry policies are a major concern for small-scale owners, as highlighted in the empirical results. Owners discuss diversifying their forestry activities to include eco-tourism and other non-timber-based income sources, reflecting a strategic shift in their economic capital to mitigate the risks associated with strict timber harvesting regulations. This aligns with Dedeurwaerdere's (2009) findings on social learning, where collective action and shared resource management become crucial in adapting to new economic realities.

In Bourdieu's terms, this represents an accumulation and transformation of economic capital, where owners not only adjust to the economic demands of the market and policy environment but also engage in creating new forms of capital that align with broader social and environmental values. These strategies underscore the dynamic interplay between the owners' habitus (ingrained practices and dispositions) and the field, showing how external pressures catalyze changes in internal dispositions and practices (Dedeurwaerdere, 2009).

6.3.3 Utilization of Financial Support Mechanisms

Interviews reveal that accessing financial support mechanisms, such as grants and subsidies, is essential for forest owners to adapt to policy changes without significant financial burden. This is particularly true for owners who need to invest in new technologies or training to meet sustainability standards. Follo's (2011) study underscores the challenges posed by a lack of forestry competence, which can be mitigated through targeted financial and educational support.

From a Bourdieu inspired perspective, these mechanisms represent important resources in the field, enabling owners to accumulate the necessary capital to comply with and benefit from new regulations. The capital (whether economic, cultural, or social) that owners gain from these supports facilitates their agency within the field, allowing them to navigate the complexities of forestry management more effectively and sustainably (Follo, 2011).

Integrating empirical findings with Bourdieu's theoretical framework provides a rich, nuanced understanding of how small-scale forest owners in Sweden cope with the challenges and opportunities presented by forestry policies. These owners are not passive recipients of policy but active participants in the forestry field, employing various strategies to maintain and enhance their capitals. This dynamic interplay between field, capital, and habitus illustrates the complex reality of forestry management, where economic viability, environmental sustainability, and regulatory compliance are constantly negotiated and balanced.

6.4 Contribution to Existing Research and Policy Implications

This study provides valuable insights into how small-scale forest owners, particularly those who are environmentalists, navigate the demands of Swedish and EU forest policies. It highlights the importance of considering the diverse impacts of these policies on different types of forest owners and underscores the need for policy approaches that are sensitive to the unique challenges faced by these owners. By integrating Bourdieu's theoretical framework, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the power dynamics, capital distributions, and adaptive strategies within the forestry sector.

It confirms and expands on existing research by highlighting the proactive and innovative ways in which environmentalist forest owners manage their forests under regulatory constraints. The findings suggest that policies should be designed to support forest owners not only economically but also culturally and socially, recognizing their role as stewards of both environmental and cultural heritage. This comprehensive approach can enhance the effectiveness of forestry policies, ensuring they are equitable and supportive of sustainable forest management practices across different segments of forest owners.

7.0 Conclusion

Far within the Swedish forest, where pine and birch trees stand in long rows like soldiers guarding centuries of history, small-scale forest owners are caught between their livelihoods and their legacy. This research explores how Swedish and the European Union (EU) forestry policies impact small-scale forest owners and considers what strategies these landholders adopt and how they affect the landscape as well as themselves.

Sweden's forest sector is not only an economic stronghold but a cultural one as well. The industry operates under a complex policy framework that stretches from national to EU levels. These policies are meant to harmonize economic interests with ecological concerns; they determine what happens in the forests day by day through smallholders' strategic decisions. Within Pierre Bourdieu's social fields theory this is where various kinds of capitals – economic, cultural, social, and symbolic – come together.

At this intersection between policy and practice stand small-scale forest owners who often are family keepers of woods heritage. Rooted deep into sustainability values these people steer their way across regulatory landscapes by adjusting management approaches towards conservation ends. They must deal with sets of prescriptions which require things like selective cutting as against clear cutting that is more disruptive, reflecting a shift towards maintaining biodiversity and ecological health.

The economic meaning of these policies is obvious, yet at the same time they are very puzzling. Their purpose is to encourage sustainable forest management; however, it also means that they limit financially and operationally owners' capacities compelling them lose their livelihoods as well as destabilizing them economically. The latter implies that forest owners articulate a dual narrative of challenge and adaptation, where the pressure to comply with stringent policies intersects with the need to sustain economic viability.

Culturally, these policies reframe the traditional practices of forest management, embedding new norms and expectations into the local forestry community. This shift is not merely operational but deeply cultural, influencing the very identity of forest owners and their connection to the land. The study reveals a poignant layer of interaction where forest owners, while safeguarding their heritage, must also embrace modern conservation techniques to uphold policy mandates.

Culturally, this means that what the policies have done here is to change the way forests are managed traditionally. They have established new standards in the forestry community around them but not only that. This change goes beyond operations; it affects culture itself at its core level and changes who people feel they are as owners of the forests and how these individuals relate with their environment. So, while protecting their legacy, foresters must adopt contemporary methods for preserving natural resources if they want to comply with policies – such is the irony revealed by this research.

To deal with such policy pressures, owners show their strength and versatility by using different methods. Some of these strategies are coming up with new ways of doing things, asking for financial help in the form of grants and involving themselves in talks that can shape policies so that they favor them. They do this because it enables them to be aware about what is happening around forestry policies which pose a threat or offer prospects for growth.

The broader impacts of these policies on the Swedish forests and landscape are significant. They have led to a more sustainable management approach that emphasizes the ecological and aesthetic value of the forests, promoting a landscape that supports biodiversity and provides ecosystem services essential for both the environment and the community.

7.1 Implications for Rural Development in Sweden and Beyond

This research contributes to the broader discussions and problems of rural development in Sweden and other places with similar conditions. The findings demonstrate how policy frameworks play a key role in shaping rural livelihoods and environmental stewardship. This study emphasizes the significance of knowledge production by examining small scale owners of forests who are knowledgeable on environment or environmentalists to keep it safe.

In Sweden, these insights can help in developing rural development strategies that balance between economic, ecological as well as cultural dimensions. In this regard, decision makers ought to be considerate about different types of forest owners as they apply regulations because their impacts vary a lot among them, hence inclusive approaches are needed towards making these regulations sustainable economically.

7.2 Lessons for Global Rural Development

The lessons learned from this study in Sweden can inform rural development challenges in other similar regions as well. The emphasis on integrating economic, cultural, and environmental considerations is universally applicable. Key lessons include:

- Engaging stakeholders, especially those with deep local knowledge and environmental commitment, is crucial for effective policy implementation.
- Policies should aim to support economic stability while promoting sustainable practices, ensuring that rural communities can thrive without compromising environmental health.
- Recognizing and respecting traditional practices and cultural values in policy design can enhance acceptance and effectiveness.
- Providing financial and technical support to help small-scale landowners adapt to new regulations can mitigate economic impacts and encourage compliance.

Overall, this research shows that in Swedish forestry, policies, practices, and livelihoods are intricately linked. Such a finding not only calls attention to the importance of environmental policies but also those which consider economic and cultural aspects of managing forests as well. Additionally, what was learnt here requires more discussions between policy makers with forest owners if they want sustainable future for Swedish forestry that will be fairer too so that it saves the lush landscapes for generations to come while supporting the communities that thrive within them.

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Popular science summary

Almost half of Sweden's arable land is managed by small-scale forest owners, who have a significant influence in the country. An overwhelming number of these owners have serious environmental concerns. In this study, the impact of Swedish and EU forest policies particularly those that put ecological sustainability ahead of profit is examined.

These regulations frequently present difficulties for small owners even though their goal is to support sustainable forestry. Owners find it difficult to balance meeting environmental goals with maintaining their financial viability when policies fail to take into consideration the complex realities of forest management.

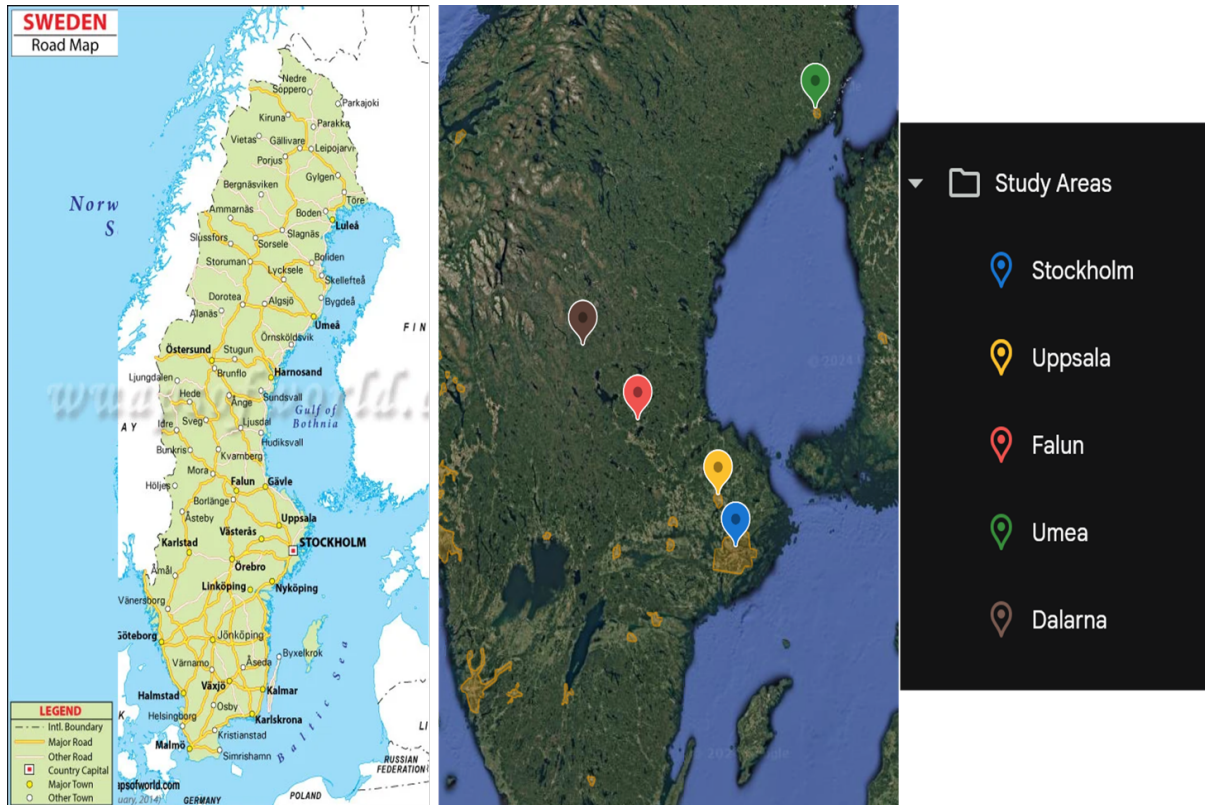
Through conducting interviews with environmentally conscious forest owners, the study discovered that while these owners support the policies' objectives, implementing them is fraught with financial and practical challenges. Many owners change their forestry practices, look for financial assistance, or diversify their businesses to adapt. The study provides insights for future forest policymaking by illuminating the challenging balance these owners must maintain between earning a living and protecting the ecosystem.

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Appendix 1

A map showing the different locations of individual interviews.



Appendix 2

List of individual Interviews

Identity	Location	Occupation	Land Size	Date of Interview
Participant 1	Uppsala	Lecturer	120 hectares	2024-01-16
Participant 2	Stockholm	Retired lecturer	220 hectares	2024-02-08
Participant 3	Falun	Economist	180 hectares	2024-02-08
Participant 4	Dalarna	Lecturer	200 hectares	2024-02-14
Participant 5	Falun	Retired Lecturer	180 hectares	2024-04-09
Participant 6	Umea	Lecturer	90 hectares	2024-04-23

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