An Interruption of Work – How Bureaucratism Hinders Private Forestry in Lithuania

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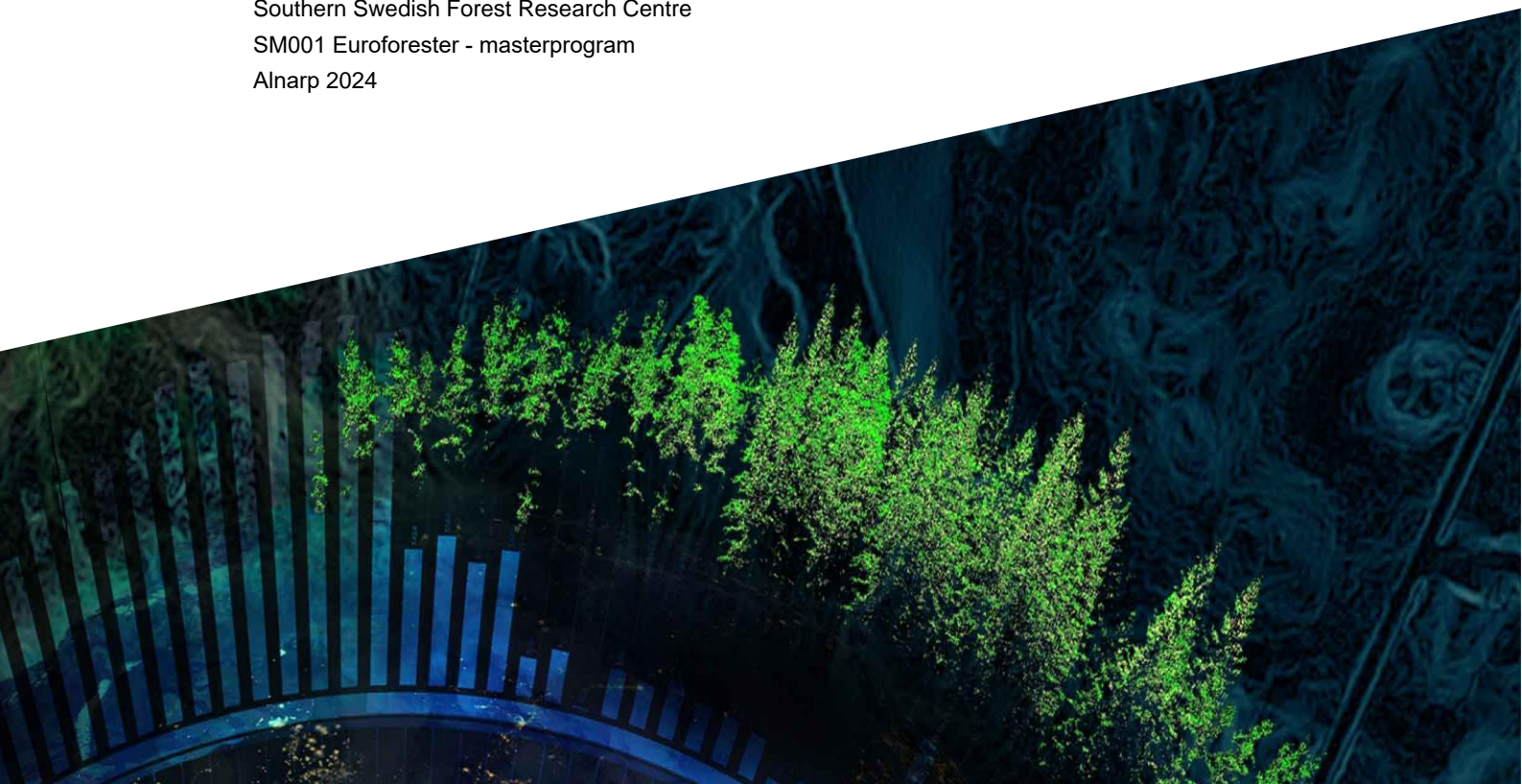
An interruption of work – How bureaucratism hinders private forestry in Lithuania
Biurokratizmo problema Lietuvos privačių miškų sektoriuje

Vytautas Reingardtas

Abstract

Lithuanian private forest ownership was established in 1990 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since that moment, responsible individuals encountered many difficulties with private forest legislations, which continues to challenge private forest owners to this day. Qualitative interviews were conducted with ten private forest owners and people working in private forest owners associations in Lithuania to identify the most significant problems they perceive in private forest policy, in relation to bureaucracy. The findings were categorized according to the type of policy instrument into economic, regulatory, and informational. The results show that problems occurred after Lithuania gained independence and are happening today. Excessive bureaucracy, frequent changes in legislation, and lack of compensation regarding Natura 2000 territories are the most repetitive issues that forest owners encounter. Owners suggest that to improve the current situation, the government should start trusting the owners and give them more freedom regarding management decisions concerning their property. Additionally, the government should collaborate more with associations before making policy changes.

Keywords: Red tape, Policy instruments, excessive bureaucracy.

Santrauka

Lietuvos privati miškų nuosavybė buvo įkurta 1994 m., žlugus Sovietų Sąjungai. Nuo to laiko atsakingi asmenys susidūrė su daugybe sunkumų, susijusių su privačių miškų teisės aktais, o tai iki šiol sukelia iššūkį privačių miškų savininkams. Atlikti kokybiniai interviu su 10 privačių miškų savininkais arba privačių miškų asociacijos darbuotojais Lietuvoje, siekiant nustatyti svarbiausias problemas, kurias jie pastebi privačių miškų politikoje, susijusias su pertekline biurokratija. Perteklinė biurokratija anglų kalboje apibrėžiama „red tape". Lietuvių kalboje šio termino atitikmuo yra „biurokratizmas". Išvados pagal politikos priemones buvo suskirstytos į ekonomines, reguliavimo ir informacines. Rezultatai parodė, kad problemos atsirado Lietuvai atgavus nepriklausomybę ir vyksta iki šių dienų. Perteklinė biurokratija, dažni teisės aktų pokyčiai ir kompensacijų dėl Natura 2000 teritorijų nebuvimas – tai dažniausiai pasikartojantys miškų savininkų pastebėjimai. Savininkai siūlo pagerinti esamą situaciją: vyriausybė turėtų pradėti pasitikėti savininkais ir suteikti jiems daugiau laisvės priimant valdymo sprendimus, susijusius su jų turtu. Be to, prieš imdamasi pakeitimų vyriausybė turėtų daugiau bendradarbiauti su asociacijomis.

Raktažodžiai: biurokratija, perteklinė biurokratija, politiniai istrumentai.

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1. Introduction

The history of private forestry in Lithuania is complex and diverse, reflecting the country's social, economic, and political changes over the centuries. In the 16th century, private forestry did not exist in The Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Similarly to other European countries, forests were the property of dukes and the Church. These forests were used for hunting and other noble activities. However, it permitted people to use the forest if they refrained from obtaining or exchanging its goods (Falkowski, 2017). People could gather acorns, mushrooms, wild fruit, and firewood and let their cattle graze freely, cut hay when it was in season, and maintain bees in tree hollows. Following the occupation of Lithuania by the Russian Empire in 1795, approximately 70% of the country's forest area was owned by wealthy foreign landlords (Brukas, 2003). Commoners were only permitted to enter forests for necessities, such as hunting and gathering wood. In 1918, Lithuania gained independence. The interwar period brought various reforms, including the nationalization of forests belonging to foreign nobles (Kairiūkštis, 2003). Ordinary citizens could now acquire ownership rights and manage forests for personal profit. These reforms lasted until 1940, when Lithuania, once again, fell under Russian control, becoming one of the 15 countries of the Soviet Union. Under Soviet legislation, private property, including private forests, was banned entirely (Dembinski, 1991). After Lithuania regained independence, private property was restored to the previous owners. Restitution continues to this day. Currently, 7,5% of Lithuania's forest land is still awaiting owners (Fig.1).

Furthermore, the economic sector transitioned from a planned economy, where central planning authorities controlled everything (Brukas, 2015), to a market economy, where the dynamics of supply and demand govern the economic activity. (Mizaraitė and Mizaras, 2005). Additionally, changes in government lead to institutional reforms (Lazdinis et al., 2009). Following Lithuania's independence, forests have been utilized intensively, with targeted efforts to enhance the sector's contribution to the national economy. Environmental concerns were not prioritized after independence, as the government focused on economic transformation (Brukas & Hjortsf, 2004). Due to this, in the later years concerns about environmental destruction and forest degradation emerged (Balkytė & Paleckis, 2010) (Bouriaud, 2005). In the first half of the 1990s, there was a significant increase in the number and size of protected areas. All forests underwent zoning,

resulting in various management restrictions (Brukas et al., 2018). In 1995, forest management in Lithuania corresponded with all the criteria of sustainable forest management (Mizaras & Mizaraitė, 2004).

Currently, the forest policy of Lithuania follows four directions and tries to achieve all goals to ensure sustainable forest management (Fig. 2). Economically, the forest sector in Lithuania makes up around 4% of countries GDP (Mizaras & Mizaraitė, 2004). From an ecological perspective, protected areas in Lithuania are still expanding. According to Lithuanian State Services for Protected Areas Under the Ministry of Environment data, around 33% of forests in Lithuania are protected. These territories also ensure that social services are provided to society regarding social forest policy.
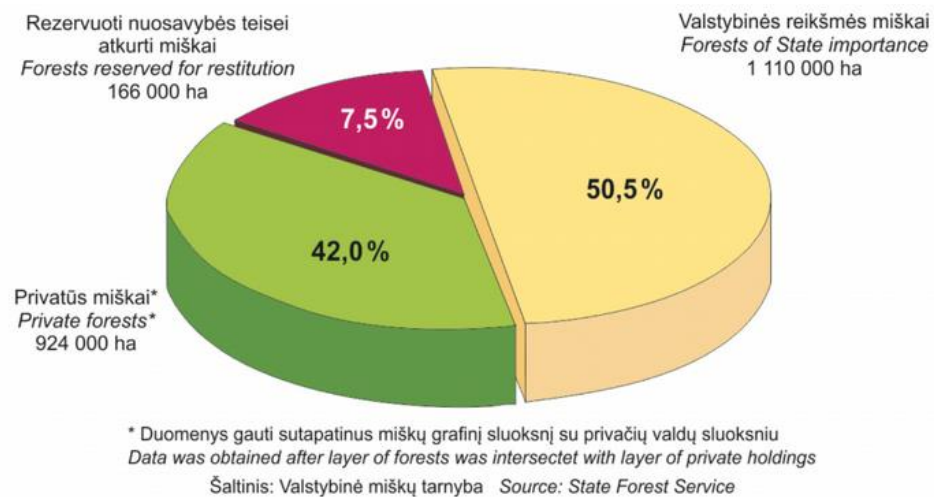
Figure 1.Forest ownership distribution in Lithuania. Source: State Forest Service (2021).

Policy direction	Policy priority
General	1. Preservation and enrichment of forest resources
	2. Ensuring a variety of forest ownership forms
	3. Participation of society in the resolution of major forestry issues
	4. Information to society about forest conditions and management
	5. Development research, education and training on forest issues
	6. Strengthening and development of international relations
Economic	1. A rationally distributed and continuous usage of forest resources, increase in forest productivity, and improvement of timber quality
	2. Increase the economic efficiency of forestry
Ecological	1. Ensuring the stability of ecosystems
	2. Preservation of biodiversity and improvement of forest health
Social	1. Meeting the general forest-related needs of the society
	2. Development of state and private forest sectors in the rural context

Figure 2. Lithuanian Forest Policy Directions and Their Implementation Strategy. Source: State Forest Service (2021)

1.1 Bureaucracy and what problems excessive bureaucracy cause

Bureaucracy is one of the earliest forms of government and administration in recorded history (Farzamand, 2010). It is reasonable to view bureaucracy as a mechanism for carrying out elected leaders' directives (Olsen, 2006). Bureaucracy helps create rules and legislation that help societies coexist harmoniously and ensure all citizens' rights. It facilitates the establishment of distinct roles, duties, and a hierarchy to guarantee efficiency (Weber, 2009). However, when bureaucracy becomes overly rigid, it can lead to unnecessary paperwork and overly rigid policies and guidelines that could impede decision-making (DeHart-Davis & Pandey, 2005). It can lead to a decrease in efficiency and motivation (Chang, 2023) and prolong the time needed to facilitate all documentation (Feeney & Bozeman, 2007).

1.2 Problems in the private forestry sector and their effects

After Lithuania gained independence, the government decided to regulate forests by using the Soviet Forest Code from 1979 (Brukas et al.,2018). This Forest Code was created by prioritizing the utilization of forests without any environmental

considerations. Lithuanians focused more on sustainable forest management as the plan was to become a part of European Union. In 1994, Lithuania adopted its own Forest Act, where more attention was given to the environmental problems of forests. The protected areas increased by 71% compared to the Soviet period. To achieve environmental protection goals, the government decided to control everything with restrictions towards forest management. The Forest groups were introduced in 1994 (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania). Forests were divided into separate categories. These categories have different restrictions regarding management. Many criticize it for excessive restrictions and strict regulations in forest land zoning (Brukas et al.,2018).

Fragmentation of properties caused a problem of inefficient farming due to small size (Mizaraitė et al., 2010). Private forest owners' lack of education and training contributes to problems of private forest policy in Lithuania (Mizaraitė et al., 2010). Policy directions that Lithuania tried to follow to achieve sustainable forest management have also not been followed completely. The initial plan ensured that economic, ecological and social policy directions would be represented equally. However, ecological policy directions get more attention, and an increasing percentage of protected areas, achieved by implementing restrictions through bureaucracy, has strengthened environmental management, but the economic pillar is built on weak foundations (Brukas et al., 2011). Lithuanian forests have substantially more potential production than forests in Scandinavia when compared regionally. If Lithuania reached the same usage intensity as Finland and Sweden, the forest harvest would rise by 10–20% (Brukas et al., 2011).

1.3 Aim and research questions

This study aims to identify specific bureaucratic issues in Lithuanian private forestry and answer the following questions.

1. How do private owners and managers in private forestry understand the term "bureaucracy"?
2. What problems do private forest owners and managers experience in the private sector and how are they affected?
3. What suggestions do owners and managers have for improving the private forest sector in Lithuania?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Definition of bureaucracy

The term "bureaucracy" is frequently applied to all governmental administration and large-scale formal organizations as a derogatory term (Olsen, 2006). Many authors claimed that bureaucracy has often been mistakenly associated with red-tape kind of bureaucracy (see definition in section 2.2), corruption, and stiffing processes in getting things done (Farazmand, 2010). However, the definition of bureaucracy does not have a negative connotation. One of the definitions provided by Max Weber claims that bureaucracy is standardized, rule-based, hierarchical, specialized, with a distinct functional division of labor and jurisdiction, and impers (Olsen, 2006). Other authors defines bureaucracy as "a machinery of government". A system or complex of organizations and institutions—executive, judicial, and legislative—that makes the operations of government and governance possible, get things done, and "run the government" (Farazmand, 2010). It is essential to understand that bureaucracy, rather than being a detriment to effective governance, serves as the essential organizational framework for delivering goods and services within the contemporary state, with particular importance in developing nations (Campos and Nugent, 1999). From this perspective, bureaucracy cannot be positive or negative; it is simply a governmental approach to deal with specific issues and no one can escape, whether in the private sector or public (Farazmand, 2010). Defining how much bureaucracy is needed in the present world is difficult, though various authors agree that bureaucracy is inevitable in order for societies to function. Especially, when it is effective (Bozeman 2015).

On the other hand, the term "bureaucratism" has a negative connotation and some authors claim that it is not only negative, but also destructive phenomenon (Bodnarchuk, 2016). In English language this term is not used very often. Another term is usually used to express a negative meaning of bureaucracy – red tape. In Lithuania, there is no direct translation to "red tape". People who want to express negative thoughts about bureaucracy use the word "bureaucratism". It means that "bureaucratism" and "red tape" are synonyms in Lithuanian language.

2.2 Red tape

Red tape is not a neutral term for bureaucracy. It is a negative term for excessive bureaucracy. The term and the definition of red tape are relatively new. The first time this term was used was in 1975 research written by Buchanan. In the past, red tape did not have a definition at all. In Kaufman's book "Red Tape: Its Origins, Uses, and Abuses" (1977), red tape was shown as not always detrimental. On the contrary - sometimes very beneficial. Only present authors agreed that red tape cannot be beneficial and always represents bureaucracy's disadvantageous feature. (Bozeman 1993; 2000; Bozeman & Feeney 2014). Nowadays, the Bozeman definition of red tape takes precedence in public literature. He defines red tape as: "rules, regulations, and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden but do not advance the legitimate purposes the rules were intended to serve" (Bozeman 2000)

2.3 The theory of Red Tape

Red Tape has several definitions. By Kaufman's concept, red tape is subject-dependent; rather than using a broad or obvious set of criteria, its design is determined by the evaluations of specific individuals (Bozeman, 2012). The drawback of this premise is that it is not intended to be used in social science theory. In book, written by Kaufman (1977), the aim was to explain what red tape is and to reflect on its role in society; it was not the primary research subject (Bozeman & Feeney, 2014). The most common interpretation of red tape is the Organizational concept. It was developed by Bozeman in 1993 and is widely used in research papers to this day.

The "organizational red tape concept" focuses on how red tape influences key organizations and their goals (Bozeman 2012). In his latest research, Bozeman mentions that a drawback of this concept is the restrictive definition which only allows researchers to focus on the most problematic rules and not give attention to implemented regulations that have both advantages and disadvantages.

Stakeholder red tape concept is less-common in research. The premise is closer to Kaufman's concept (1977) because it is also subject–dependent and claims that different stakeholders can be affected differently by rules and regulations. An advantage of the stakeholder concept is the approach to problems: it aims to value stakeholders rather than the effectiveness of the organizational goals (Bozeman, 2012). Meanwhile, the organizational concept only focuses on issues that have no merit. Unfortunately, this definition also has drawbacks. Firstly, it is unpopular and only used by a few researchers (Pandey et al., 2007; Brewer & Walker, 2010; Ponomariov & Boardman, 2011). Another limitation is that it makes stakeholders

difficult to identify, because often there are no nature boundaries among stakeholders (Bozeman, 2012)

Multidimensional red tape is the newest concept of these. The key element of this premise is the effectiveness of rules (Bozeman, 2012). Bozeman's intention for this concept was to focus more on the quality of regulations rather than investigating ineffective rules.

For this research, the stakeholder concept is the most suitable. While preparing the interviews, the key idea was to keep questions as unbiased as possible to allow participants to consider the positive and negative consequences of specific rules. The multidimensional concept was not suitable because of its approach, considering that this research aims to identify problems, not to analyse the quality of the rules.

2.4 Red Tape Scale

The three-item red tape scale (TIRT) was used to prepare interview questions. This scale explores red tape by examining its three characteristics (Borry, 2016). Firstly, the TIRT scale looks at whether the problem is burdensome. The second characteristic examines whether it is necessary to have specific rules; and thirdly, whether they are effective.

All respondents were asked questions that helped to understand specific red tape characteristics. There are other red tape scales, such as ''self-assessed red tape' (Bozeman & Feeney, 2014), the Personnel Red Tape (PRT) scale (Rainey et al., 1995) or the General Red Tape scale (GRT), which are more suitable for quantitative interviews. For example, the GRT scale asked respondents to assign a numerical value to indicate the extent of bureaucratic processes within their organization. The TIRT scale has more advantages than other scales. The first advantage is that red tape is not mentioned anywhere, which helps to keep interview questions unbiased, considering that the term has a strong negative connotation (Bozeman & Scott, 1996). Another advantage is that it captures how well stakeholders understand the rules and how they are affected by them, rather than assessing the extent of these problems (Borry, 2016).

2.5 Policy Instruments

Policy instruments are used to categorize problems in this research and make it easier to understand the broader implications of Lithuania's private forest policy. Policy instruments are the strategies employed by governing bodies, whether governmental or public, to promote specific policies and reach a predetermined set of objectives. Vedung's trichotomy divide instruments into separate categories.

Regulatory, economic, and informational instruments. Vedung's trichotomy is the most common classification of policy instruments (Bemelmans et al., 2011). Additionally, categorizing the findings in this way makes it much more convenient and clearer to see where the problem lies in policy making decisions. Informational instruments are the most common policy instruments regarding controlling human behavior (Krott, 2005). They help to raise awareness and gain knowledge in decision-making situations. Examples of informational instruments are advisory services and forest education. Economic instruments refer to the political tools that formally impact social or economic activities by engaging in the exchange of "economic values" (Krott,2005). Examples of economic instruments could be financial support, tax revenue or mandatory taxes. The last instrument is regulatory. Regulatory instruments involve all political interventions that formally impact social and economic activities through the establishment of obligatory regulations (Krott,2005). The main purpose of this tool is to regulate how specific stakeholders can behave in their property; it prevents forests from being destroyed or harmed by the owner.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Study approach

A qualitative approach was selected for this study since the focus is on understanding owners' perceptions of bureaucracy and problems in the private sector (Borry, 2016).

3.2 Data collection

3.1.1 Qualitative interviews

The data was gathered through qualitative interviews with ten people who manage forest property in Lithuania or whose job directly involves private forest (Table 1). In total 15 people were contacted, but five persons did not respond. The requirements for forest owners were to have more than 20 hectares of forest and forestry must be their main source of revenue (Table 2). Smaller forest owners were not interviewed due to possibly lack of knowledge of forest policy. It was considered that smaller owners not always focus on forest management and their knowledge about forest policy could be limited. Requirement for forest managers were to be leader of private forests owners' associations or individuals who help forest owners with bureaucracy. The person from public sector was interviewed due to his contribution to private forest policy. This person is Nerijus Kupstaitis and he was a leader of forest policy group in the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania. Another person who gave confirmation of disclosure identity is Gediminas Sakalauskas. He is the owner of the company that owns 520 hectares of forest. Information about these people was gathered from public internet sources or by recommendations of other respondents who had already been interviewed. Some of the forest owners were recommended by this thesis supervisor Vilis Brukas and additional supervisor Ekaterina Makrickienė. Out of 10 people who participated in this interview study, four were recommended by supervisors. Interviewed participants recommended three respondents, and the remaining three people were contacted after finding their e-mails on the internet.

Table 1. Interview participants

	Amount
Forest owners	5
Forest managers	4
Public sector	1

Table 2. Property size in hectares

Forest owners	Property size in hectares	Private forest owners' association employees	Property size in hectares	Public sector	Property size in hectares
F.O1-Gediminas Sakalauskas	520	F.A 1	70	P.S 1 – Nerijus Kupstaitis	0
F.O 2	500	F.A 2	0		
F.O 3	80	F.A 3	0		
F.O 4	120	F.A 4	0		
F.O 5	Refused to say				

3.1.2 Interview questionnaire

The interviews were conducted from December of 2023 to February of 2024.
Interview questionnaire was semi-structured (Kvale 2009). That means that
questions were prepared before starting to do interviews, and guided the interviews,
but at the same time, it allowed for asking follow-up questions. One interview lasted
from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, depending on how talkative the respondent was.
Two interviews took place in person, while the remaining eight were conducted
remotely, using Zoom services.

Interview questions were divided into separate segments. The first segment was
about getting to know a respondent. Questions were related to how long their
managing their forest, how they end up in forest sector, and their broad opinion on
forest management rules in Lithuania (Table 2.) This question helps to identify if
the respondent is a small owner or big. Furthermore, it helped to understand if the
owner has a university degree in this sector. Another benefit of this segment is

alleviating stress for owners. By asking these questions it reduced a stress for owners and increase their confidence on the topic (Johnson et al. 2021)

Table 3. Questions to getting to know the interviewee

How are you involved with forests?
How many years have you been engaged in this activity?
Could you tell us how much forest land you currently own?
Do you purchase and manage forests primarily for your own needs?
How did you decide to engage in this activity? Did you study forestry-related subjects?
What is your attitude towards the legal and administrative management of private forests?
Are adequate conditions provided to private forest owners for forestry?
Does established forest management (legal framework and administrative procedures) complicate or facilitate forest management? What are the current bureaucratic implications for private landowners?

The second segment focuses on the concept of bureaucracy and how the respondent understands it. This concept can be interpreted in various ways, as noted by Eisenstadt (1959), hence it is crucial to ascertain the respondent's understanding. The questions aimed to explore the concept of bureaucracy, its connotations, and the extent to which the respondent deals with bureaucracy while managing forests (Table 3).

Table 4. The concept of bureaucracy

Could you describe how you understand this concept?
Do you associate it with positive or negative connotations?
Do you often encounter bureaucracy in your work?
What impressions does bureaucratic work leave on you? Does it cause difficulties and inconvenience, or does it expedite your work?

After clarifying the term "bureaucracy," respondents were questioned about the challenges they encountered in forest management. The main objective of this segment was to identify the primary issues in the private sector and delve deeper into their effects on the private sector, as well as the causes behind these problems. This segment was the most important because it focus of the main idea of this study (Table 4).

Table 5. Question to identify the primary issues

What are the main problems you observe?
Since when, in your opinion, has this problem existed, or has it intensified during a certain period? Is it related to specific institutional or legal changes?
Have you noticed any problems arising in other types of forestry activities?
What problems do you encounter there?
Do you think your listed problems arise due to deficiencies in Lithuania's forest policy? More specifically, do these problems arise from bureaucratic processes? Such as excessive paperwork, strict control, cumbersome processes, or excessive legal requirements?
What inconveniences does a forest owner face due to the bureaucratic problems you mentioned earlier?
Does bureaucracy complicate or facilitate forest management?
Is the bureaucracy you mentioned necessary? Or could it be dispensed with?
Is bureaucracy effective in terms of the forest owner? Does it ensure that the owner can make decisions about their forest without obstacles?
In your opinion, what caused these problems?
Have they existed for a long time, or have they arisen recently?
Could you name which institution made these decisions that currently cause inconvenience to private forest owners?
Was there communication with private forest owners when these changes were being made?
How has this affected your work? If possible, could you compare how it has changed your work after these problems arose? Of course, if these problems did not exist throughout your forestry activities.

The last segment was intended to get suggestion of owners how to solve problems that occurred and how to improve private forest sector in order to achieve a better condition for owners to manage their property and achieve sustainability (Table 5).

Table 6. Owner's suggestions

Do you have any suggestions on how to solve these problems?
What would you like to change?
Do you think the younger generation can make a difference?

3.4 Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed completely word by word. All transcripts of people who wanted to be not mentioned were anonymized to safeguard against the disclosure of personal details. After collecting interviews, the opinions about specific questions were rewritten into a separate worksheet with citations supporting specific owners' statements. Then the information given by the informants was categorized into the different types of policy instruments. This classification helped to dive deeper into identified issues and the timeline and different consequences.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Prior to the interview, all respondents received a letter of consent. This letter contained an introduction of the student, the topic of the study, the aim of this study, an invitation to this study, and an assurance of anonymity during this study. Respondents were also asked if they wanted to familiarize themselves with questions before the interview. Notably, not all respondents wanted to be anonymous and two informants wanted to disclose their name in the study.

4. Results

4.1 Bureaucracy concepts - perceptions and attitudes

The responses to inquiries regarding "What is bureaucracy?" and "Do you associate it with positive or negative connotations?" yield markedly divergent perspectives. Most respondents see Bureaucracy as a negative term that is interrupting their forest management process. Some respondents see Bureaucracy as useless and claim it is an *"instrument to slow down and interrupt their work"* (F.O 3) or a complicated instrument for governance to *"allow governance people to make our life much harder" (F.O 4)* Private F.O 1 said that Bureaucracy became a problem only now when many changes happened, and there needs to be clarity regarding document completion. This respondent claimed that now, Bureaucracy is associated with only negative connotations because, as he said: *"One institution instructs to contact another, while the latter suggests contacting the initial one."* However, a few respondents see Bureaucracy as neither good nor bad. They see it as a process to regulate specific management questions to prevent forestry from becoming chaotic. Private forest associations leaders and managers agreed, *"Bureaucracy encompasses administrative processes that do not necessarily generate added value" (F.A 1).* Participants who see Bureaucracy as a neutral term agree that there is a small gap between Bureaucracy being functional and unnecessary. As private F.O 1, *"Bureaucracy is not inherently malevolent if it adheres to logic. A state cannot function without Bureaucracy, yet excessive, trivial, and overlapping bureaucratic systems give rise to negative associations."*

Looking at the answers to these questions, it is noticeable that most respondents connect it with adverse connotations. When they think about bureaucracy, the first mind that comes to their head is *"interruption of work"*. All private forest owners see bureaucracy negatively and describe it as an interruption for them to manage their forest as they want.

Meanwhile, respondents working in associations that help private forest owners see bureaucracy as a neutral term. These respondents explained bureaucracy as an inevitable administrative process in societies that do not always work as intended. The variation in these responses can be attributed to different work positions. Forest owners are more focused on working in the field. They have more knowledge about

managing forests properly, while respondents who work in private owners'
associations dive deeper into the management of bureaucracy and administration
processes. Given their expertise in the topic, they can offer a more nuance
interpretation of "bureaucracy" and its intended function within society.

4.2 Classification of problems

All problems highlighted by private forest owners were classified by types of policy
instruments (Figure 2). Problems attributed to regulatory instruments are young
forest sector, lack of experience and strict control, frequent changes in legal
provisions, slow administration process, Natura 2000 and lack of knowledge of
people working in government institutions. A few problems are caused by the
regulatory instruments overlapping with the economic instruments. Natura 2000
problems caused issues in economic instruments as there is a problem in lack of
compensation due to restrictions applied to Natura 2000 territories. A flawed forest
restitution plan is a problem caused by regulatory instruments that affect economic
instruments. Scattered and fragmented property create a challenge to manage these
forests that can cause economic losses. A 5% turnover tax is a problem attributed
to economic instruments and does not overlap with other instruments. Informational
instrument problems were weak associations and a lack of consultative assistance
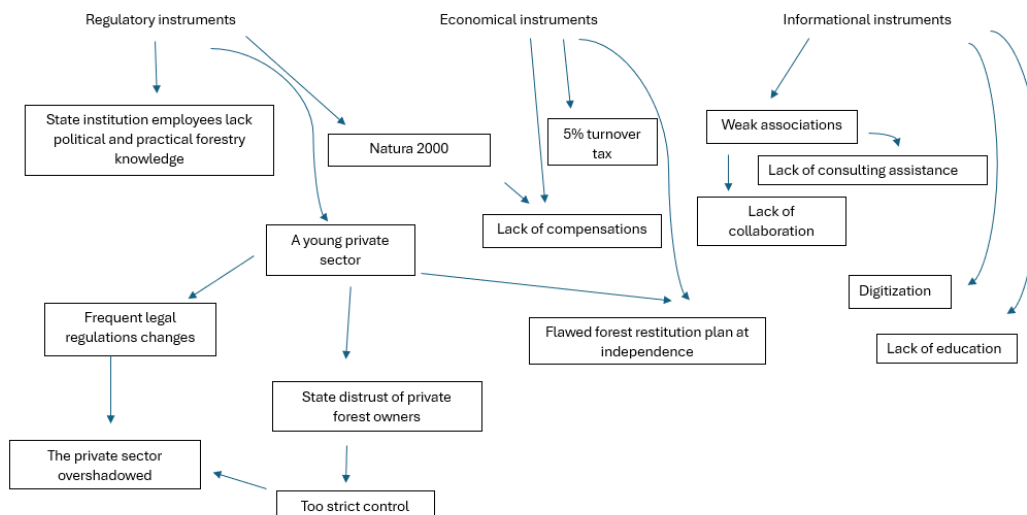and education.

Figure 3.Classification of problems using Vedung's trichotomy of policy instruments.

4.3 Regulatory clouts

As the interviews progressed, a pattern emerged in the problems cited by respondents, revealing a chronological progression of issues. The unfavourable beginning resulted in numerous challenges in the following years. The initial problem identified was the emergence of a fledgling private sector. Private sector in Lithuania was established after Lithuania got independence from Soviet Union in 1990 and privatisation bloated (Yamin, 1998). Most respondents mentioned this fact as one of the reasons that caused problems in later years. Private F.A 2 describe this situation historically: *"In Lithuania, we practically have a newly established private forest sector created after independence. We have 30 years of experience because before that, during the Soviet era, there was no private ownership of land or forests, and even before that, during the interwar period, private forests were scarcely regulated. Little can be drawn from that experience."* Even before Soviet-occupied Lithuania, private ownership was not common in Lithuania. As private F.O 2 claimed: "*Unfortunately, unlike neighbouring countries, we have never had any farming experience in private forests. Whether during the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the time of the two republics, Imperial Russia, or independent Lithuania, state forestry always prevailed, the forests of the nobility always prevailed."*

Consequently, the politics of Lithuania had the challenging task of creating legislation and rules for private owners. The first task was to give back property to the owners. Respondents to this interview mentioned that restitution was done incorrectly. The governance of Lithuania converted real estate into movable property. As a result, it *"created conditions that hindered the development of the private forestry sector" (F.A 2)*. Smallholdings are located many kilometres away from where people live. The continuously changing laws exacerbated this situation. Participants of this interview claimed that the laws changed multiple times during this period. Initially, the government intended to return properties up to 5 hectares. After some time, they decided that 5 hectares was too little and expanded this number to 10 hectares. Later, this was increased to 15 hectares and then to 25 hectares. Their final decision was to return as many hectares as each person owned. However, during these changes, "*In those areas where people owned forests, they were given to others, resulting in the formation of difficult-to-manage, scattered (fragmented) plots." (F.A 1)*

4.3.1 Lack of experience and strict control

Lack of experience in ownership of private forest owners causes distrust. The first decade after Lithuania gained independence was challenging economically. Many people lived in poverty or near the poverty line. For these people, to get a forest meant to harvest it and make additional money source. Not many people back in

the day knew how to manage forest property properly. The government of Lithuania was afraid of this. Nerijus Kupstaitis, the former a leader of forest policy group in the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, describe this situation: *"Initially, especially during 1995-2000, when the regulation of private forests in Lithuania began, a very cautious approach was adopted. The principle of precaution was heavily emphasized, aiming to minimize the owner's independent management of their forest."* Due to this, private owners faced stringent control. Respondents mentioned *"strict control"* as a daily problem. It comes from governance not trusting private owners. Owners have little freedom in their property to manage the forest as they want. A state institution makes the decisions, and in this way, the sense of responsibility of the forest owner is not nurtured. Private F.O 3 gave a short example of how this distrust affects forest management: *"They demand us a forest management plan, even for a small holding where there may not be anything to plan. Even if we have this plan, we must additionally plan the felling area".* These permits work as *"safeguards" (P.S 1)* for governance before the owner is granted the right to use their private property. Respondents were not satisfied with the governance attempting to fit everything into rules. Private F.O 4 claimed that government trying to prevent forest owners from *"deriving the benefits they would need from the forest, even without causing any harm to the forest".* To this day, this remains a pressing issue. Respondents agreed that regulations for them are too harsh. As private F.O 2 said: "*Fines are still being increased for any offence. Economic sanctions are provided for companies in the environmental protection law for common forestry violations (such as bark damage and forest floor damage), which are administrative offences. It is a trivial control aimed not at monitoring ecosystem conditions but at asserting dominance".* Owners mentioned that this feel like a strict control leaves no possibility for owners to make a mistake. However, in reality, owners are afraid to do something. A few respondents said that while managing a forest, it is impossible not to make small mistakes, but due to these mistakes, they are punished severely.

4.3.2 Frequent changes in legal provisions

Frequent changes in legal provisions are the result of the young private sector. As mentioned before, the private forest sector started only when Lithuania gained independence. The people responsible for legislation and forest rules had the challenging task of preparing legislation completely from scratch. To make this task easier, people responsible for the forest law copy-pasted many of the rules from the forest code, which was used during the Soviet Union occupation period. From that instant forward, forest policy in Lithuania underwent numerous changes over the course of a few decades. Indeed, the majority of respondents identify this as an issue. Inconsistency in rules makes management harder for owners as private F.O

3 said: "*Every year brings something new. One day everything is one way, and the next day everything changes again".* To keep up with these changes it is not easy. Respondents noted that it is a common situation *"a person buys a forest with the intention of managing it, and after a year, they can no longer do anything, even though a forest management plan was prepared" (F.O 1).* Private F.A 1 claimed, that "*during one tenure, the forest law underwent more than 100 changes."* This causes confusion and presents challenges for private forest owners because keeping track of all the changes is not easy, especially when they occur constantly, as private F.O 5 said: *'Reform after reform. Legislative changes happen so frequently that it's difficult to keep up".* Even to find out all changes are not so effortless. To access comprehensive information regarding their specific property, forest owners must visit multiple online platforms. Respondents were disillusioned that there is no time to adapt to all the changes and demand to *"leave those restrictions in place and don't change them again, so the owner can adapt" (F.O 1).*

4.3.3 Slow administrative process

Respondents claimed that some processes take a long time and restrict their freedom regarding forests. One of the problems that was highlighted during interviews is that administrative processes take too much time. For example, if owners want to sell their forest, documentation processes can take over a month. As it turned out, if owners want to sell their property, they need to get permission from everyone who have neighbouring forests. The owner must pay for the forest management project. Then, the land management authority inquires all nearby landowners, asking if they want to buy the forest. If several neighbours agree, the land management authority provides information about which owners the person can sell to. Then, the forest owner needs to call to ask if one of them wants to buy. Private F. O 1 lamented that such a system "*does not allow freely disposing of their property*". Sometimes, buyers are unwilling to wait for this long period, and owners experience financial losses.

4.3.4 Cumulative effects of the regulatory clout

All the regulatory issues mentioned above contribute to a situation where the private forest sector is held back. There is no freedom to be independent and make decisions in forests. It is challenging to keep up with changes in legislation. The control of forest owners is strict, and fines are given for minor violations. Respondents are profoundly affected by how the state/public authorities treats the private sector and describe the current situation as an *"incredibly strong public sector and an overshadowed private sector" (P.A 3).* Over the past 30 years, the

forest area of the public sector decreased by half, but the state´s influence on the market and the decision-making process in government not only remains unchanged but has also been strengthened.

4.4 Economic and informational aspects

4.4.1 Compensation for owners

Lack of compensation was mentioned several times during interviews. It is not only a problem for Natura 2000 territories but also for all possible compensations for private forest owners in Lithuania. By looking at information and data provided by the National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, compensations are granted in several cases. One of the compensations is called "Prevention and compensations for damage to forests". This compensation can be used to create forest fire protection infrastructure, improve forest fire monitoring, or restore forests affected by natural disasters. Overall, the government will spend 950000 euros on this task. However, not all owners can get this compensation. Increasingly frequent windthrows and pest infestations are damaging more and more forests in Lithuania. It means that, an increasing number of owners are seeking this compensation, intensifying competition. Additionally, the public sector can also submit requests for it. It intensifies the competition for compensation even more. Due to these reasons, private forest owners do not always try to get this compensation because they believe there is a low likelihood of receiving it. As F.O 4 stated: "*owners will wait in line for that compensation for 2-3 years, and no one will pay you any interest*"

Another compensation is provided for afforestation. The main problem with this compensation is the requirements to get it. This compensation applies if there has never been a forest in that area and the owner intends to plant one. If owners have a forest on their property and the forest has been logged – they do not meet the requirements. This compensation, possibly, is intended for increasing forest cover in Lithuania and not ensure help for forest owners regarding forest management processes.

4.4.2 Natura 2000

Natura 2000 territories pose a significant challenge in Lithuania presently. This issue is related to both regulatory and economic instruments. Natura 2000 has become a focal point of discussion among private forest owners. Despite over a decade of existence, governance has remained inactive in addressing these

territories and only now have some changes started to occur. In all Natura 2000 territories, it is temporarily forbidden to cut a forest due to ongoing discussion between owners and government. There are many examples when "*Forest owners go to obtain permits. The forest project is prepared. Payment has been made for it, and they find out that there is a habitat, and they cannot interfere with it*" (P.A 3). The biggest problem is the lack of compensation. All respondents highlighted that after territories are added to the Natura 2000, it is difficult to get compensation due to lack of funds. Additionally, compensations are small and do not compensate all loses regarding the prohibition of the use of forests for economic purposes. During the interview, respondents often compared how different countries deal with that: "*In Western European countries, all environmental policies and measures are based on agreements between the state and the owner, and any economic activity is restricted only when there is an agreement (P.A 2). This means that compensation is provided.*" Private F.O 3 gave an example of Sweden and Finland, where "*not only do you receive a one-time payment, but they also calculate for another 25 years*". As it turned out from the interview, people are not displeased about Natura 2000 territories but about the fact that governance took their forest territories, banned the use of timber harvest and did not give proper compensation for it. Owners even cite the constitution, which says, "*If there is a restriction for your property created by governance, they must pay compensations for it*" (F.O 1). In this context, owners directed attention to insufficient funds available to compensate all proprietors and claimed, "*In order to protect, you need something to protect, and protection is expensive, but the government doesn't have enough money.*" (F.O 5)

The Forest and Landowners Association of Lithuania actively participate in discussions about new regulations in Natura 2000 territories. The Natura 2000 problem stems from regulatory tools and significantly overlaps with economic instruments. Natura 2000 commitments were part of the negotiations for EU accession. Between 2011 and 2014, a large-scale habitat inventory project was undertaken. Subsequently, all findings were presented to the European Commission, and after six years, demands ensued.

The Forest and Landowners Association of Lithuania actively participated in discussion about new regulations in Natura 2000 territories. On 11th January 2024, the association presented an official letter to the Environmental Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, detailing their feedback regarding the amendment of the law, which was adopted in December 2023. The letter highlighted several drawbacks of the new legislation, such as the "*unmeasured and immediate suspension of large-scale economic activity in the forest*" (Lithuanian Forest and Landowners Association, 2024). The Environmental Ministry forbade both sanitary and clear cuttings in the affected areas. At present, approximately 30% of forests in Lithuania are designated Natura 2000 areas. In these territories no economic activities are

taking place - no necessary permits, notifications, or approved forest management plans have been issued. Furthermore, permits are revoked and coordinated projects are no longer approved. By association, it "*incurs significant losses to the country's forestry sector and provokes justified and increasing outrage*" (Lithuanian Forest and Landowners Association, 2024).

Another problem is that no criteria are specified regarding the conditions of natural habitats and species protection. For example, in Lithuania, cuttings in a specific area are forbidden by law if there is a protected bird nesting site nearby. Meanwhile, there are no such specifications regarding Natura 2000 territories. Inconsistent ruling leads to subjective evaluation and misunderstandings. Negatively inclined individuals can take advantage of such loopholes by filing complaints to halt activity on private properties, thereby depriving private owners of income, or even leading to the confiscation of their property. The government should compensate owners for losses in these instances.

Conversely, the greatest concern within the forestry industry is that cuttings and heavy machinery could disturb protected wildlife habitats. Even without this document, cuttings are conducted with caution. Heavy machinery is not permitted to traverse the land haphazardly and must follow a strict route to the cutting area. To reduce harm for soil compaction, on the road people put branches. Due to these reasons, to assess environmental impact equally in the construction industry and forest industry is not a logical solution. The same template cannot be applied to completely different activities, both in terms of their size and their environmental impact. Additionally, this approach will result in a burdensome and expensive administrative workload for government officials, forestry specialists, and property owners, further aggravate the overall issues of red tape in the Lithuanian forestry.

The abundance of issues concerning the project leads to one conclusion: the conservation of Natura 2000 areas is managed improperly and hastily, with no consideration of the suitability of all processes or input from forest owners.

As mentioned, a common complaint amongst private owners is insufficient compensation under the Natura 2000 project. Last year, the National Payment Agency raised payouts for owners. In accordance with current rules, where felling is prohibited or only low-intensity selective logging is allowed, landowners receive 275 euros per hectare for the first 5 years, and 200 euros for every year that follows. In cases of comprehensive restrictions, where silvicultural harvesting and felling of mature trees is prohibited, and where sanitary logging is restricted or prohibited, leaving a certain number of standing dead or dry trees, owners can expect to receive 177 euros per hectare.

Unfortunately, acquiring the documentation needed to receive these payouts is difficult and time-consuming. Currently, there are owners who have been waiting for this compensation for over a year. Furthermore, compensation does not cover all losses caused by forest use limitations. By comparison, Lithuania offers owners

far lower payout, compared with other countries. According to Swedish Forest Agency data "on average, compensation in 2023 was around SEK 185,000 (16320 euro) per hectare for habitat protection" and "The nature conservation agreements had an average compensation of SEK 47,000 (4147 euro) per hectare in 2023."

4.4.2 People working in government institutions lack knowledge about forestry

Many specialists working in the Ministry of Environment and the Forest Policy Group need more practical experience in forestry. Many speakers highlighted this issue and mentioned that practice and theory are not always aligned. By the owner's response to this problem, a clear historical path appeared. During the Soviet Union era, a person needed to climb up a career path to get a job position in ministry. They need to begin their careers as foresters and become forest engineers. Only then did they have the opportunity to secure a position in the ministry. Currently, the situation is much different compared to the past. Private F.O 3 stated that today "*Forest management, administration, and bureaucracy have begun to fall into the hands of individuals who lack expertise in the field. Economists, linguists, historians, geographers, geologists—all are involved, but not foresters.*"

4.4.3 5% turnover tax

One of the economic instruments that make the life of private forest owners more complicated is the five percent turnover tax. Respondents stated that due to this legislation "*forest owners are facing significant losses in today's conditions.*" (P.A 3). Lithuania is the first country in the world to have such taxes. According to governance explanations, this tax was instituted to gather funds for forest infrastructure by legalizing the mandatory deduction from the income for sold raw timber and standing timber. However, in reality, owners are still determining where this money went. Also, the forest management project requires them to fix the roads after cutting down the forest. Furthermore, forest owners, when purchasing fuel, automatically contribute to the road maintenance program through paid excise duties. Respondents complained that this tax forces them to pay multiple times for the same thing. Additionally, owners pointed out a fact that farmers with heavy machinery also using forest roads, but they do not force to pay taxes regarding using forest roads.

4.4.4 Weak associations

Respondents pointed out that there many problems are related to the state/public authorities' communication with owners. The most problems come from weak private owners associations. Currently, in Lithuania are two bigger associations. One of them is active, while another one is more passive. The more active organization have more than 6500 member and they task are to develop and strengthen the organizational structure, to influence the drafting of legislation regarding forest management, forestry practices, and other important issues concerning forest owners, to organize effective and beneficial training and consulting for forest owners, ensuring reliable management and care of private forests and to provide information about current issues related to private forest management. Most respondents claim that the state fails to adequately communicate desired changes, making them difficult to track. It has been mentioned that although private owner organizations collaborate with the ministry, but respondents feel like "*The Ministry does not listen to private forest owners*" (F.O 5). Respondents complained that miscommunication leads to "*the confrontation between the state and the forest owners*" (F.O 4).

4.4.5 Consultative assistance

The lack of consultative assistance for owners was mentioned several times during the interviews. Currently, no specifically designated state institutions are solely dedicated to advising forest owners. In the past, the State Forestry Service was mandated to provide the services. The problem was that this institution also carried out forest inspections. Nerijus Kupstaitis thinks that "*the person who punishes cannot also be a consultant*". After 2021, the State Forest Services started to provide consulting services. This institution has 150 people work throughout all Lithuania. The problem is that providing consultations is not their main task. As Nerijus Kupstaitis continues his thought: "*If they did nothing more than consult, everything would be fine. However, they have other duties, and consulting forest owners is not a priority*". It led to owners' complaints that to get some help, it takes almost a month.

4.4.6 Lack of education

Participants described the lack of education in the forestry sector as a pressing issue. They complained not only about control agencies inspectors who "cannot identify tree species" (F. O 2), but also about society, which has a negative attitude towards

them. Private F.O 3 stated: "*everybody in Lithuania is forester now. Just go outside and ask if clear cuts are a bad thing. Everybody will say – yes*".

4.4.7 Participants' suggestions

All respondents' suggestion can be summarize by policy instruments (Table 7). A few respondents claimed that it would be convenient to have online platform where all information about their property and restrictions could be find. As private F.O 1 claimed: "*right now is difficult to find all information. We need to check a several page to find that we need*". Respondents are confident that such a system would "*help them and make their life easier*." Another suggestion, proposed by owners, is adequate compensation for prohibitions or restrictions. Owners mentioned that currently "*compensations are inadequate compared to the prohibitions*" (P.O 5). The amount of money that owners get does not compensate for all the losses regarding restrictions. The freedom in decision making processes was another suggestion proposed by respondents. Owners claimed that "*government should allow the owners to manage their property as they want as long as owners ensure proper functioning of the forest ecosystem*" (P.O 2). Owners claimed that more freedom could help them to manage forests even more efficiently regarding economic and ecological prospects. Private forest owners suggested that ensuring equal representation of environmental, economic, and social interests would be beneficial too. Currently, as respondents said, "*environmental protection is being greatly increased, compared to other interests*" (P.A 4). In owners' opinions, it is illogical to give "*all attention to one interest and completely ignore everything else" (F.O 4)* and it is necessary to seek a bit more compromise. The most repetitive suggestion from respondents was reduction in legislative change. Consistency must be a priority to improve the private forest sector in Lithuania. Currently, the situation is complicated because new amendments to the law are issued frequently, and owners struggle to "*keep in touch with the news, especially when finding all the changes is not an easy task.*" (F.O 1). Owners suggested that "*introducing a moratorium on any legislative changes for a decade. Nothing is altered or newly done. Forest owners will find ways to adapt and focus on forestry.*" (F.O 3). An equally important proposal is to educate the public on forestry matters. Private owners mentioned that society sees them as "*bad guys who only want to destroy a forest.*" (F.O 2). Due to this approach, owners feel disrespected, and their work is undervalued.

Table 7. Respondents' suggestions

Respondents suggestions	Policy instruments
Digitalization	Informational
Adequate compensations	Economical
Freedom in decision making process	Regulatory
Ensuring equal representation of environmental, economic, and social interests	Regulatory
Reduction of legislative changes	Regulatory
Public education on forest issues	Informational

5.   Discussion

5.1 Main findings

After discussion with participants, the main findings show that owners consider excessive bureaucracy to be a major issue in the Lithuanian private forestry. The problems that owners noticed in forest management are caused by excessive and not necessarily needed bureaucracy. The Natura 2000, and the lack of compensations are the most discussed topics in Lithuania at the moment compared to other problems such as strict control, frequent changes in legal provisions, slow administrative processes, 5% turnover tax, weak associations, lack of consultative assistance, and lack of education.

5.2 The significance of research

This research paper is significant for expanding the knowledge of red tape. By delving into this intricate subject, the study contributes to understanding bureaucratic hurdles. It provides specific examples of problems that force the bureaucracy to become red tape in the Lithuanian private forest sector. Furthermore, the findings of this research have significant implications for policy formulation and implementation, offering policymakers an understanding of the challenges posed by excessive bureaucracy. Moreover, the study aids in identifying potential solutions to streamline bureaucratic processes, ultimately fostering efficiency and productivity in the private sector. The research may also catalyze dialogue and action, sparking discussions on regulatory reform and institutional improvement. These results illustrate how bureaucracy, designed initially to facilitate conditions for individuals, transforms into a burden disrupting the work of both private foresters and governmental institutions. For instance, in its efforts to facilitate land restitution to private individuals, the Lithuanian government made ill-considered decisions regarding documentation requirements. Consequently, attempts to rectify the situation led to the imposition of additional legal provisions, which still pose numerous bureaucratic challenges for the owners.

Few studies have investigated the bureaucratic issues in Europe's forestry sectors. Most studies focus on the "red tape" term without looking deeper at particular issues different countries face. This paper is one of the few that have searched for specific problems. One study was conducted to compare Lithuania and Slovakia. The results showed that in both countries, various difficulties are caused by overly strict regulations that limit the freedom of choice in all forests, regardless of who owns them or their functional priorities (Makrickiene et al.,2019). Slovakia, like Lithuania, was part of the Soviet Union. By the end of the Soviet era, 68% of Lithuania's forests were managed by the State Forest Enterprise, and the remaining percentage was managed by collective farms (Teder et al.,2015). In Slovakia, the State Forest Enterprise managed 99.1% of the forests until 1990 (Sarvašová, 2005). By comparing the problems that both countries have, it is evident that former Soviet Union countries struggle to create effective bureaucracies for private forests and still suffer from red tape. The evidence implies that many former Soviet Union countries have encountered this issue because they lack knowledge about private forestry and how to handle it. Comparing the problems the rest of the former Soviet states have with private forestry since gaining independence could be insightful. Similarities would highlight common issues and areas most affected by red tape. Likewise, comparing bureaucratic processes with other European countries that were not part of the Soviet Union could identify potential solutions to the problems.

5.3 Red tape – a fundamental issue in Lithuanian private forestry

Interviews with representatives of the private forestry sector indicate that red tape is a significant issue. Previous research has indicated various bureaucratic issues in Lithuanian forestry (Brukas & Sallnäs, 2012; Brukas et al., 2018). This study, however, conducted a systemic analysis of red tape as the main focus, confirming its importance based on direct evidence from the most affected stakeholders. The issues identified in this study are consistent with those reported in earlier studies. Most forest owners cited forest restitution and the Forest Act as initial problems that triggered a "snowball" effect of bureaucratism in Lithuania. Brukas and Sallnäs reported similar findings in 2012, where forest land zoning and The Forest Act were among the significant issues in Lithuanian private forestry policy. The randomness in whether an owner's restored forest is commercial—where decisions about forest management have more flexibility—or protected—where clear-cutting is prohibited, and rotations must match the natural mortality age of the species on site—creates significant challenges (Brukas & Sallnäs, 2012). This is compounded by the fact that private forest properties in Lithuania are dispersed across the

country. These relatively small holdings are challenging to manage and often result in a lack of motivation among owners to manage their areas actively.

Additionally, the Forest Act is often viewed as outdated and overly strict for private forest owners in Lithuania. The principles of forest planning and management, initially developed for state forestry during the Soviet era, were normatively transferred to private forestry in independent Lithuania, along with stricter environmental requirements (Brukas & Sallnäs, 2012). Respondents in this study noted that the Forest Act does not align with the current forestry goals in Lithuania. While the Forest Act was initially created to guide forest utilization, the addition of increasingly stringent environmental restrictions has left owners with little to no freedom, and some rules are contradictory. These two fundamental forest policy issues create a conducive environment for other bureaucratic problems to emerge. The problems that have arisen encompass all policy instrument classifications proposed by Vedung. The findings of this study suggest that all problems mentioned in the results section stem from an inapt Forest Act. Attempting to adapt the Forest Act to environmental concerns through regulatory instruments leaves no space for owners to manage their property freely. Problems arising in regulatory policy instruments also create issues in other policy instruments (Capano & Lippi, 2017). For example, strict restrictions on Natura 2000 territories create problems in economic policy instruments, as the compensation provided to owners is minimal and does not cover all losses.

Additionally, restrictions caused by regulatory instruments have a negative impact on informational instruments. The weak forest associations can be explained by harsh restrictions that remove all owners' responsibilities in the decision-making process. Owners only need to follow the rules in forest management plans, which reduces their motivation and demand to deepen their knowledge and try different things to ensure better biodiversity or production of their property.

5.4 Private owners' associations and advisory services

Another issue mentioned was weak private associations and advisory services in Lithuania. Respondents believed that private owner associations hold no sway in government decisions. In Lithuania, private forests appeared only in 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Teder et al., 2015). The traditions of private forest owners are still in the formative years.

Meanwhile, the agriculture sector has strong traditions in Lithuania. Most of the farmers would say that their grandparents and parents were farmers. The agricultural sector has solid associations and unions that fight for farmers' rights. For instance, in accordance with the Natura 2000 program, farmers must maintain meadows and other natural areas that are significant to biodiversity conservation. Farmers were unhappy with the proposed compensation they would get to preserve

meadows, so they organized a strike. Tractors from all over Lithuania arrived at the capital to participate in a peaceful demonstration for better conditions. This event garnered overwhelming public support and drew relevant government officials' attention. Meanwhile, private forest owner associations talk about problems without any explicit actions. This disparity in the influence of associations and advisory services could be linked to the number of members versus property size.

Lithuania has around 2.8 million hectares of agricultural land and 1.9 million hectares of private forest (Food and Agriculture Organization). Divided amongst around 100 thousand farmers and around 250 thousand private forest owners. According to this data, the average farmer has around 28 hectares of land, while private forest owners have around 7.6 hectares. Private owners have smaller, fragmented properties scattered throughout Lithuania, ensuring they remain minor economic players compared to farmers.

The stronger associations could improve the private forest sector in Lithuania. Some good examples can be taken from various European countries. In Sweden, forest owners' associations contribute significantly to shaping forestry policy (Brukas & Sallnäs, 2012). In contrast, private forest owners' opinions in Lithuania are mostly ignored or not even asked for. Additionally, it takes away the possibility of getting knowledge and consultant services. The lack of these services is noticeable in Lithuania, where many owners are left to deal with bureaucratism alone. Unlike in Lithuania, The German Forest Association helps private forest owners maintain and improve the health and management of their forests through technical assistance and educational programs (Kahle & Heger, 2017). This shows many good examples of how to improve associations in Lithuania by taking examples from other European countries. However, the most significant difference between these associations and their impact on policy is the number of association members. Organizations in Lithuania has a smaller number of members compared to other private forest organizations in other countries. According to the German Forest Association's data, this association has approximately 10,000 members. According to Swedish Forest Owners Association (Södra) data, this association has around 52,000 members. These numbers are significantly bigger than the Lithuanian Private Forest Association, with 3000 members.

5.5 The concept of bureaucracy

The proposition that the concept of bureaucracy can undergo diverse interpretations, as articulated by Eisenstadt in 1959, finds validation in the responses obtained from the study participants. It is evident from their varied interpretations that a plurality of perspectives concerning bureaucracy exists, thereby affirming this assertion's validity. Results showed that people's conceptions of bureaucracy are different. For some of the respondents, it has a negative

connotation and proved the results of Bodnarchuk study done in 2016, where the author described this term as negative and destructive. However, some respondents described this term as the operations of government and governance to get things done and "run the government" and mentioned that bureaucracy is necessary. These explanations agree with studies done by Bozeman in 2015, where authors claimed that bureaucracy is inevitable for societies to function. The contrast between answers shows that this term has a broad interpretation range for each person and brings different opinions about this topic. It proves that bureaucracy has often been mistakenly associated with red-tape (Farazmand, 2010). As for many respondents, initial thoughts about this term are closer to the definition of red- tape provided by Bozeman in 2000, where he described it as rules, regulations, and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden but do not advance the legitimate purposes the rules were intended to serve. The differences in understanding this term can arise from various experiences related to the bureaucratic process a person needs to deal with during his working experience. However, more research need to be done in order to prove this statement.

5.6 Limitations

During this research, several problems were encountered. Finding private owners to interview during the research phase proved troublesome. The pool of potential participants decreased further after initial contact, as some parties declined the invitation. One individual justified their refusal to comment out of fear that their statements would not remain anonymous and could do harm to his business. After a few months of searching and inviting participants, only ten people agreed to an interview during the research phase out of 15. Additionally, only owners with more than 20 hectares were interviewed. It can he be considered as a limitation because smaller forest owners could have a different opinion about forest policy in Lithuania compared to the bigger owners and possibly change the results of this study. Smaller forest owners could see other problems of private forest policy compared to bigger private owners, depending on their interest in management and time that they spent dealing with management processes.

Another limitation appears to be the small number of respondents. Even if a clear pattern of common complaints emerged, and thus the point of information saturation was approached, a bigger number of respondents would have been needed to ensure these findings. It cannot be ruled out that a larger number of respondents might have led to the discovery of people with opposing views.

The scope of the discussion topic also created limitations for this study. The problems caused by ineffective bureaucracy are a broad subject. To understand the full picture, each issue should be investigated individually and in-depth. This was not possible under the given time constraints.

Online interviews could have influenced the results, because it is harder to build trust and some respondent possibly did not share all thought regarding problems in private forest policy due to their untrustworthiness.

5.7 Suggestions

The interviewed participants suggested ways the government could improve the current situation. Unfortunately, many of them are challenging to implement. One of the suggestions was digitalization. Digital accessibility enables forest owners to implement more sustainable practices and better adhere to rules (Berkes et al.,.2008). It would help Lithuanian forest owners manage their property better and more efficiently when all property information could be easily found online. Additionally, it would save more time for owners with more than one forest property, and finding all the information about it takes some time.

Other suggestions were to increase compensation for losses regarding restrictions towards management of their property. Research done by many authors agrees that compensations could improve the private forest sector and sustainable management (Pagiola et al., 2003) (Wunder, 2005); however, implementing this suggestion is difficult. More money is needed to increase the compensations. Governments and other organizations may be unable to offer larger payouts due to budgetary restrictions, particularly during difficult economic times (Belman et al., 1996). Increment in compensation can mean that other areas may suffer financially.

Freedom in decision-making processes and equal representation of environmental, economic, and social interests cannot be easily implemented in Lithuania's private forestry policy. More freedom for owners could mean that forest management legislation should be changed completely. This means that nearly all forest legislation in Lithuania has to go through long processes that involve creating new legislation, discussing it, voting for it, and implementing it. Even after all these processes, the situation of freedom could be the same as before, and complaints can remain.

Suggestions of respondents could improve the private forest sector in Lithuania, but the biggest issue is that many things in Lithuania must change to implement these suggestions. To do this, the government needs to make fundamental changes in the approach, which can demand a large amount of money, time, and human labour. Even then, nobody can ensure that these problems will disappear or that new problems won't appear

6. Conclusion

Private owners have a distinct understanding of bureaucracy. Most forest owners who participated in this interview associate bureaucracy with inefficiency, hindrance, and impediments rather than facilitation. In contrast, participants working in associations which help private forest owners view bureaucracy neutrally and describe it as inevitable. Distrust towards owners, frequent changes in legislation, and uncertainty in decision-making have allowed excessive bureaucracy to develop, causing ongoing difficulties for both owners and forest institutions to this day.

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Popular science summary

Private forests in Lithuania were established in 1990 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since that moment, the Lithuanian government has encountered many difficulties while creating legislation from scratch. These problems still make private forest owners' lives difficult. Qualitative interviews were conducted with ten private forest owners in Lithuania to identify the biggest problems they encounter in private forestry caused by excessive bureaucracy. The results showed that most of the problems appeared after Lithuania gained independence and continue to happen to this day. Excessive bureaucracy, frequent changes in legislation, and lack of compensation regarding Natura 2000 territories are the most repetitive issues that forest owners have noticed. Owners suggested that the government should start trusting them and let them make more decisions freely.

Privatūs miškai Lietuvoje atsirado 1990 m., žlugus Sovietų Sąjungai. Nuo to laiko Lietuvos valdžia, kurdama teisės aktus nuo nulio, susidūrė su daugybe sunkumų. Šios problemos vis dar apsunkina privačių miškų savininkų gyvenimą. Renkant informaciją buvo atlikti kokybiniai interviu su dešimčia privačių miškų savininkų Lietuvoje, siekiant nustatyti didžiausias problemas, su kuriomis jie susidūrė privačiame miškų ūkyje dėl per didelės biurokratijos. Rezultatai parodė, kad dauguma problemų atsirado Lietuvai atgavus nepriklausomybę ir išlieka iki šiol. Per didelė biurokratija, dažni teisės aktų pokyčiai ir kompensacijų dėl Natura 2000 teritorijų trūkumas – tai dažniausiai pasikartojantys miškų savininkų pastebėjimai. Savininkai siūlė valdžiai pradėti jais pasitikėti ir leisti jiems laisvai priimti daugiau sprendimų

Acknowledgements

Interview Guide

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Introduction to the interviewee</th></tr>
<tr><th>Questions</th><th>Important information about the question</th><th>Additional information</th><th>Follow-up questions</th></tr>
<tr><td>How are you related to forests?</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>How many years have you been engaged in this activity?</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Could you tell me how much forest area you currently own?</td><td>This will help to distinguish if the owner is a small player or a large player in the forest business</td><td></td><td>Do you manage these forests alone, or do family, friends, or business partners help you?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Do you buy and maintain forests mostly for your own needs?</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>How did you decide to engage in this activity?</td><td>To find out if forests were important since childhood. For example, if parents or grandparents were involved and thus fostered a desire to continue.</td><td></td><td>Did the relative you mentioned also engage in this specific activity? Did the involvement of relatives encourage you to get into forestry?"</td></tr>
</table>

Introduction to topic			
What is your attitude towards the legal and administrative management of private forests?	These two aspects are interconnected, and speakers may not distinguish them properly	Legal management establishes the rules under which forests can be used and managed, often based on a legal framework (laws, regulations, and legal provisions that determine how forests can be used). Administrative management involves practical activities (forest maintenance, planning, monitoring, and utilization) applying legal regulations.	
Are private forest owners provided with adequate conditions for forestry?	Ask what suitable conditions are, and then follow up with your question.		
Does established forest management (legal framework and administrative procedures) complicate or			

facilitate forest management? What are the current bureaucratic implications for private owners?			
"bureaucracy" definition			
Could you describe how you understand this term?	to investigate if the interlocutor has a negative or positive impression about bureaucracy		
Does it evoke positive or negative associations for you?			Could you explain why it evokes positive/negative associations for you?
Do you often encounter bureaucracy in your work?			
What impressions does bureaucratic work leave on you? Does it cause difficulties and inconveniences? Or does it perhaps speed up your work?			How much time does dealing with bureaucracy take while working? In your opinion, with an efficient system, would this time shorten or lengthen, and by how much?
Identification of Problems			
What are the main problems you notice? Start with the most important one.			How do these bureaucratic problems affect your ability to perform necessary

		49	forest maintenance or other aspects of forest management work? Do you incur additional expenses or experience dissatisfaction with forest management processes due to these bureaucratic problems?
Since when do you think this problem has existed, and has it worsened during a certain period? Is it related to specific institutional or legal changes?			Could you compare forest management before and after the changes you mentioned? What are the differences between these two periods?
Have you noticed any problems arising from other types of forestry activities?			
What problems do you encounter there?			
Are the issues you mentioned arising due to the shortcomings of Lithuania's forestry policy? More specifically, do these problems result from			

bureaucratic processes such as excessive paperwork, overly strict regulations, slow processes, or excessive legal requirements?			
Affection on private forestry and suggestions			
What inconveniences do forest owners face due to the bureaucratic problems mentioned earlier?			
Does bureaucracy hinder or facilitate forest management?			But perhaps there are advantages where bureaucracy facilitates the execution of processes?"
Is the bureaucracy you've mentioned necessary, or could it be done without?			
Is bureaucracy effective for the forest owner? Does it ensure that the owner can make decisions about their forest without hindrance?			
What do you think caused these problems?			
Have they existed for a long time, or			

have they arisen recently?			
Could you identify which institutions made these decisions that currently cause inconvenience to private forest owners? Were private forest owners consulted when these changes were being made? How has this affected your work? If possible, could you compare how it changed your work after these problems arose? Of course, if these problems did not exist all the time while you were engaged in forestry.			
Do you have any suggestions on how these problems could be solved?			
What would you like to change?			
Do you think your ideas can be applied to today's forestry industry? Or are there any obstacles that			

would prevent the implementation of your proposed solutions?		52	
Can the younger generation make a difference?			

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